

A photograph of a man with dark, curly hair, wearing a blue and white striped shirt, playing a cello. He is looking upwards and to the left. The background is a dark, textured wall with a window on the right showing a view of a building.

# REINECKE: Cello Concerto

and works by  
SCHUMANN • BLOCH  
TAVENER • GOLIJOV

MICHAEL SAMIS, cello  
Gateway Chamber Orchestra  
Gregory Wolynech, conductor  
Eric Willie, marimba



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# MICHAEL SAMIS

## REINECKE: Cello Concerto

and works by  
SCHUMANN • BLOCH • TAVENER • GOLIJOV

**Carl Reinecke:** Concerto for cello and orchestra in D minor, Op. 82

Allegro moderato • Andante con moto • Allegro vivace

**Sir John Tavener**

Threnos, for cello solo

**Robert Schumann:** Adagio and Allegro for cello and orchestra, Op. 70 (orch. by Ernest Ansermet)

Adagio • Allegro

**Ernest Bloch:** Suite No. 1 for cello solo

Prelude • Allegro • Canzona • Allegro

**Oswaldo Golijov**

Mariel, for cello and marimba

Total Playing Time: 66:35



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DE 3446



# REINECKE: CELLO CONCERTO

and works by Schumann, Bloch, Tavener, Golijov

**Carl Reinecke:** Concerto for cello and orchestra in D minor, Op. 82 (27:17)

1. Allegro moderato (14:24)
2. Andante con moto (7:05)
3. Allegro vivace (5:45)

**Sir John Tavener**

4. Threnos, for cello solo (7:44)

**Robert Schumann:** Adagio and Allegro for cello and orchestra, Op. 70 (9:23)

(orch. by Ernest Ansermet)

5. Adagio (4:34)
6. Allegro (4:49)

**Ernest Bloch:** Suite No. 1 for cello solo (10:49)

7. Prelude (2:34)
8. Allegro (2:30)
9. Canzona (2:55)
10. Allegro (2:50)

**Oswaldo Golijov**

11. Mariel, for cello and marimba (10:58)

Total Playing Time: 66:35

**Michael Samis**, cello

Eric Willie, marimba (tr. 11)

James Button, oboe (tr. 5 & 6)

Gateway Chamber Orchestra

Gregory Woly nec, conductor



**With love and gratitude, I would like to dedicate this recording to my devoted parents, Sylvia and Charles Samis. This performance of Golijov's *Mariel* is further dedicated to the memory of my departed friend, Patrick Coleman Saunders.**

Sometimes, great music is overlooked. The forgotten cello concerto by the gifted and prolific composer Carl Reinecke is a lost gem that richly deserves a place in the repertoire. With no recording currently available, few people have ever heard it. I hope to change that by making it the centerpiece of this, my debut solo album. Reinecke wrote music in the tradition of his early Romantic-era teachers, Mendelssohn and Schumann. I love to play music of this period, because of its singing melodies, profound expression, and power to communicate emotionally.

About a year ago, I discovered this neglected masterpiece, written in 1864. After playing the opening theme, I decided that I had to learn this piece. Its soaring melodies and brilliant virtuosity remind me of Mendelssohn's violin concerto – my favorite childhood work. Reinecke's music was overlooked because it was considered “out of fashion” in its day. Today I find it compelling and full of emotion – and I trust that modern listeners will

agree, as it speaks to the human condition and emotions that are common to us all, and bind us together across the ages.

This album's remaining works are also built around connections to the past, looking back to earlier music and cherished people for their inspiration. Schumann's lyricism was clearly a part of Reinecke's musical voice. This is the first-ever recording of Schumann's charming *Adagio and Allegro*, in a setting for cello and orchestra by the legendary conductor, Ernest Ansermet. Twentieth-century composer Ernest Bloch, during the final years of his life, harked back to the unaccompanied cello suites of J.S. Bach, after which he modeled three suites of his own. The first of them is offered here: I am moved by the power of its dark and somber language. For music of a more personal nature, I've turned to two of my favorite living composers. Both Osvaldo Golijov's *Mariel*, for cello and marimba, and John Tavener's *Threnos*, for solo cello, were written following the



deaths of their close friends, and reflect on their lives and memories.

I am delighted and deeply honored to share this wonderful music – both old and new – with you. May it open fresh musical doors to you, and give you the same kinds of pleasure that I have enjoyed in performing it.

