

# Cellists' Corner

## Brief Career Details of Important Cellists

*prepared by David Johnstone from public information*

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## **SPECIAL FEATURE on RAPHAEL SOMMER**

Raphaël SOMMER was born in Prague in 1937 and began playing the piano at the age of five. Six years later he decided to study the cello under Pravoslav Sadlo (teacher of Milos Sadlo). However in 1949 he emigrated to Israel, and graduated in 1956. During that period he met Paul Tortelier in a kibbutz and in 1958 he was awarded a grant which enabled him to continue his studies at the Paris Conservatoire with Tortelier and Maurice Marechal, graduating with a First Prize in 1962 having already won the "Casals" Prize in Belgium the previous year. Other prizes included the "Piatigorsky" Prize in Boston, Second Prize at the 1963 Munich International Cello Competition, and First Prize at the 1965 Competition in Santiago de Compostella.

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In 1967 Raphaël Sommer came to England and was invited to head the cello department at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, where he also founded a string ensemble of sixteen players, and so beginning his conducting career. He left the Royal Northern College of Music in 1989 after 22 years there to become a Professor at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, until his death in November 2001. Latterly he was Cellist with the Salomon Trio.

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Raphaël Sommer played with major European orchestras and worked with such international conductors as Barbirolli, Dorati, Munch, Foss and Vladimir Ashkenazy. In 1990, he performed the World Premiere of HIS OWN transcription for cello and violin of Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante in Northern Ireland with Yan Pascal Tortelier and the Ulster Orchestra. He appeared regularly as Guest Conductor and Soloist in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with distinguished orchestras in the United Kingdom, Europe and Israel. He also performed regularly with his cellist wife, Genevieve Teulieres in this country and abroad.

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Raphaël Sommer recorded for the French label Lyrinx and with Daniel Adni, recorded all the cello and piano works of Martinu for the BBC and the Israel Broadcasting Corporation. He also gave regular interpretations of then almost unknown cello works of British composers such as Rubbra... The Telegraph wrote of him *“reliable grace and technical fluency; his splendid bowing arm and strong, flowing tone enabled him to extract poetry from the driest and most experimental of pieces.”*

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Raphaël Sommer was regularly a member of juries for international competitions, performed and gave master classes in festivals on the European and American continents.

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He had a great heart and was a generous man - this from the obituary which appeared in [levioloncelle.com](http://levioloncelle.com): *“We have just learned with great sorrow of the sudden death of Raphaël Sommer. All those who knew him appreciated his immense talent, his learning, his sharpness of spirit, and his warm friendship. In February 2001, he had organized in the Wigmore Hall (London) a moving tribute to Paul Tortelier, his old teacher, to whom he expressed profound respect. During the last Rostropovitch Competition, his own talents as a teacher were rewarded when one of his pupils won second prize. At the time of his death (2001), he was touring Israel with his beloved Trio Salomon.”*

And this quote from him sums everything up: *“One of the greatest pleasures of music is to make other people listen to it; to feel, for just a moment, a tiny part of an ideal world in which everything is good, beautiful, harmony, love.” - Raphael Sommer*

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There is now a Foundation in his name...

And finally a video: Beethoven Cello Sonata Op5 No2 1st Movt. by Raphael Sommer Cello, Jaromir Klepac piano - what a wonderfully cello lyricism, gorgeous!!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkPQvaUKNoU>



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