

Cellists' Corner

Brief Career Details of Important Cellists

prepared by David Johnstone from public information

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SPECIAL FEATURE on TIBOR DE MACHULA

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Tibor "Tibby" de Machula was born in Kolozsvár in Hungary on 30 June 1912, and at the age of seven began his studies at the Budapest Conservatoire under Adolf Schiffer, a contemporary of Popper. Progress was certainly very fast indeed; he was barely twelve when he made his debut playing the Haydn D major Cello Concerto with the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra under Bernard Tittel. A subsequent concert tour of Italy led to the award of the David Popper Scholarship, and, in 1927 still only 15! - and acting on the advice of Jenő Hubay - he furthered his studies at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia with the English cellist Felix Salmond. He remained in the USA for three years before returning to Europe.

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So at eighteen, when most of us think about starting our advanced education, he returned to Hungary and, with the pianist Paul Schramm, was immediately engaged by Nicholas Roth of the Budapest Trio to go on an extensive concert tour of Singapore, Java, Sumatra, Ceylon and the Dutch East Indies. The duo also achieved considerable success in Finland where de Machula returned many times and later also had a number of pupils.

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Everything seemed to go right for this cellist - in 1936 he was invited by Wilhelm Furtwängler to become the principal cellist of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, holding this post for eleven years. He then (1947) became the principal cellist of the Concertgebouw Orchestra, remaining in this post for thirty years until his retirement in 1977.

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He gave the world premieres of Thärichen - Cello concerto and Mackeben - Symphonic Ballade

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He had become a Dutch citizen in 1955. He died 18 December 1982 in Abcoude, Netherlands.

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The British cellist Graham Elliott, a former student and personal friend of the great cellist (and I once played cello quintets with Graham too!) said of de Machula as an obituary:

"Certain cellists have a wonderful animal magic. They live through their senses, playing in a totally physical way which is beautiful and exciting but lacks intellect. Tibor de Machula possessed both qualities welded into a consummate whole, never allowing a considerable intellect to get in the way of what he was feeling or thinking."



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