

Cellists' Corner

Brief Career Details of Important Cellists

prepared by David Johnstone from public information

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CELLISTS' CORNER

OTTOMAR BORWITZKY

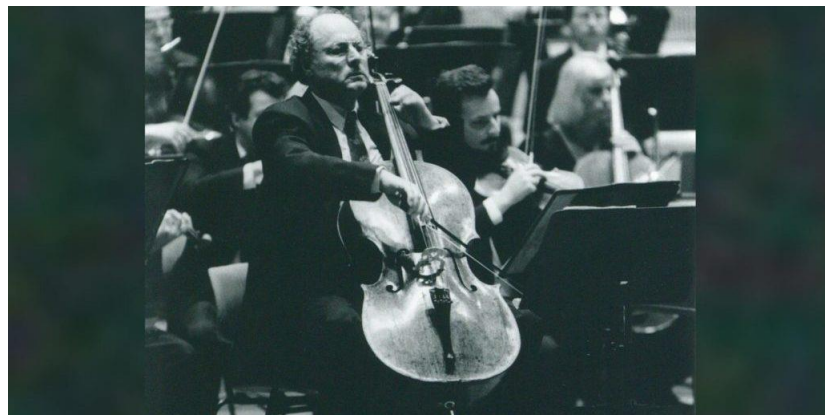
Birth: 1930 - Hamburg, Germany

Death: 2021

Ottomar Borwitzky was the son of the first concertmaster of the Hamburg Symphony Orchestra, Ottomar Borwitzky. His mother was also a professional violinist. He studied with Bernhard Günther, Arthur Troester and Paul Grümmer. He left high school before graduation time, to become the first cellist with the Hamburg Radio Orchestra. In 1954 he moved to the Hanover Opera House in the same position.

In 1956 he became principal cellist with the Berlin Philharmonic and then worked in this orchestra for 37 years until 1993. He was a constant in Berlin's musical life. In 1972 he helped found 'The 12 Cellists' with his orchestra colleagues as an independent ensemble. As a soloist he held 35 cello concertos in his repertoire - incredibly, he performed the Brahms Double Concerto some 82 times! (preferring, when possible, his Philharmonic friend Thomas Brandis as violin soloist). It is said that the 'Berliner Philharmoniker' particularly remembered his superb interpretations of Antonín Dvořák's Cello Concerto and Richard Strauss' Don Quixote. Indeed, he performed 'Don Quixote' at his farewell concert in April 1993; when he handed over the position to Ludwig Quandt, he also sold him his cello!

From 1979 onwards, Borwitzky worked as a cello professor at the Karajan Academy. Ottomar Borwitzky would have liked to move back to Hamburg as a pensioner. But his wife advocated a Brandenburg idyll by the lake, where she spent her childhood days. So, the cellist moved there, southeast of the capital Berlin. Ottomar Borwitzky died on 29th March, 2021 after a long illness at the age of 90.



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