— Michael Samis

**Carl Heinrich Reinecke** (1795-1883) is one of those Romantic era composers whose name should ring familiar with classical music fans, as does Schumann, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, and so many others – yet that is not the case. He was relegated to the music history books, alongside many other worthwhile composers whose works were suddenly deemed to be “out of fashion,” and simply fell by the wayside – despite the fact that he was a man of incredible talent and creativity. A prodigy, virtuoso performer, conductor and composer – all filled the bill for what should have been a name ranking high in our memories, concert halls, and performing repertoire.

His pedigree attests to this: He was born in Altona (a district of Hamburg, Germa-

ny), the son of a respected music teacher and author. Young Carl gave his first public piano performances at age 12, did early touring in Northern Europe, and performed for (and was befriended by) Mendelssohn, Liszt and the Schumanns. He taught Liszt’s daughter Cosima (later the wife of Richard Wagner), became Director of Music at the University of Breslau, was a faculty member at the Leipzig Conservatory, and even conducted the premier of Brahms’ *Deutsches Requiem* with the Gewandhaus Orchestra. His students in Leipzig included Grieg, Weingartner (of *Schwanda the Bagpiper* fame), Sullivan, Janacek, Albeniz, and Bruch. One of his personal missions there was to reintroduce works by the then “forgotten” composers Palestrina and Bach.

His compositions, the majority of which were written after he had retired from teaching and performing, include almost 300 known works. The only one still regularly performed is his *Sonata for Flute and Piano* “the Undine.” Other works, besides many other chamber pieces, include solo instrumental music; concertos for harp, violin, cello, and four for piano; three known symphonies (also a



“Children’s Symphony”) and symphonic overtures; operas and comic operettas; plus numerous songs and choral works. He composed well-known cadenzas for piano concertos by Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven. And at age 80, he became the oldest living pianist to make Welte-Mignon piano roll recordings.

The Op. 82 *Cello Concerto in D Minor* – heard here in its first-ever commercial recording – was completed in 1864 and dedicated to the virtuoso cellist and pedagogue Friedrich Grützmacher. In the *Allegro moderato*, the cello delivers the pensive initial theme in the opening bars, over a gently thrumming orchestral foundation that soon builds in both volume and dramatic intensity. A somewhat softer variant of the theme then emerges – again from the soloist – followed by a series of developmental passages that give the soloist many chances to shine, both technically and expressively. The basic themes are recapitulated about halfway through, leading after further elaboration to a cadenza that’s remarkable for its lyrical beauty, inventiveness and virtuosity (remember, Reinecke was a “cadenza specialist”), before the orches-

tra returns to propel the movement to its emphatic conclusion.

The central *Andante con moto*, right from the start, breathes an air of gentle reflection and melancholic yearning, led by the solo cello. Despite moments of restrained buildup, the prevailing mood – even with a few major-key shifts – persists for the most part, until the music fades into silence on a series of ever-softer rising arpeggios. The final *Allegro vivace* begins with a series of fateful, minor-hued chords before – almost surprisingly – the cello presents a jaunty, major-key theme of near-Mendelssohnian gaiety and verve. Again, the solo cello gets a good technical workout in its varied dialogue with the orchestra, as the work barrels to its happy and life-affirming finish.

**Sir John Kenneth Taverer** (1944 – 2013), a native of London, attended the Royal Academy of Music, studying with the distinguished Lennox Berkeley. He seems to have migrated from church to church, absorbing and rejecting religious dogma along the way – evolving from serving as organist in a Presbyterian Church through Roman Catholicism, be-



fore finally settling into Russian Orthodoxy in 1977. His music began to attract increasing worldwide attention after his *Song for Athene* was performed at Princess Diana's funeral.

The composer: "Some say they find truth and beauty in my music, and I accept that. I hazard a guess: maybe they are attracted by the "Tradition" which I have used. A Tradition with a capital 'T,' which embraces Saint Sophia in Constantinople as well as Chartres ... of which the West seems to have lost all sense ... We are now at the end of a cycle, in a time where anything goes, artistically speaking. Maybe that's what I try to work on. Tradition. Perhaps that is the chord I strike in people's hearts. I use the tone systems of the Byzantine era; I use sacred geometry. If I write a piece about, say, the Holy Spirit, the notes wouldn't come out of nowhere. I am only a vessel through which God speaks.

"*Threnos* was composed for Steven Isserlis, who gave the first performance on August 24, 1991 ... at that year's Edinburgh Festival. The title *Threnos* [threnody] has both liturgical and folk significance in Greece – the Threnos of the Mother

of God sung at the Epitaphios on Good Friday and the Threnos of mourning that is chanted over the dead body in the house of a close friend. I wrote my short *Threnos* for solo cello in memory of my dear friend Dr. Costas Marangopoulos."

