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**GOLTERMANN, Georg** – a largely  
forgotten German romantic cellist

*written by David Johnstone*

# **GOLTERMANN, Georg – a largely forgotten German romantic cellist**

**Born: 1824, 19<sup>th</sup> August (Hannover)**

**Died: 1898, 29<sup>th</sup> December (Frankfurt am Main)**

Goltermann's father was an organist, and therefore he got an early introduction to music. He received cello lessons from A. Ch.Prell, and from Joseph Menter during Goltermann's two-year stay in Munich (1847-1949) and was noted there for his compositional talents. He also had composition instruction from Lachnar, who himself had written a medium-scale work for a quartet of cellos.

During the 1850's he was touring Europe as a solo cellist, often performing his own works. There were plentiful journeys, but alas little has been recorded of them. In 1857 he became music director in Würzburg. However, he only remained there for one year because in 1858 he accepted an offer to become deputy music director of the municipal theater Stadttheater in Frankfurt-am-Main, where he was promoted to Kapellmeister (Main Director) in 1874.

Georg Goltermann died in 1898.

His first three cello concertos, virtuoso vehicles, were popular in the mid-19th century. In all, Goltermann wrote a number of cello concertos, generally believed to number five, but in fact he produced some seven or eight works in this genre. The most famous today surely is the fourth concerto. This concerto is considered the "student's concerto" because it is the easiest of his concerti, and it is still studied fairly widely. Although quite 'easy' both technically for the cellist and not particularly ambitious harmonically-speaking if one compares him with giants such as Liszt and Wagner by his side, the work is never-the-less very well-constructed and offers the performer and listener a sense of being a true soloist concerto. His piece captivates the listener with a rich vein of melody in the first movement, an expansive and elegiac slow movement, and a wittily amusing *Allegro molto* as a finale. It does not require knowledge of thumb positions and is a perfect teaching piece for medium level students.

His other concertos are now occasionally practised by students in order to push their technique and also get a basic understanding of the concerto (the orchestral writing is straight-forward and is comfortable for the soloist to hear). Perhaps the most difficult concerto of all is the First Concerto, due to the many runs in thirds and octaves – it certainly has a sense of ‘bravura’. Unfortunately, nowadays his virtuoso music is rarely if ever performed in professional concerts and is deemed to lack the musicality of true concertos. Adding to the above, Concerto No. 1 was the one most played professionally up to the early 1900s and again after World War I, especially in the Germanic lands. The slow movement entitled Cantilena was often played separately as a cello solo. An early recording still exists of this played by Pablo Casals. However the first and third movements use the same material, and this in cello writing is for some reason very difficult to bring off (the Dohnanyi Concert Piece, Op.8, suffers somewhat in the same respect).

Many of Goltermann's shorter solos were frequently in the repertoire up to the 1920s, and beyond. As *Chandos* and other recording companies are frequently reviving the works of forgotten composers it might be worth while to revive some of Goltermann's if only to see the reaction of the public and of present day critics. For example, the present writer has performed a number of times two short cello quartet pieces – Romance and Serenade Op.119, and these are indeed some quite delightful short romantic writing, both pieces in ternary form.

Goltermann was an intelligent musician, even if we have few anecdotes to go by. For example, Grieg highly recommended Goltermann's arrangement of his Peer Gynt Suite No. 1, which he considered very high quality transcription making. Unfortunately some of the finest transcriptions were only published at the end of his life, and have not thus entered the general cellists' repertoire. After his death, at the very end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it would be fair to say that although ‘salon music’ would still command a respectable place among musicians, its hey-day was passing – leaving both the original pieces and the fine transcriptions of Goltermann out ‘in the cold’. I would suggest that it is time for a revival, or at least a reappraisal, of his work and achievements.

Georg Goltermann should not be confused with *Julius* Goltermann (1825-1876), the cellist teacher of David Popper. In his book on David Popper, even Steven De'ak confuses Popper's teacher Julius Goltermann [1825-76] with Georg.

