

Steven Isserlis

Violoncello

Acclaimed worldwide for his profound musicianship and technical mastery, British cellist Steven Isserlis enjoys a unique and distinguished career as a soloist, chamber musician, educator, author and broadcaster.

As a concerto **soloist**, he appears regularly with the leading orchestras, including the Berlin Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra Washington, London Philharmonic and Zurich Tonhalle orchestras. He gives recitals every season in major musical centres and plays with many of the world's foremost chamber orchestras, including the Australian, Norwegian, Scottish, Munich, Potsdam, Zurich, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen and Mahler Chamber Orchestra, as well as period-instrument ensembles, such as the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra. He also directs chamber orchestras from the cello in classical programmes.

As a **chamber musician**, he has curated series for many famous festivals and venues, including the Wigmore Hall, the *92nd St Y* in New York, and the Salzburg Festival. These specially devised programmes have included *In the Shadow of War*; explorations of Czech music; the teacher-pupil line of Saint-Saëns, Fauré and Ravel; the affinity of the cello and the human voice; varied aspects of Robert Schumann's life and music; and the music of Sergei Taneyev (teacher of Steven's grandfather Julius Isserlis) and his students. For these concerts, Steven is joined by a regular group of friends, such as Joshua Bell, Isabelle Faust, Pamela Frank, and Janine Jansen, Tabea Zimmermann, and pianists Jeremy Denk, Stephen Hough, Alexander Melnikov, Olli Mustonen, Connie Shih, and Dénes Várjon.

Recent and upcoming highlights include performances with the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra; the premiere of Thomas Adès's *Lieux retrouvés*, conducted by the composer, in Lucerne, Amsterdam, at the BBC Proms, and with the Los Angeles Philharmonic; Prokofiev's Concerto Op. 58 with the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Vladimir Jurowski in London and Dresden; Haydn's C major Concerto with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment under Adam Fischer; and Schumann's Cello Concerto with the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie under Paavo Järvi, and with the Radio Symphony Orchestra Leipzig under Kristjan Järvi.

He also takes a strong interest in **authentic performance**. This season's projects include a recording of the Chopin Cello Sonata and other works with Dénes Várjon, using one of Chopin's own pianos; and a recital of Russian sonatas with Olli Mustonen. Recent seasons have featured a special performance with Sir András Schiff at the Beethovenhaus in Bonn, using Beethoven's own cello; and performances of Beethoven's complete music for cello and piano with Robert Levin, using original or replica fortepianos from the early nineteenth century. With harpsichordist Richard Egarr, he has performed and recorded the viola da gamba sonatas of J.S. Bach as well as sonatas by Handel and Scarlatti.

He is also a keen exponent of **contemporary music** and has premiered many new works including John Tavener's *The Protecting Veil*, Thomas Adès' *Lieux retrouvés*, Stephen Hough's *Sonata for Cello and Piano, Left Hand (Les Adieux)*, Wolfgang Rihm's *Concerto in One Movement*, David Matthews' *Concerto in Azzurro*, and *For Steven and Hilary's Jig* by György Kurtág. In 2016, he gave the UK premiere of Olli Mustonen's *Frei, aber einsam* for solo cello.

Writing and playing for children is another major enthusiasm. He has written the text for three musical stories for children – *Little Red Violin*, *Goldiepegs and the Three Cellos*, and *Cinderella* – with music by Oscar-winning composer Anne Dudley (Universal Edition). Steven Isserlis' books for children about the lives of the great composers – *Why Beethoven Threw the Stew* and its sequel, *Why Handel Waggled his Wig* – have been translated into multiple languages. His latest book, a commentary on Schumann's famous *Advice for Young Musicians*, was published by Faber and Faber in September 2016. He has also given many concerts for children, for several years presenting a regular series at the *92nd Street Y* in New York.

As an **educator**, Steven Isserlis gives frequent master classes all around the world, as in the Kronberg Academy. Since 1997 he has been Artistic Director of the International Musicians' Seminar at Prussia Cove in Cornwall, where his fellow-professors include Sir András Schiff, Thomas Adès and Ferenc Rados.

As a **writer and broadcaster**, he contributes regularly to publications including *Gramophone*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Guardian*, and *The Strad* magazine. He makes regular appearances on BBC Radio on programmes including *Today*, *Soul Music*, and *Saturday Classics*. He has written and presented a documentary about the life of Robert Schumann, and most recently the documentary *Finding Harpo's Voice*, about his hero Harpo Marx.

His diverse interests are reflected in an extensive and award-winning **discography**. His recording of the complete Solo Cello Suites by J.S. Bach met with the highest critical acclaim and was Gramophone's *Instrumental Album of the Year* and *Critics' Choice* at the Classic BRIT Awards. Other recent releases include the Elgar and Walton concertos, alongside works by Gustav and Imogen Holst, with the Philharmonia Orchestra and Paavo Järvi; Prokofiev and Shostakovich concertos with the Frankfurt Radio Symphony, also under Paavo Järvi; Dvořák's Cello Concertos with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra and Daniel Harding; the complete recording of Beethoven's works for cello and piano together with Robert Levin (nominated for the *Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik*); recital discs with Richard Egarr, Stephen Hough, Thomas Adès, and with Olli Mustonen; a Brahms album with Joshua Bell and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, and – as director and soloist – concertos by Haydn and C.P.E. Bach, with the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen. The CD *The cello in wartime* was released in 2017. This First World War-inspired disc with Connie Shih includes works performed on a travel cello – now known as the *Trench Cello* – played in the trenches by WWI soldier Harold Triggs.

The recipient of many **awards**, Steven Isserlis' honours include a CBE in recognition of his services to music, the Schumann Prize of the City of Zwickau, the Piatigorsky Prize in the USA, the Glashütte Original Music Festival Award in Dresden, the Wigmore Hall Gold Medal, and the Walter Willson Cobbett Medal for Services to Chamber Music. He is also one of only two living cellists featured in Gramophone's Hall of Fame.

He gives most of his concerts on the *Marquis de Corberon (Nelsova)* Stradivarius of 1726, kindly loaned to him by the Royal Academy of Music.

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