

Cellists' Corner

Brief Career Details of Important Cellists

prepared by David Johnstone from public information

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SMALL FEATURE on MÁTYÁS GYÖRGY SEIBER

1905 - 1960

Hungary - Germany - Great Britain

Mátyás György Seiber was born in Budapest, but he is considered a British composer and teacher. The cello was his principal instrument before dedicating himself to composition - born into a musical family, he started to learn the cello at the age of ten, and from 1919 to 1924 studied at the Budapest Academy of Music with Adolf Shiffer (cello) and Kodály (composition).

From 1925 through to 1928, Seiber taught and lectured, he also played cello with a ship's orchestra. Whilst there he was exposed to, and developed an interest in, jazz. That was so important in his development, as from the late 1920s he taught in Frankfurt where his classes in jazz were the first of its kind in the country.

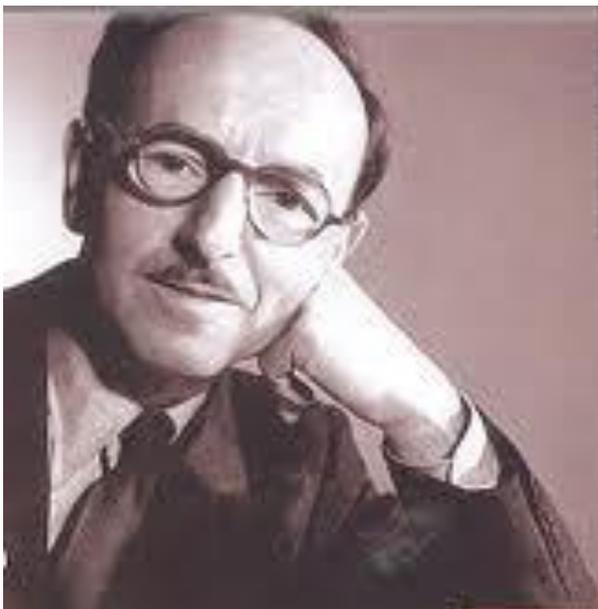
He left Germany in 1933 for Britain when the Nazi government closed the jazz department! In England he worked as a freelance writer and undertook various jobs including writing music for films. He almost immediately gained British citizenship, in 1935. In 1942 Michael Tippett offered him a teaching post at Morley College where during this decade he was a founder of the Society for New Music with Francis Chagrin, and the Dorian Singers.

He was a founding member of the Society for Promotion of New Music, actively promoting new music throughout his life. In 1956 he was awarded the inaugural Ivor Novello Award. He died in a car accident in 1960.

His music is eclectic in style, showing influences from plainchant and folk music, to jazz, and Bela Bartok and Arnold Schoenberg were also strong influences. He wrote in almost all types of instrumental music, including ballets and many, many film scores, but it is for his vocal music that he is best remembered.

Works of Seiber of special interest to cellists:

- ** Tre Pezzi for violoncello and orchestra (1956)
- ** Sarabande and Gigue for violoncello and piano (1922, revised 1941)
- ** Sonata da Camera for violin and violoncello (1925, revision for violin and piano published 1946)
- ** Phantasy for violoncello and piano (1941)
- ** Introduction and Allegro for clarinet, violoncello and piano
- ** Introduction and Allegro for violoncello and accordion
- ** 3 String Quartets (written in 1924, 1934-35 and in 1948-51)
- ** 'The Londonderry Air' arranged for string quartet, for solo violoncello and string quartet, and for two or three diatonic harmonicas (1955)
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