Accordingly, this unspeakably sad piece personifies the Holy Mother's grief (and ours) at Christ's entombment, unfolding with an aura of intense personal mourning as well as the feel of sacred ritual. The relentlessly slow and desolate melodic flow is periodically embellished by brief double-stop passages, mostly in thirds. While the bulk of the piece lies within the cello's middle register, a brief evocation of instrumental "keening" emerges with a shift to the upper reaches of its range. A sudden drop into its bottom end concludes the piece with a particularly strong sense of devastation, with the final downward progression seeming to sink into a bottomless abyss of gloom and despair.

It is no secret what an odd one **Robert Schumann** (1810 - 1856) could be. After moving into his piano teacher's home, he almost immediately fell in love with the teacher's daughter, Clara: reportedly



a better pianist than he was. And then there was his ill-fated effort to correct a “design flaw” in human hands (certain ligaments for two fingers are shared) by the use of a device called the *chiroplast* – but all it did was to damage his hands, dashing his hopes for a performing career. He thus began to concentrate on composing, often for piano alone – and even more often with opposing themes, since he believed he housed two distinct personalities. Finally, there was his fateful, late-in-life mental illness (ostensibly caused by syphilis) that led to his suicide attempt and confinement in the asylum where he died.

It was indeed after meeting Clara that he began to branch out and compose for other instrumental genres. Many of these works can actually sound as if they were written for the piano, but with other instruments possibly in mind. His opus 70 *Adagio and Allegro* was originally composed for horn and piano. But Robert knew that if it were also available for other instrument combinations, it could bring in more income – so he dutifully arranged it for piano with cello or viola. The 1849 work was edited for publication by Clara,

and came out the same year as his *Konzertstück* for Four Horns and Orchestra, *Introduction and Allegro Appassionato* for Piano and Orchestra, Three Romances for oboe and piano, and the Five *Stücke im Volkston* for piano and cello.

Swiss conductor Ernest Ansermet was quite a champion of Schumann’s compositions; witness his long list of DECCA recordings from the 1950s and 60s. Besides his orchestral transcriptions of Schumann’s piano works – including the massive *Carnaval* – he orchestrated the piano part for the *Adagio and Allegro* in 1943.

Schumann’s “dual personalities” are reflected in the two movements of this charming piece, thanks to the pronounced “mood swing” between them. The lovely *Adagio* unfolds like an atmospheric nocturne, breathing an air of serene contentment from start to finish – with a brief central episode that approaches ecstasy. Tender exchanges with sweet-sounding woodwinds (especially the oboe) abound, as the cello “sings” its way through music that’s sure to bring a dreamy smile to your face. The ensuing *Allegro* bursts straight into a lively



romp, full of Schumann's unique brand of cheerful abandon. Fleeting moments of near-tension and doubt – and a brief (and pensive) central slow section – fail to dampen the prevailing jolly mood for long. Listen for the “laughing cello,” as it repeatedly shrugs off all hints of doubt and hesitation to end the piece in the same high spirits with which it began.

Swiss-born **Ernest Bloch** (1880 – 1959) began his musical training at age nine on the violin. Eugène Ysaÿe, his teacher at the Brussels Conservatory, helped him to gain enough confidence and virtuosic skill to begin traveling around Europe. From Germany through Paris to Geneva, he then came to the US, becoming an American citizen in 1924. He was the first teacher of composition at the Mannes College in New York, was appointed as the first director of the Cleveland Institute of Music, and finally moved to San Francisco to become director of that city's Conservatory of Music.

Bloch's compositions include the opera *Macbeth* (often called the best operatic adaption of all of Shakespeare's plays); music for orchestra, chamber ensembles,

organ and piano; and works in the concerto genre. Cellist Pablo Casals called Bloch “the best composer of our times.” Much of his heartfelt music is from 1912 – 1916, known as his “Jewish Period.” Works such as *Schelomo* are seemingly derived from the sounds of a Jewish Synagogue's cantor. As he commented of his Jewish-themed works, “I do not propose or desire to attempt a reconstruction of the music of the Jews ... it is rather the Hebrew spirit that interests me.”

The three suites for unaccompanied cello were composed near the end of his life, from 1955 – 1957; the first two were dedicated to Canadian cellist Zara Nelsova (of whom he said, “Zara Nelsova *is* my music.”): she performed the first of them at her debut solo recital in New York. Having spent the mid-1920s revisiting the works of Bach and Palestrina, Bloch obviously used his love of that music as a basis for these three profound and often abstract suites. The *Suite #1* for Solo Cello (1956) is the best known and most accessible of the three. In it, Bloch's debt to Bach is tempered by his romantic streak as well as his modernistic impulses.



