# Robert Schumann - Cello Concerto (2011)

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## Robert Schumann - Cello Concerto (2011)



*1. Allegro. Nicht Zu Schnell  2. Adagio. Langsam                        3. Finale. Vivace. Sehr Lebhaft*    Johannes Moser - cello   Berliner Philharmoniker  Zubin Mehta - conductor  Recorded at the Berlin Philharmonie, 2 October 2011

Robert Schumann wrote no fewer than seven concertante works, among which only the Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 54 (1841) and the Cello Concerto in A minor, Op. 129 (1850) find regular representation on concert programs and recordings. The Cello Concerto, composed during the early days of Schumann's ultimately unhappy stay in Düsseldorf, has long been a favorite among performers, especially given the relative paucity of great nineteenth century concerti for that instrument.

Schumann considered calling the work a "Concert piece for cello with orchestral accompaniment"; indeed, the orchestral writing in the concerto is far more transparent and unobtrusive than is normally associated with Schumann's concert works. It is a little-known fact that the composer learned to play cello as a child, and that after damaging his right hand during the early 1830s he intended to return to the cello in an effort to better his understanding of chamber and orchestral music. Nevertheless, the unfortunate idea that the Cello Concerto is poorly written for the instrument persists even to the present. Such a notion may result in part from the work's lack of flashy virtuosity typically associated with instrumental concertos, a feature found in Schumann's Piano Concerto.

Four lean bars -- three of them quiet pizzicato chords, one outlining a pianistic accompaniment figure -- introduce the cello's broad opening theme. The passionate second theme, with its chromatic inflections and upward minor-seventh leaps, is almost archetypal in its use of the cello. A comparison of the concerto with both earlier and later cello concertos demonstrates Schumann's palpable influence on the way composers came to write for the instrument. The

development, more Classical in tone, ventures into stormier territory and utilizes a triplet motive. Encouraged by the horn, the cello attempts a recapitulation of the initial theme; the orchestra, however, rejects the soloist's choice of F sharp minor and recommences its agitated passagework. The recapitulation proper is stunning and unexpected; characteristically, Schumann makes very little change in the exposition material as it reappears. The coda is interrupted by a recitative for the soloist that prepares a modulation to F major for the second movement.

The second movement, marked Langsam, is essentially a tender song. The soloist's rich melody floats on a sea of gently pulsating pizzicato triplets, while the passionate double-stopped outburst in the middle of the movement is a golden moment in the cellist's repertory. A brief recollection of the first movement interrupts the flow; the solo line, growing ever more excited, paves the way into the finale. While the two contrasting themes of the last movement -- one rather bold, the other more intimate -- are attractive enough, the level of inspiration in the finale falls short of that in the first two movements, particularly in the development. More successful, however, is the accompanied cadenza that precedes the final coda. The substitution by some players of flashier cadenzas (written by less insightful cellists) for Schumann's more musically convincing one seems, happily, to be a thing of the past. --- Blair Johnston, Rovi

Praised for his rich, gorgeous tone and playing that can range from lovely and elegant, to vigorous with head-banging, rock star energy, German-Canadian cellist Johannes Moser has been hailed by Gramophone Magazine as "one of the finest among the astonishing gallery of young virtuoso cellists." --- imgartists.com

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