



		Concerto for cello and orchestra in E minor, op.85 mi mineur · e-Moll	
1	-	Adagio — Moderato	7.48
2 3	11	Lento — Allegro molto	4.26
3	Ш	Adagio	5.08
4	IV	Allegro — Moderato — Allegro, ma non troppo —	11.55
		Poco più lento — Adagio	
		ELLIOTT CARTER b.1908	
		Cello Concerto	
5	1	Drammatico —	1.40
6	II	Allegro appassionato —	2.43
5 6 7 8	Ш	Giocoso —	3.11
8	IV	Lento —	3.40
9	V	Maestoso —	3.04
10	VI	Tranquillo —	4.11
11	VII	Allegro fantastico	3.48
		Bonus	
		MAX BRUCH 1838–1920	
12		Kol Nidrei, op.47	10.49
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		ALISA WEILERSTEIN cello	
		Staatskapelle Berlin	
		DANIEL BARENBOIM	
		DDD	

EDWARD ELGAR 1857–1934

ALISA WEILERSTEIN, ELGAR AND CARTER

Elgar: Cello Concerto

When Alisa Weilerstein was asked to play the Elgar Cello Concerto to Daniel Barenboim in his studio at Carnegie Hall, it was the daunting culmination of a lifetime's relationship with the work. "We ran through it without stopping," she says, "and then he asked me if I would like to play it with him in Berlin." It took her a while to get the "yes" out, and before she knew it she had walked the length of Central Park, cello in hand, without quite knowing how she got there. "I first heard Elgar's cello concerto when I was about seven or eight, and I was drawn to it instantly, haunted by it. At one time I listened to Jacqueline du Pré's recording almost as a daily ritual. She became my childhood heroine and, in sixth grade, I wrote a research paper on her. But when I was twelve and started working seriously on the piece. I knew I had to put her recordings aside. Her interpretation was so convincing, so powerful, I had to force myself to find my own way."

And find her own way she did; making her debut with The Cleveland Orchestra at only thirteen, playing Carnegie Hall at fifteen and graduating from Columbia University with a degree in Russian History in 2004. The daughter of Donald Weilerstein, founding violinist of the Cleveland Quartet, and the pianist Vivian Hornik Weilerstein,

Alisa has shown wisdom and prudence in developing her formidable gift. She has won myriad prizes and awards, including the MacArthur Foundation Fellowship in 2011. Her collaboration on the Elgar with Barenboim and both the Berlin Philharmonic and Berlin Staatskapelle has proved a turning point in her career, confirming her place on the world stage.

Returning to that key meeting with Barenboim in the studio in Carnegie Hall in 2009, Alisa recalls how they instantly began working on the elegiac first movement with forensic intensity: "He sat at the piano and began to go through each note — it was fantastic, there was so much detail, so much to unpack, connections to be made. He even made suggestions for expressive fingerings. He has this ability to give so many ideas, to make links between themes, to find flow, organic cohesion so that you have the whole work of art in your mind the whole time; I knew this piece intimately, yet he made everything clearer to me."

The concerto, written in the aftermath of the First World War in 1919, has become a centrepiece in the cellist's repertoire. Despite its under-rehearsed premiere with Felix Salmond and the LSO, the composer immediately knew its value, describing it as: "a real, large work and I think good and alive". Ernest Newman of the Observer also

recognised its understated power, touching on "that pregnant simplicity that has come upon Elgar's work in the last couple of years — but with a profound wisdom and beauty underlying its simplicity."

