

Eduard Lalo - Cello Concerto in D minor (1990)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Prelude*
2. *Intermezzo*
3. *Finale*

Yo Yo Ma – cello Orchestre National de France Lorin Maazel – conductor

For the many who know Edouard Lalo only as the composer of the warhorse *Symphonie espagnole* for violin and orchestra, it is surprising to learn that he is the author of over a half-dozen other vehicles for soloist and orchestra (and all kinds of other works, operatic, orchestra, chamber, and sacred, as well), including two other violin concertos and an absolutely unknown piano concerto. The only one of these other concerto-type works to have earned any kind of reputation at all is the Concerto for cello and orchestra in D minor composed in 1877, a favorite of student cellists that is nevertheless surprisingly and wonderfully colorful in a master's hands. Lalo was a better and more thoughtful composer than historians usually allow, and although the work sometimes veers toward the trite, the Cello Concerto is not short of charms.

Though a Frenchman, Lalo was of Spanish descent; Spanish idioms fill the three movements of the Cello Concerto, here subtly, there blatantly. The *Allegro maestoso* first movement is prefaced by a *Lento* introduction in which the cellist ponders the coming movement in recitative style -- there is no traditional orchestral exposition here. The body of the movement is built around three elements: a firmly chiseled tune first offered by the soloist, an unshakable descending accompaniment theme, and a gorgeous, *dolcissimo* second theme, during which the descending accompaniment theme takes on a new tenderness but does not dissolve. The second movement is an intermezzo that alternates between lyric *Andantino con moto* music and sprightly *Allegro presto* music. After a brief introduction (which temporarily moves into the unlikely realm of B flat minor and gives an advance copy of one of the upcoming themes), the last movement takes the shape of a robust rondo. ---Blair Johnstone, Rovi

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