

Cellist Raphael Wallfisch rediscovers the exiled Jewish composers in a new series of CDs with the Berlin Konzerthaus Orchestra



Through a series of new recordings with Classic Produktion Osnabrück (CPO), cellist Raphael Wallfisch goes on a personal journey to rediscover the forgotten cello music of exiled Jewish composers who escaped Fascism and the Third Reich.

The series will include premiere recordings of cello concerti by Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Weigl and Reizenstein, and Bloch's Symphony for Cello and Orchestra. With conductor Nicholas Milton, Wallfisch has joined forces with the Berlin Konzerthaus Orchestra and Deutschland Radio starting in May to record the series of cello concertos of Hans Gál and Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco for release later this year. The next recordings in September will include the concertos of Berthold Goldschmidt, Karl Weigl, Franz Reizenstein, Robert Starer and Ernst Bloch. Many of the selected composers had a connection either to Wallfisch's own parents, themselves émigrés, or to his teacher Piatigorsky.

"This recording project in Berlin is extremely personal to me, coming from a Jewish background, as we shed light on some of the exiled Jewish composers and record their works. We've uncovered works by Karl Weigl and Castelnuovo-Tedesco who both wrote pieces dedicated to my teacher - Piatigorsky - which I am hugely excited about recording. Four of the pieces we are releasing have never been recorded before. The whole journey has a lot of connotations and significance - it almost feels like we are completing the plans of the exiled composers by recording their music in Berlin, to allow their music to live on."

The first disc in the series features the works of Hans Gál and Castelnuovo Tedesco. Austrian-British composer Hans Gál had a productive career as director of Mainz Conservatory, following the support of important musicians such as Wilhelm Furtwängler, Fritz Busch and Richard Strauss. With the rise of Nazism, his career came to an abrupt end when he was dismissed from his post in Mainz due to his Jewish ancestry. Returning to Vienna, he was unable to find work. After the Anschluss in 1938, he fled to London and found some work in Edinburgh with the help of Donald Tovey. Following the outbreak of war, he was interned as an enemy alien in Huyton Camp near Liverpool and then on the Isle of Man.

He wrote his cello concerto in 1944 after a particularly difficult period, following the loss of his mother, sister, son and aunt. Gál completed the piece in Edinburgh, where he took up a teaching position at the University in 1945 and co-founded the Edinburgh International Festival in 1947. In the mid 1980s Raphael Wallfisch met Hans Gál in Edinburgh. Wallfisch will be performing Gál's cello concerto live in concert in Osnabruck, January 2017.

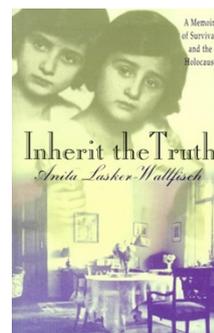
The Italian composer Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco migrated to the USA in 1939 following the Italian Racial Laws, which banned his music from radio and live performances. Castelnuovo-Tedesco thrived in the US, becoming a prominent film composer and using his Jewish heritage for inspiration. Piatigorsky premiered Castelnuovo-Tedesco's concerto in New York, 1935, conducted by Toscanini.

Born in Vienna, Starer fled to Palestine following the Anschluss where he met Wallfisch's father, Peter Wallfisch, who had also sought refuge there. In World War II, he served in the British Royal Air Force and in 1947 he settled in the US, studied composition at the Juilliard with Aaron Copland. He wrote four operas, several vocal works to English and Hebrew texts and a score for Martha Graham's 1962 ballet *Phaedra*.

The German-Jewish composer Berthold Goldschmidt's music was suppressed by Nazi Germany, labelled as "degenerate". When his music was banned from being performed, he was forced to emigrate to England to forge a career. He won first prize in the 1951 Festival of Britain Opera competition, however the Royal Opera House refused to put on a production of his winning opera. Goldschmidt's cello concerto was written in the early 50s for British cellist William Pleeth.

Franz Reizenstein's cello concerto was written in 1951 in England, after he fled Germany aged 23 in 1934 to escape the Nazis. Reizenstein continued his studies in the UK under Ralph Vaughan Williams at the Royal College of Music, later becoming a professor at the Royal Academy of Music and Royal Northern College of Music. At the start of World War II, Reizenstein was interned in Central Camp, Douglas, where he continued composing.

Wallfisch returns to the music of the Swiss-American composer Ernest Bloch following an earlier CD including *Schelomo* released in 2014 dedicated to members of his family who died in the Holocaust. Stephen Pritchard of The Observer stated that it was "**an intensely personal disc**". Wallfisch's mother Anita Lasker-Wallfisch was a survivor of Auschwitz and Bergen Belsen, and published her story *Inherit the Truth* in 1996. Lasker-Wallfisch was saved, alongside her sister, by her cello when she joined the Auschwitz Women's Orchestra. As Wallfisch explains "**Bloch is able to encapsulate the fervent nobility, grandeur, tragedy, and joy of the Jewish legend with unequalled pathos and skill**".



[Click here to watch Raphael and his mother on Newsnight in 2014](#)

Raphael Wallfisch

Raphael Wallfisch is one of the most celebrated cellists performing on the international stage. He was born in London into a family of distinguished musicians, his mother the cellist Anita



Lasker-Wallfisch and his father the pianist Peter Wallfisch.

At an early age, Raphael was greatly inspired by hearing Zara Nelsova play, and, guided by a succession of fine teachers including Amaryllis Fleming, Amadeo Baldovino and Derek Simpson, it became apparent that the cello was to be his life's work. While studying with the great Russian cellist Gregor Piatigorsky in California, he was chosen to perform chamber music with Jascha Heifetz in the informal recitals that Piatigorsky held at his home.

At the age of twenty-four he won the Gaspar Cassadó International Cello Competition in Florence. Since then he has enjoyed a world-wide career playing with such orchestras as the London Symphony, London Philharmonic, Philharmonia, BBC Symphony, English Chamber Orchestra, Hallé, City of Birmingham Symphony, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Berlin Symphony, Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Indianapolis Symphony, Warsaw Philharmonic, Czech Philharmonic and many others.

He is regularly invited to play at major festivals such as the BBC Proms, Edinburgh, Aldeburgh, Spoleto, Prades, Oslo and Schleswig Holstein.

Teaching is one of Raphael's passions. He is in demand as a teacher all over the world and holds the position of professor of cello in Switzerland at the Zürich Hochschule der Kunst.

Raphael has recorded nearly every major work for his instrument. His extensive discography on EMI, Chandos, Black Box, ASV, Naxos and Nimbus explores both the mainstream concerto repertoire and countless lesser-known works by Dohnanyi, Respighi, Barber, Hindemith and Martinu, as well as Richard Strauss, Dvorak, Kabalevsky and Khachaturian. He has recorded a wide range of British cello concertos, including works by MacMillan, Finzi, Delius, Bax, Bliss, Britten, Moeran and Kenneth Leighton. For the Chandos Walton Edition he was privileged to record the composer's Cello Concerto, originally written for his master, Piatigorsky.

Britain's leading composers have worked closely with Raphael, many having written works especially for him. These include Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Kenneth Leighton, James MacMillan, John Metcalf, Paul Patterson, Robert Simpson, Robert Saxton, Roger Smalley, Giles Swayne, John Tavener and Adrian Williams.

Raphael plays a 1760 Gennaro Gagliano, the 1733 Montagnana "Ex-Romberg" and an exquisite modern cello built for Raphael by Patrick Robin.

<http://www.raphaelwallfisch.com>

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