## ***Principal Compositions of GOLTERMANN by Opus Number***

- Op.1 - Fantaisie sur un thème favori (1838)  
Op.14 - Concerto No.1 in A minor, for cello and piano  
Op.15 - Grand Duo for Cello (or Viola) and Piano, Op.15  
Op.17 - Romance in E minor, for Cello and Chamber Orchestra (dur. 8 mins)  
Op.22 - Romance in C major, for Cello and Chamber Orchestra (dur. 5 mins)  
Op.24 - Capriccio for Cello and Piano  
(*N.B. falsely named as the work Op.35 No.4 by Hegner*)  
Op.30 - Concerto No.2 in D minor, for cello and Piano  
Op.35 - 4 Morceau de Salon  
    No.1 - Romance in D major  
    No.2 - Alla Mazurka in A minor  
    No.3 - Caprice in G major  
    No.4 - Adagio and Tarantelle in D minor  
Op.36 - 1st Sonatine in A major, for viola or cello and piano  
Op.43 - 4 Morceaux caracterist  
    No.1 - Reverie in E minor  
    No.2 - Inquietude in G major  
    No.3 - Nocturne in D minor for cello and piano  
    No.4 - Humoreske in D major  
Op.48 - 4 Morceaux Caractéristiques for cello and piano  
Op.49 - Nocturne for cello and piano  
Op.49 - Suite for cello and piano (4 solo pieces)  
    No.1 - Nocturne in G major  
    No.2 - Serenade in E major  
    No.3 - Noveletta in G major  
    No.4 - Capriccio in D minor  
Op.51 - Concerto No.3 in B minor  
Op.52 - 3 Romances sans paroles  
    No.1 - G major  
    No.2 - A major  
    No.3 - G minor  
Op.53 - Morceaux de Salon (Salon Piece) for Four Cellos  
Op.54 - 4 Morceaux caracterist  
    No.1 - Nocturne in G major for cello and piano (*alternative version:  
    Nocturne, Op. 54, No. 1 for flute and piano*)  
    No.2 - Desir in E minor  
    No.3 - Reverie in A minor  
    No.4 - Etude-Caprice in C major for cello and piano  
Op.56 - Andante religioso in G major  
Op.59 Notturmo and Saltarello  
    No.1 - Nocturne in B minor for cello and piano  
    No.2 - Saltarello in B minor  
Op.60 Two Pieces  
    No.1 - Romance in A minor  
    No.2 - Tarantelle in A minor

- Op.61 - 2nd Sonatine in G major, for viola and piano  
 Op.65 - Concerto No.4 in G major, for cello and piano  
 Op.65 - Consecration Hymn for 4 cellos  
 Op.66 - Fantaisie to Oberon from Weber  
 Op.67 - Concerto No.5 in D minor, for cello and Piano  
     *(occasionally given with the number Op. 76)*
- Op.81 - Ballade in G major  
 Op.88 - Elegie in C minor  
 Op.90 - 3 Romances Sans Paroles for cello and Piano  
 Op.92 - 3 Morceaux de Salon (with piano)  
     No.1 - Nocturne in E minor for cello and piano  
     No.2 - Reverie in G minor  
     No.3 - Romances in F major
- Op.95 3 Romances symboliques  
     No.1 - La Foi No.1 for cello and piano  
     No.2 - La Charite in A major  
     No.3 - L'Esperance in F major
- Op.97 - 6 Tonbilder (Tone Poems)  
     No.1 - Ballade in D minor  
     No.2 - Scherzetto in G minor  
     No.3 - Trauermarsch in E minor  
     No.4 - Stiller Glück in F major  
     No.5 - Sehnsucht in G major  
     No.6 - Auf der Jagd. in D major
- Op.98 - Fantaisie on melodies of Mendelssohn  
 Op.103 - Concerto No.7 in C major  
 Op.108 - Notturmo in F major  
 Op.115 - 3 Morceaux faciles  
     No.1 - Serenade in G major  
     No.2 - Idylle in A major  
     No.3 - Nocturne in A major
- Op.119 Two Pieces for Four Cellos  
     No.1 - Romance for 4 cellos  
     No.2 - Serenade for 4 cellos
- Op.120 Pieces choisies (Transcriptions)  
     No.1 - Am Meer (Schubert)  
     No.2 - Kirchen-Aria (Stradella)  
     No.3 - Litaney (Schubert)  
     No.4 - Das Fischermädchen (Schubert)  
     No.5 - Larghetto (from Clarinet Quintet from Mozart)  
     No.6 - Sei mir gerüst (Schubert)  
     No.7 - Elegie (Ernst)
- Op.121 - Opera Transcriptions  
     No.1 - Idomenee (Mozart)  
     No.2 - Idomenee (Mozart)  
     No.3 - Zaide (Mozart)  
     No.4 - Cosi fan tutti (Mozart)  
     No.5 - Iphigenie en Tauride (Gluck)  
     No.6 - Medee (Cherubini)
- Op.125 - 3 Nocturnes  
     No.1 - G major / No.2 - E flat major / No.3 - F major

Op.128 - 4 Pieces with piano  
    No.1 - Ballade in B flat major  
    No.2 - Intermezzo in D major  
    No.3 - Notturmo in C major  
    No.4 - Wiegenlied in G major  
Op.130 - Cello Concerto No.8 in A major  
Op.132 - 2 Pieces for cello and piano  
    No.1 - Etude in E minor  
    No.2 - Trauer and Trost in C minor  
Op.133 - Vito in F major  
Transcription of Sandmännchen from Hänsel und Gretel by Humperdinck,  
Engelbert for cello and piano

Man of Sorrows By George Goltermann (1824-1898). Arranged by Gary Parks. For SATB Chorus and piano reduction. Bible Reference: Isaiah 53. Choral. Sacred. I have little knowledge of this work, but would appear to show Goltermann in other musical fields than purely cellistic ones ...

There are still too many 'holes' left in the opus list. Perhaps most of the works not mentioned above have simply disappeared for good. But for those who might know more then *johnstone-music* would be eagerly awaiting to hear from you!

One can see that here was a cellist absolutely dedicated to his instrument, providing a wealth of literature for the following generations of cellist musicians. He was not to know how the musical patterns and climates would soon radically change with the oncoming of impressionism, serial music, neo-classical music, jazz-influenced music etc. but his fine opus list is manifest of his unselfish contributions.

DAVID JOHNSTONE

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