Sombre chords in E minor open the Adagio, before violas hand a winding lament on to the soloist, culminating in the dramatic scale rising to the instrument's highest E. The clarinet introduces a lilting melody in 12/8, which the soloist expands into rhetorical and sensuous gestures. A pizzicato section marks a change of tone to charged anticipation, and a short solo cadenza bursts into the skittering moto perpetuo Allegro molto in G major. interspersed with expressive cadences. The sixty bars of the song-like Adagio constitute the emotional heart of the work, at once ethereal and viscerally confessional. The finale is the most intensively developed movement, recalling material from the concerto's opening in an ardent declamation followed by a fierce rondo in which orchestra and soloist are pitted against each other. Moments of scherzo-like airiness are replaced by darker resonances from the Adagio and then, as Weilerstein comments, time seems to stand still: "When the Adagio theme returns it's like a single tear drop, a palpable expression of sadness like no other." This devastating reverie is broken by the return of the work's opening chords and a fervent coda from the soloist leading

to a furious finish.

Says Weilerstein of the concerto, "I think of it as an intensely personal work; an intimate, tragic farewell to an era, to his own composing life. It may begin with an apparently public face, with its grand nobilmente chords, but it truly comes from one man's heart. And when those chords return in the final movement, there is no nobilmente marked again. The sound now is vulnerable, there's a tragic personal history behind them."

Elliott Carter: Cello Concerto (2001)

Elliott Carter provided the following note for his concerto (2001): "My Cello Concerto is introduced by the soloist alone, playing a frequently interrupted cantilena that presents ideas to be expanded into movements. These movements are connected episodes that often refer to the final Allegro fantastico. In this score, I have tried to find meaningful, personal ways of revealing the cello's vast array of wonderful possibilities."

Weilerstein was delighted to pair the Elgar with Carter's concerto, which she has played and discussed with the vivacious one hundred and four-year-old composer: "It's an amazingly compact work, full of different characters. While the surface might seem cerebral, when you get under its skin it's extremely dramatic, rhythmically complex, with rapid gear changes. The

orchestration is so spare, so clever, it almost feels like a one-on-one conversation. Carter is a composer who really likes performers, and is excited by the instrument's potential. He's never austere or relentless — I always sense a twinkle there."

Structurally, the work falls into seven clearly characterised, linked sections. The explosive Drammatico opening is, Weilerstein says, "a road map of everything that's to come in the concerto". The cello then launches into a bravado Allegro appassionato accompanied by swirling strings, horns and lower woodwinds. She describes the character as defiant: "one senses great energy in Carter, heated debate, but never anger." Eruptive percussion gestures spark off the witty, syncopated Giocoso section — "Carter remarked to me, 'I tried to be humorous' in his typically self-deprecating way. It's delightful and huge fun to play." This turns into a slow, meditative Lento movement, in which the cello sings through exquisitely sensitised textures of rustling strings and chattering woodwinds. "The cello's expressive, lyric side is allowed to shine here", says Weilerstein, and comments that the ensuing Maestoso, angular and

declamatory, "takes huge strength, and is highly concentrated." This section melts into a magical Tranquillo in which the cello line floats over sub-aqueous contrabass clarinet tones interspersed by strange "drops", inspired, indeed, by water: "Carter recalled that he had been sitting in a Japanese garden with his wife Helen, where everything was very still but for these huge water drops that were falling around them."

We are shocked out of this dream-like atmosphere into a scampering, scherzo-like Allegro fantastico, culminating in a sequence of vast, searing *tutti* chords. When the orchestra falls away, we hear the cello in a final lone cadenza, ending in an abruptly curtailed cascade of pizzicato. Says Weilerstein: "I feel like an actor, who has had their big, dramatic moment and then walks off stage still speaking, breaking off mid-sentence."

Weilerstein includes another piece in this programme that she has cherished since her youth, the eloquent *Kol Nidrei* (1881) by Max Bruch, inspired by the rhapsodic voice of a *hazzan*, chanting the Aramaic Kol Nidre (All Vows) prayer recited on Yom Kippur.

Alisa Weilerstein plays on a cello made by William Forster in 1790.

Helen Wallace

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Recording producers: Andrew Keener (Elgar); Friedemann Engelbrecht (Carter; Bruch)

Recording engineer: Mike Hatch (Floating Earth Limited)

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Photo of Daniel Barenboim on booklet back: Felix Broede/DG

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