The opening *Prelude* movement, though rather lyrical, is relentlessly solemn throughout. The piece is memorable for its recurring melodic fragments over a foundation of low “pedal points” – creating, like Bach did, a sense of “implied counterpoint.” The lively, yet still-sober *Allegro* frames a slower central episode of high-end “keening” between powerfully manic outer sections. The following *Canzona* – the most songful of the lot – has the faint flavors of a Jewish lament, among other ancient voices. The most dancelike of the set, the intermittently brusque final *Allegro* swaggers its way – with a vaguely Celtic-sounding melodic line – through its energetic course.

The son of eastern-European immigrant parents (a physician father and piano-teaching mother), **Oswaldo Golijov** (b. 1960) is a native of La Plata, Argentina. As he described himself, “I am simply an extension of what I heard at home: the classics, the Russians, tango, Jewish music.” After moving to Israel in 1983, he then came to the United States three years later, earning his Ph. D. at the University of Pennsylvania, studying musical composition with George Crumb. He was also a

Fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center. Within a few years, he had begun musical relationships with American soprano Dawn Upshaw, and with two prominent string quartets: the Kronos and St. Lawrence. He won a MacArthur Fellowship, leading him to compose more and more works on commission, including a cello concerto for Yo-Yo Ma. He also collaborated with cellist Matt Haimovitz, the Silk Road Ensemble, and the symphonies in Chicago, Atlanta, and Boston. Further kudos came with his appointment as Composer-in-Residence at Spoleto USA, the Mostly Mozart Festival, Ravinia, and in European musical capitals. With over 20 film scores to his credit, he even worked with Francis Ford Coppola, composing soundtrack music for 2007’s *Youth Without Youth* and 2009’s *Tetro*. As *Chicago Tribune* critic John von Rhein put it, Golijov is “The poster child for all that’s exciting and accessible in today’s new classical music.”

Premiered in New York’s Merkin Hall in 1999, *Mariel* – heard here in its arrangement for solo cello and marimba – was commissioned by Meet the Composer. Says Golijov: “I wrote this piece in



memory of my friend Mariel Stubrin. I attempted to capture that short instant before grief, in which one learns of the sudden death of a friend who was full of life: a single moment frozen forever in one's memory, and which reverberates through the piece, among the waves and echoes of the Brazilian music that Mariel loved. The work was written for and premiered by Maya Beiser and Steve Schick."

The marimba – using its sole "sustain" mode of subtly repeated mallet-strokes – lays down a smoothly surreal (and somewhat spooky) initial foundational "bed" of notes, in almost minimalist fashion. The cello presently joins in, with a somber threnody that seems to breathe a sad aura of unprocessed mourning. The marimba seems – almost hesitantly – to join the ensuing melodic and harmonic dialogue here and there, except for a central passage where the cello fades into soft "droning" mode as the marimba briefly takes over the melody. Otherwise, the cello bears the main thematic weight, delivering tunes that the seasoned ear will recognize as distinctly Hispanic (specifically Brazilian) in nature – though, in most cases, much more slowly than we

are accustomed to hearing them. As the last notes fade into silence, the listener is left in an unsettled trance – with nowhere left to go, save for full-blown grieving as the final reality of loss sets in.

– Geoffrey S. Lapin (with musical commentary by Lindsay Koob)

### **Michael Samis, cello**

(bio by Holly Hickman)

Recognized for his "shining and expressive" playing (*The Tennessean*), "confidence, conviction and precision" (*ArtsNash*), and "haunting" tone (*The Cincinnati Post*), **Michael Samis** is an accomplished solo, chamber and orchestral cellist. In 2013, he gave what was likely the U.S. premiere of Carl Reinecke's Romantic-era *Cello Concerto* with the Gateway Chamber Orchestra, which set the stage for this debut solo album.

Samis performed Dvořák's *Cello Concerto* with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra at age 17. Other solo performances have included Haydn's *Cello Concerto in C Major* with the Nashville Philharmonic Orchestra and Elgar's *Cello Concerto* with



the Bryan Symphony Orchestra. He has performed in numerous music festivals around the world, including the Pacific Music Festival in Japan, where he sat Principal Cello under the baton of Michael Tilson-Thomas.

