

Cellists' Corner

Brief Career Details of Important Cellists

prepared by David Johnstone from public information

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SPECIAL FEATURE on MICHAL KAZNOWSKI

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Birth: 17th January, 1954 (Gooderstone, West Norfolk, England)

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In 1979 when Michal Kaznowski took up the post of principal cello in the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra working with Simon Rattle, he was then the youngest principal cello in the country to accept such a senior position. Performing various concertos with the orchestra including a BBC broadcast of 'Don Quixote', he shared the early development of the orchestra as Simon Rattle turned it into one of the UK's leading orchestras.

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This followed on from the experience of having already been the principal cello of the Sadlers Wells Royal Ballet and associate principal position in the BBC Welsh Symphony Orchestra. Since leaving the CBSO in 1983 for what became the Maggini quartet, he has been principal cello of the extensively recorded New London Orchestra. He is in demand as a principal and guest principal cello for many of the leading freelance orchestras in London and the provinces including the CBSO and Birmingham Royal Ballet. When I was first out of music college I well remember Michal being my section leader on occasions, and remember the experiences fondly, finding him a most efficient and professional artist and someone to 'look up to' as a positive influence.

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Michal's first teacher was his father, formerly a professional cellist in Poland and subsequently he was taught at the Menuhin School by Myra Chahin and Peter Norris. At the Royal Academy of Music (where he won the major cello prize), he was taught by Florence Hooton and went on to study with André Navarra in Germany with a German Government Scholarship. He also studied extensively with the Romanian cellist Radu Aldulescu. He performs outside the quartet as soloist with many orchestras, as a broadcast recitalist, as deputy cellist with many quartets, as well as chamber music concerts with other artists including Peter Donohoe.

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As a member of the internationally renowned Maggini Quartet, Michal has played throughout Europe, North America and the Far East. With the Quartet he has recorded over thirty five discs of twentieth-century British string quartet repertoire, including the cycle of ten 'Naxos' quartets by Sir Peter Maxwell Davies winning the Gramophone Award and the Diapason d'Or. The Quartet's work has extended to the commissioning of other new music, notably works by Robert Simpson, James MacMillan, Eleanor Alberga, Roxanna Panufnik. Michal Kaznowski plays on an Italian cello, made in 1745 in Genoa by Jacobus Philippus Cordanus.

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As a conductor, Michal for over 15 years has been the conductor of the Orchestra of the Pagoda Children's symphony orchestra - now the Esher and Ditton Youth Orchestra. His work is appreciated as "*Michal has a fantastic rapport with the children, encouraging them to express themselves, so that EDYO is a place where the students can gain self-confidence as well as developing their musical talent*". He also regularly works with student orchestras at Imperial College and Oxford University.

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Michal has taught for many years at the Junior Department of the Royal College of Music. Formerly he was the senior cello teacher at Birmingham Conservatoire and for fifteen years a staff cello teacher at the Purcell School. He has also taught at Wells Cathedral Music School in collaboration with Amaryllis Flemming and Margaret Moncrieff and at Birmingham and Southampton Universities. He was appointed an ARAM in 1991 for his work in the Quartet, and is also an Honorary Fellow of Canterbury Christ Church University and Brunel University.

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BRIEF VIDEO:

Coull Quartet with Michal Kaznowski (cello)

Here is a short extract from the first movement of Schubert's 'Quintet in C' from a rehearsal. One immediately notices that Michal is always 110% alert to everything going on around him - an absolutely dream second cellist for any good string quartet playing quintets!

<https://www.facebook.com/112492005508366/videos/453453492111083>

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Finally, I found by chance a few interview questions aimed at Michal - I'm going to reproduce only a couple, which I feel make good 'food for thought':

Q: Some feel there is no need to record classical music any more, that it's all been done before. What do you tell them?

A: "There are many interpretations of a piece of music most of which are worthy of listening to. The way Andreas Moser played Mendelssohn quartets would not be the same as the Griller Quartet, the Amadeus Quartet or even (dare I say it) the Maggini Quartet. All are very considered and thoughtful performances for the listener to chose between. In any case CDs are only a substitute for the real thing – live performance".

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Q: What constitutes a good live performance in your opinion? What's your approach to performing on stage?

A: "It is a one off performance, made up there and then with a live touch between the players. One rehearses possibilities and then sees what happens. The human condition is to be different from day to day, which is an asset to performers and should be fully utilized".

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Thanks so much Michal for the fantastic work for the cello in Britain!

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