

## SPECIAL FEATURE on HEINRICH SCHIFF

..

..

Heinrich Schiff was born on 18th November 1951 in Gmunden, Austria. His parents, Helga (née Riemann) and Helmut Schiff, were both composers. He began playing piano when he was 6, and took up cello at the age of 10. He studied cello with Tobias Kühne and André Navarra and made his solo debut in Vienna and London in 1971, aged just 20. Since then he was a regular guest of virtually all the leading orchestras, at the big music centres and at the major festivals in Europe, North America and Japan.

..

He was a cellist whose lyrical, understated style and singing tone made him a profound interpreter of music from Bach through a long list of contemporary composers. His recording of the Bach Cello Suites won prizes, and his recording of the Shostakovich concertos won the Grand Prix du Disque in 1985. His recording of the Brahms Double Concerto with Frank Peter Zimmermann and Wolfgang Sawallisch won the Deutscher Schallplattenpreis. Apart from all the principal works of the standard repertoire, contemporary music played a very important role in Heinrich Schiff's artistic work. He frequently collaborated with composers such as Luciano Berio, John Casken, Friedrich Cerha, Michael Gielen, Hans Werner Henze, Ernst Krenek, Witold Lutosławski, Krzysztof Penderecki, Matthias Pintscher, Wolfgang Rihm and Hans Zender. Indeed he premiered works of Friedrich Cerha, Hans Werner Henze, Luciano Berio, Krzysztof Penderecki, and Ernst Krenek. Composers who have written cello concertos for Schiff include John Casken and Friedrich Cerha. At the Salzburg Festival 2006 he performed Johannes Maria Staud's new composition (Segue) with Daniel Barenboim and the Wiener Philharmoniker. With the latter he also gave the premiere of Otto M. Zykan's cello concerto "Beethovens Cello" (conductor: Zubin Mehta).

..

Mr. Schiff taught at the Cologne University of Music and Dance, the University of Basel, the Mozarteum in Salzburg and the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna. Among his students were Rudi Spring, Gautier Capuçon, Richard Harwood and Natalie Clein.

..

After building a career as one of the finest cellists to emerge in the last quarter of the 20th century, Heinrich Schiff also established himself as an important orchestral conductor. He had previously studied conducting with Hans Swarowsky, and made his official conducting debut in 1986. He was Artistic Director of the Northern Sinfonia (England) from 1990 to 1996, and recorded with them for the Collins Classics label. He also held chief conductorships with the Copenhagen Philharmonic Orchestra in Copenhagen, Denmark (1996–2000), and the Orchester Musikkollegium Winterthur (1996–2001). In 2004, he was appointed Chief Conductor of the Vienna Chamber Orchestra and served in the post from 2005 to 2008. He stood down from the post in 2008 for health reasons.

..

Schiff frequently experienced pain in his right shoulder and arm, the one that holds the bow, presumably caused by overexertion, but he tried to ignore it. However, while playing in a chamber concert in Vienna on 25th April 2010 he had to take breaks during pieces due to the pain. After this evening, he never played cello in public again.

..

Heinrich Schiff played the famous "Mara" Stradivarius made in 1711 and also the "Sleeping Beauty" made by Montagnana in Venice in 1739. Since 2012, his 'Mara' Cello has been played by Christian Poltéra, one of Schiff's former students.

..

..

Schiff died in Vienna on 23rd December 2016 at the age of 65, having suffered a stroke in 2008 and experiencing a delicate health position in his last years.

..

Quote from the spectacular artist himself:

*"Cellists always say, 'We don't have the repertoire,' instead of really looking at what's out there. Even in the older literature, as far back as the Baroque, there is a wider repertoire than cellists are willing to admit."*

..

And Natalie Clein said in 2012 about her former teacher:

*"Schiff is a true cello animal. His hands seem to be molded around the instrument, as if he were born playing it. He strikes the balance between individuality and faithfulness to a composition perfectly, maintaining a deep integrity and old-school seriousness. There is a high-voltage electricity in his vibrato, a breathlessness that keeps you endlessly listening; but his playing also has a sensitivity and a generosity of spirit that makes his sound instantly recognizable."*

..

More wonderful thoughts from this individual artist himself, in why we need to think about the music we are playing!:

*'I heard Yehudi Menuhin with a young student in a TV masterclass – which is a difficult thing for both of them, for everybody, especially the music! He was asking about a virtuoso figure in the Bartók concerto, and inquired if the student knew what notes he was playing. The student played them and Menuhin asked if the student knew that those notes were from the main theme. Obviously the student didn't know, so Menuhin said to play the figure slowly and then play the theme. He asked if the student saw that it links together. Until then, the student thought it was just virtuoso passage. So who is the better for the concerto – the one who knows the connection, or the one who plays cleaner and more powerful? He didn't say it, but I could see that Menuhin insinuated that he might think about it. Then he said something wonderful. He said, "You might ask why that is necessary. It is necessary because it works like telepathy. If you know, you are stronger. If you are stronger, you reach the audience." Certainly the audience doesn't know that you know that these notes are in the theme.'*

..

..



The images linked here are claimed to be used under fair use as:  
# the photos are only being used for informational purposes

..

'documenting the cello'

# JOHNSTONE - MUSIC

*A space open for:*

- Concerts and performances
- Composition and special projects with the cello
- New frontiers / cross-over / fusion
- Composition of instrumental music for concerts and recitals
- Television music / cinema / theatre / documentaries

## *Downloading of Music Scores*

- Strings
- Wind and brass
- Piano
- Accordion
- Chamber groups / orchestra

## *Downloads of transcriptions:*

- Solo cello
- Cello and piano
- Cello and orchestra
- Cello ensembles  
(duos up to cello orchestras)

## *Written Articles*

- General Music
- Specialist themes on the cello

## *Directory - Library*

- Famous Historical Cellists

## *Audio - Video*

- Free downloads and links

## *Interactive*

- News and Diary
- Commentaries and Suggestions
- Useful and easy tools for musicians
- Games



[www.johnstone-music.com](http://www.johnstone-music.com)