

SPECIAL FEATURE on BORIS PERGAMENSCHIKOW

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Born: August 29 1948 - Leningrad (now St Petersburg), Russia, USSR

Died: April 30, 2004 - Berlin, Germany

Full name: Boris Mironowitsch Pergamenschikow

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The Russian cellist, Boris Pergamenschikow came from a musical family - his father was also a cellist, and gave him his first lessons. His main teacher (during 12 years), first at a specialist music school and later at the Leningrad Conservatoire, was Emmanuel Fischmann. Pergamenschikow said in an interview for the Strad in 2000, that Fischmann was "like a second father" to him. He also studied composition. In 1974, Pergamenschikow had a big break through by winning the gold medal in the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, which launched his international career.

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He emigrated to the west in 1977, and made his New York debut in 1984, when the New York Times wrote that he was "*a world-class cellist by any reckoning ... his performances were on a technical, tonal, musical and interpretative level that only a small handful of cellists could match*". Over the following years he performed as a soloist with many of the world's finest orchestras and acclaimed as a chamber musician. He also recorded for Chandos, Decca, EMI, ECM, Hänssler and Sony Classical.

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Boris Pergamenschikow's characteristics were being a warm, intelligent cellist and his open personality made him a popular guest artist at chamber music festivals, working with such artists as András Schiff, Yehudi Menuhin, Gidon Kremer and Mstislav Rostropovich. Although he spoke proudly of not being confined to working with one set group of musicians, saying "it would restrict me too much", he did in 1981 briefly form a trio with the veteran violinist Wolfgang Schneiderhan and the pianist Paul Badura-Skoda. He was also a regular partner of the pianist Lars Vogt. Lars Vogt recalled the cellist's fascination with history, literature and politics, as well as his kindness and sense of humour. When they gave a recital together on Lars Vogt's birthday in September 2003, and on the last note of the encore, Pergamenschikow suddenly began to improvise a cadenza, which turned into Happy Birthday! It was to be their last appearance together. Boris Pergamenschikow died of cancer on April 30, 2004 - at 55 he left us far, far too young. He was survived by his wife Tatiana, whom he married in 1973, and their violinist son Daniel.

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Boris Pergamenschikow was a sought-after soloist and teacher, as well as being one of the best-loved figures on the European chamber music scene. He was mentor to many of today's finest young players, while musical partners praised the profundity of his performances and his bigheartedness as a friend. A cellist of seemingly limitless talent, he tended to hide from the limelight. He even turned up in unusual locations or on unexpected recordings, with performances that invariably thrilled and challenged. He also gave numerous master-classes throughout Europe and Asia. Among his pupils were: Nicolas Altstaedt, Danjulo Ishizaka, Nina Kotova, Ditta Rohmann.

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Boris Pergamenschikow had a strong interest in contemporary music; his recording of Henri Dutilleux's *Tout Un Monde Lointain* won the Diapason d'Or, and, in June 2001, he gave the world premiere of Krzysztof Penderecki's *Concerto Grosso* for three cellos with Truls Mork, Han-Na Chang and the NHK Symphony Orchestra under Charles Dutoit in Japan. His last concert, in Warsaw in December 2003, was conducted by Penderecki.

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Pergamenschikow was also a very fine pianist. On one occasion he gave a concert in Germany with cellist colleague Heinrich Schiff in which each accompanied the other on the piano in the Johannes Brahms cello sonatas! It reminds me of the anecdote on Christopher Bunting plating both parts of the Brahms E minor sonata!

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He was also a marvellous mimic, using his deep Russian voice to imitate anyone from politicians to musicians! Unlike many musicians he was not highly strung, and could always see the funny side of any calamity. Yes, he sounds like a wonderful person.

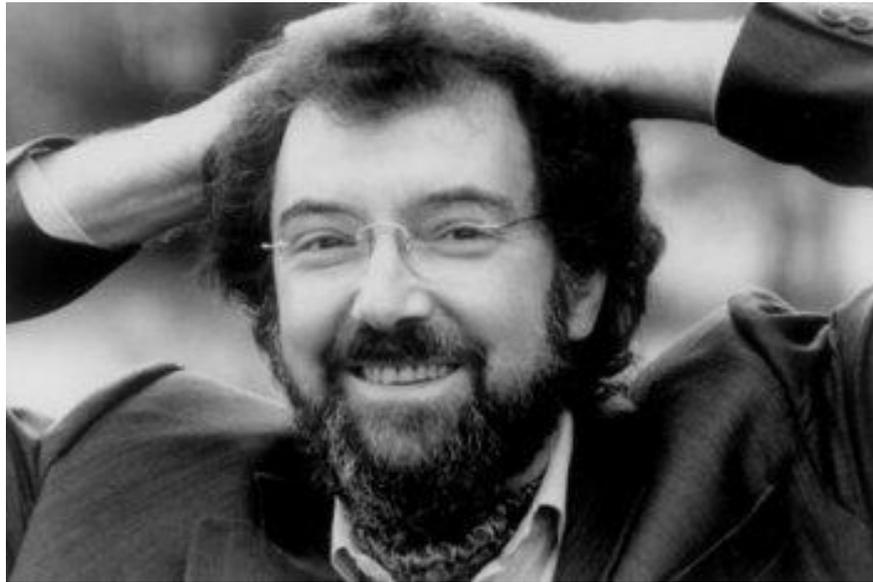
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Lastly, a quote from the artist himself relating to if it would be feasible to organize a festival similar to the Manchester cello festival for, say, violinists, he replied:

"The poor violinists don't have access to the lower registers. They always have to be soloists; even in string quartets, they take the most important roles. We are sometimes kings, sometimes peasants; we have to do everything between extremes - we have to learn to be more flexible."

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