A member of the Nashville Symphony since 1999, Samis is Co-Principal Cellist of the GRAMMY®-nominated Gateway Chamber Orchestra, with whom he has recorded on Summit Records (*Chamber Symphonies*, released in 2012). He frequently performs on National Public Radio affiliate WPLN's *Live in Studio C* program, both as soloist and with chamber groups. He currently plays in studio recording sessions with the Nashville Opera Orchestra, and also performs improvisatory cello with bands. In addition to this solo CD, he recently performed on *Stopping By*, a Delos CD recorded with tenor Kyle Bielfield and pianist Lachlan Glen. Samis was awarded a 2013 Tennessee Arts Commission Individual Artist Fellowship in Music for Solo Instrumental Performance.

Samis performed extensively as cellist with the Alexis Piano Trio from 1992-



**Michael Samis**



2001. He has given solo recitals at the Blair School of Music (Vanderbilt University), Middle Tennessee State University and the Taft Museum of Art Chamber Music Series in Cincinnati.

Other career highlights include performing as Principal Cellist under Helmuth Rilling, at Carnegie Hall with the New York String Orchestra, and at the Sarasota and Kent/Blossom chamber music festivals. He graduated from the Cleveland Institute of Music in 1999 with the Ellis A. Feiman Award in Cello. In Cleveland, Samis studied with the Cleveland Orchestra's longtime Principal Cellist, Stephen Geber. He has also studied with Desmond Hoebig, Jerry Grossman (Principal Cellist, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra) and Geraldine Sutyak.

Michael Samis has served as Adjunct Professor of Cello at Middle Tennessee State University. A strong supporter of music education and advocacy, he designed an educational program for string quartet, which he and his colleagues presented in schools as part of the Nashville Symphony's "Ensembles in the Schools" initiative. He believes in the healing power of music

and volunteers by playing cello in group psychotherapy settings, helping people who struggle with mental illness and addiction. He plays an Italian cello made in Naples circa 1850.

[www.michaelsamis.com](http://www.michaelsamis.com)

**Gregory Woly nec** is an emerging American conductor whose performances have been lauded as "world class," "deeply felt," and "big, bold, American." He is the music director and conductor of the Gateway Chamber Orchestra, which presents inspired programs to diverse audiences in the Tennessee communities of Nashville and Clarksville. Orchestral musicians have praised his expressivity, clear technique and polite persistence. His repertoire ranges from the Viennese classicists to the Expressionists to leading American composers. Such composers as Libby Larsen, Lee Hoiby, Anthony Plog and Jeffrey Wood have praised his interpretations of their works. Passionate about the development of new audiences for classical music, he has spearheaded an innovative educational outreach program and the creation of a multi-media children's series.



Wolynec was trained at the Crane School of Music and Michigan State University. He was a recipient of a Fulbright grant to Prague, which fostered a deep connection with Czech music. He currently serves as the Professor of Conducting at Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, Tenn., where he directs the Symphony Orchestra, Wind Ensemble and Opera Theatre productions.



Gregory Wolynec

The **Gateway Chamber Orchestra** is based in the Middle Tennessee region and brings together area symphony musicians, studio performers and college faculty. The GCO's unique programming philosophy balances established masterworks with overlooked treasures alongside works of today's leading American composers. The GCO's 'Wind Serenades' and 'Chamber Symphonies' recordings have been praised in *American Record Guide*, *Fanfare*, *The Instrumentalists* and numerous websites. Deeply committed to educational outreach, the ensemble has presented innovative programs for thousands of public school students and welcomed thousands more to multi-media children's programs.

[www.gatewaychamberorchestra.com](http://www.gatewaychamberorchestra.com)

Percussionist **Eric Willie** pursues a multifaceted career as a performer and teacher. He has performed in Carnegie Hall, on several broadcasts of Live in Studio C (on Nashville's NPR station), and as a performer and clinician at several Percussive Arts Society International Conventions.





**Eric Willie**

An advocate for promoting new music, he has premiered works from Christopher Adler, Greg Danner, Christopher Deane, Paul Lansky, Marc Mellits, John Psathas, Blake Tyson, Alejandro Vinao, Matt Walker, and James Wood.

As a chamber musician, he regularly performs with the Nief-Norf Project and the Eclectic Chamber Players. He has also

performed as a chamber musician at several Eastern Trombone Workshops, the World Saxophone Congress, the Florida Electroacoustic Music Festival, and the Music for All National Percussion Festival.

Eric holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of North Texas, a Master of Music degree from the University of Kentucky, and a BS in Music Education from Austin Peay State University.

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### **Acknowledgments**

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The artist offers further heartfelt thanks



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