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GREGOR PIATIGORSKY

plays Walton and Dvorák Cello Concertos

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STEREO

First of all I must say how glad I am that Walton's 'Cello Concerto is at last available on records in this country. I don't think that it is an entirely successful piece: in the first and second movements he manages to give a convincingly fresh treatment to material that has fascinated him ever since the Viola Concerto of 1928-9, but I am more than ever sure that the third movement is broken-backed; it is in the form of variations-plus-coda, but the two longish passages for the solo 'cello do not keep the argument going, and there is no inevitability about the return of the main theme from the first movement, only a feeling that Walton could not think of anything better. Nevertheless it is an accessible work by a distinguished composer, and the British public should not have had to wait so long for a recording of it that has been available for some time in America ...

Against [various sonic shortcomings] must be set the quality of the performance, and as I have already suggested, Piatigorsky is almost beyond praise. It was he who commissioned this concerto in the first place, and he gives the impression of loving every note of it. The orchestral playing is also technically as good as one would expect, and if there is a certain lack of sensuous warmth about it this may well be the fault of the recording. All in all, then, this is a record that is well worth having for the sake of the music and the performance, but one that could have been much more pleasing to listen to.

J.N., *The Gramophone*, excerpts, January 1959

Producer's Note

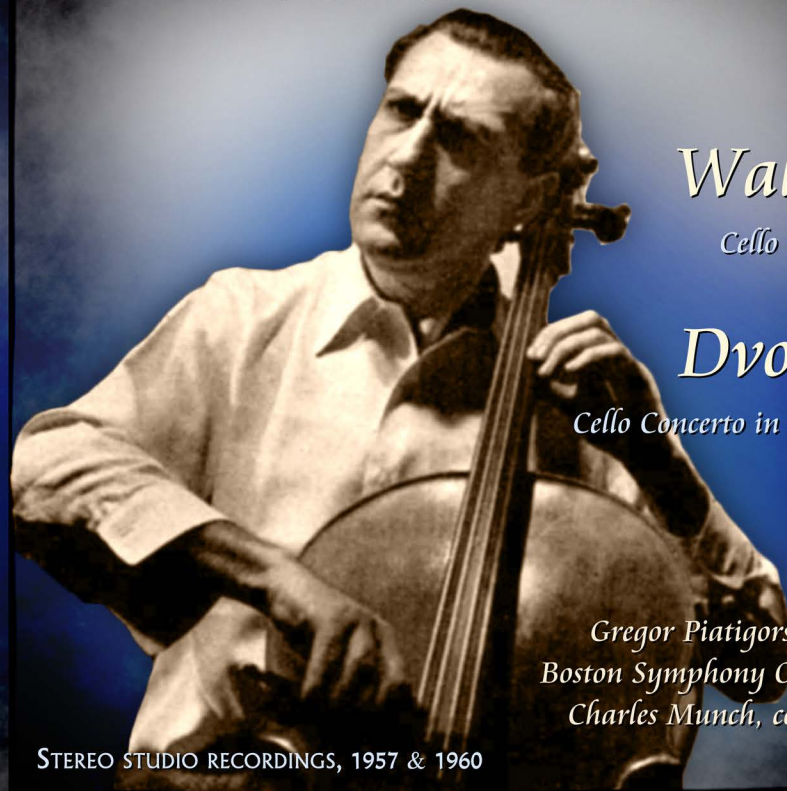
Piatigorsky's recording of William Walton's *Concerto for Cello and Orchestra*, which the cellist had commissioned and given the work's first performance of just days before this recording was made, also with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Munch was criticised at the time for its recording balance - the Gramophone's reviewer noting that: "Piatigorsky is throughout made to sound as close to us as he would be to the conductor in the concert-hall, and the result is a completely unnatural balance between soloist and orchestra." I am inclined both to agree and disagree with this diagnosis - the balance between soloist and orchestra is good, in my opinion, yet Piatigorsky does sound curiously exposed in the original. This, I believe, is partly a result of the tonal balance of the recording cutting some of the lower-end warmth of the cello, leaving it a little disembodied, thin and stark. It's also a rather dry recording, thus exacerbating this problem - like the human voice, the cello responds well to complementary acoustic resonances in the performance space, and here they were lacking, leaving the instrument sounding rather disconnected. These are both shortcomings I've tackled in this XR remaster, and I think most listeners will agree that a most delicious sound is the result - lively, crisp and well-balanced. The Dvorák, although a more successful recording to begin with, saw similar criticisms upon its release, and here we find similar improvements in top end clarity and lower-mid warmth - especially in the solo cello - as well as overall balance perception.

Andrew Rose

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM
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PIATIGORSKY

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Walton

Cello Concerto

Dvorák

Cello Concerto in B minor

Gregor Piatigorsky, cello
Boston Symphony Orchestra
Charles Munch, conductor

STEREO STUDIO RECORDINGS, 1957 & 1960

XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of **Gregor Piatigorsky**

PIATIGORSKY *Walton & Dvorák*

WALTON Cello Concerto

- 1 1st mvt. - Moderato (8:16)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Allegro appassionato (6:46)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Theme and improvisations (14:47)

DVORAK Cello Concerto in B minor, Op. 104

- 4 1st mvt. - Allegro (15:54)
- 5 2nd mvt. - Adagio, ma non troppo (13:19)
- 6 3rd mvt. - Finale: Allegro moderato – Andante – Allegro vivo (13:06)

Boston Symphony Orchestra *Charles Munch*

Gregor Piatigorsky *cello*

Walton Cello Concerto

Recorded 28 January 1957
Symphony Hall, Boston
Producer: Richard Mohr
Engineer: Lewis Layton
First issued on in the UK
as Columbia RB16027

Dvorák Cello Concerto

Recorded 22 February 1960
Symphony Hall, Boston
Producer: Max Wilcox
Engineer: John Crawford
First issued on in the UK
as Columbia SB2114

Total duration: **72:08**

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