

# Cellists' Corner

## Brief Career Details of Important Cellists

*prepared by David Johnstone from public information*

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## SPECIAL FEATURE on LUDWIG HOELSCHER

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Birth: 23rd August 1907

Death: 8th May 1996

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Ludwig Hoelscher was a German cellist. He played internationally as a soloist, and was well known as a chamber musician, first playing from 1932 in Elly Ney's piano trio, then in the Strub Quartet and other formations. He was an important cellist of the Nazi era, playing in propaganda concerts and teaching in Berlin and Salzburg. After the World War, he taught at the Musikhochschule Stuttgart and played internationally. He played the world premieres of more than 50 compositions.

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He began studying cello at age five. He was to study cello in Cologne, Munich, with Julius Klengel in Leipzig and with Hugo Becker in Berlin. It was extremely rare for someone to study with both these German artists; they tended to have their own school of cellists who praised one and not the other! However, he completed his studies with Wilhelm Lamping. In 1930 he received the highest recognition for music students, and as a result Hoelscher made his official debut as a soloist in 1931 with noneless than the Berliner Philharmoniker conducted by Max Fiedler.

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His interesting chamber music career began after meeting the pianist Elly Ney, who founded the Elly Ney Piano Trio in 1932 with him and violinist Wilhelm Stross. The trio began touring all over Europe in England, Scotland, Netherlands, Finland, Switzerland, Spain, and Sweden. From 1934 to 1938, Hoelscher was also the cellist of the Strub Quartet in Berlin; however this quartet collapsed in 1939 upon member Trampler's emigration to United States. In 1936 he played with the Berliner Philharmoniker und Wilhelm Furtwängler, resulting in a lifetime friendship between the two.

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Hoelscher is generally recognized as having been an ardent Nazi, hence his enthusiastic cooperation. No other Reich cellist, and perhaps few artists at all, promoted the Nazi cause with such dedication. Maybe he was persuaded to do so by his chamber music pianist Elly Ney, or perhaps I am plain guessing? She held really close Nazi affiliations, and was even occasionally described as "Hitler's pianist" despite having met Hitler only once in person (I believe). Anyway, on 1st May 1937, Hoelscher became a member of the National Socialist German Workers' Party. Since 1st April 1937, the 29-year-old was a professor at the Berlin University of the Arts. On 29th May 1938, he was soloist in the final concert of the first Reichsmusiktage in Düsseldorf, where the Nazi propaganda exhibition on degenerate music was also shown. Furthermore, Hoelscher had completed some radio recording sessions, which would have also been used for propaganda purposes. He played for the "Lichtfest" in front of the staff of four industrial companies.

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From 1938 Hoelscher also worked as professor at the Mozarteum in Salzburg. He played the Brahms Double concerto with the violinist Max Strub and the Vienna Symphony under Karl Böhm in Vienna on 13 December 1938. For the purpose of "cultural propaganda", he performed in 1942 in occupied Belgium at travelling concerts for the Wehrmacht in Antwerp, Ghent, Mechelen, Leuven, Lier and St. Niklaas. These concerts were repeated in 1943, with additional performances in Bucharest, Lemberg, Lublin and Warsaw. Only a few months before the end of the war, on 2nd December 1944, he performed in Krakow with the Philharmonie des Generalgouvernements, an orchestra of Polish players founded by Hans Frank for propaganda purposes. Frank noted in his diary: "Krakow concert with Prof. Hoelscher". This concert, conducted by Hans Swarowsky, featured the premiere of Pfitzner's Krakauer Begrüßung, dedicated to Hans Frank. He spent the last days at the end of World War II at his house in Tutzing, Bavaria.

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He was temporarily prohibited from performing publicly by the Allied Military Governments after the war, as was the situation for most of the German artists who had remained active during the Third Reich. But by early February 1946, he was indeed starting to play publicly again. Despite membership in various Nazi organisations, Hoelscher was rather lucky on that he could continue his career after the Second World War without any lasting damage. In 1947 he co-founded the Bach Week in Ansbach (Germany), a festival of concerts featuring the music of Johann Sebastian Bach.

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From 1954 to 1972, he was a professor at the Musikhochschule Stuttgart. Numerous concert tours still took him around the world as a performer. He was the teacher of later great German cellists Eberhard Finke (Principal cello Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra) and Peter Buck (cellist of the Melos Quartet). Not surprisingly he became a jury member of international music competitions, a member of the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts and an honorary member of many music societies.

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Despite the taints of being close to the Nazi regime, he did try to generously promote the new cello repertoire, and in this respect may have been almost the most worthy German cellist until Siegfried Palm came onto the scene. He premiered over 50 works, including compositions by Wolfgang Fortner (Cello Sonata), Hans Werner Henze ('Ode to the West Wind'), Ernst Krenek (with the dedication), Pfitzner (Cello Concerto No.3, Op.52, 1943), Günter Bialas, Harald Genzmer (with the dedication), Martin Karl Hasse, Karl Höller (Cello Concerto No.1 with Furtwangler/Berlin Phil.), Peter Jona Korn, Casimir von Pászthory, Joseph Rheinberger, Heinrich Sutermeister (Cello Concerto) and Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari. He also played the German premieres of works by Paul Hindemith. Theodor Hausmann dedicated his 1935 cello sonata, Op. 30, to Hoelscher and performed it with him. On top of all this, he was also dedicated works by the following composers: David, Rapf, Reuter, Trapp and Zilcher. He made numerous recordings, some of which have also been re-released as CDs.

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Hoelscher died in Tutzing at the age of 88, after an incredibly full career. Indeed, as an anecdote, his son Andreas once said:

*"You know, my father gave 250 concerts in the year. As a father I could hardly see him. He was actually only at home for two weeks in August and at Christmas." !!*

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If you have some money to spend here is a reasonably-priced 10-CD set of all of Ludwig Hoelscher's Telefunken recordings.

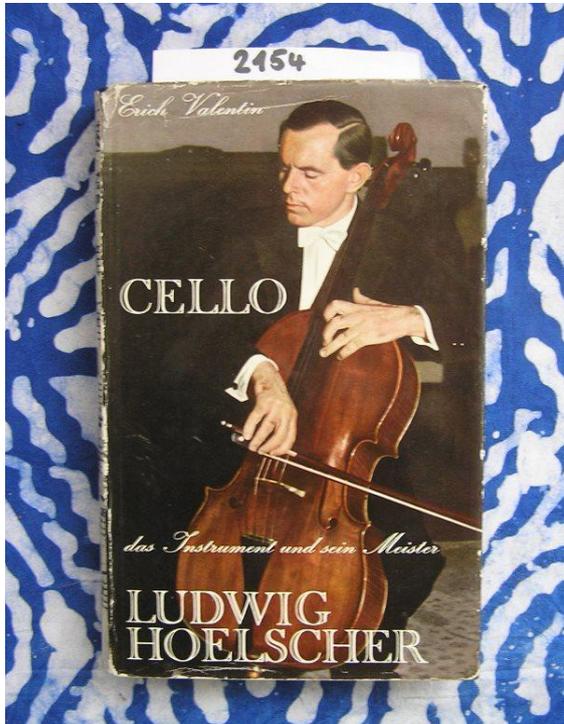
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If you would like to get an immediate taste then here is him and Elly performing Beethoven - Cello Sonata No.3 in A major - a great performance by both:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1YUsKAui4A>

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