

## Four, three, two, one = The 18/19 season of the cellist Johannes Moser



In the **2018/19 season**, the German-Canadian cellist **Johannes Moser** has been booked altogether **four times** as “**artist in residence**” by well-known orchestras in Germany, England, Scotland and the USA. His chock-a-block concert schedule with performances on **three continents, two world premières, a European première** and, above all, **his début with the Vienna Philharmonic** – where he will play film music by and with the grand seigneur of the genre, John Williams, in person – bears witness to his exceptional energy, flexibility and mastery. At the same

time, a **new CD with two epoch-making cello concertos** of the 20th century is to be released shortly. And Johannes Moser, who was recently named “Interpreter of the Year” by the Deutsche Phono-Akademie, is also once more a committed mentor and leader of social music-education projects, this time in Berlin with so-called “**Pop-Up Concerts**” in social and medical institutions.

It is not just the cello-playing of this Munich-born musician that is breathtaking, but also the number of concerts he has lined up for 2018/2019. For four **world-class orchestras** have simultaneously appointed him as “**artist in residence**”, thus each ensuring themselves several performances with this artist: the British **Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra**, the **Royal Scottish National Orchestra**, the **Oregon Symphony** in the USA and in Germany the **Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin (RSB)** – here as “**artist in focus**”.

The first highlight of the season for Johannes Moser already comes on **3 and 4 November 2018 in Vienna**, where he will be accorded a double honour: at his **début with the Vienna Philharmonic** in the Musikverein, he will play the **suite for cello and orchestra from “Memories of a Geisha”**, conducted by the work’s now 86-year-old composer **John Williams** himself. This soundtrack received several prizes in 2005, including a Golden Globe, a BAFTA Award and a Grammy.

There are many good reasons why Johannes Moser is among the most in-demand cello virtuosos in the world today – but fundamentally just a single main one: **he lives the music, both old and new** (played in masterly fashion either on his Guarneri of 1694 and his electric cello), **authentically and without compromise**. When asked during an interview at the Grand Teton Music Festival in the USA whether he even had time to take breath in the course of his breathtaking performances, he answered, with a twinkle in his eye: “*Breathing is not an option!*”

Before then putting it more precisely: “*I put major emphasis on breathing with the music.*” The only way that a score can fully come to life, he says, is when the interpreter follows the very individual heartbeat of the respective work. Johannes Moser, whom the German music journal Fono Forum – and it is not alone – considers to be one “of the most spectacular cellists of this era”, has impressively demonstrated the validity of this approach in 18 CD productions to date. And the **new studio album** (Pentatone, **Release: 2 November 2018**) with two outstanding cello concertos by Witold **Lutosławski** and Henri **Dutilleux** from the year 1970, which he has recorded with the **Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin** under **Thomas Søndergård**, is a prime example: “The two concertos by these Polish and French composers are among the most influential, prominent and valuable pieces of the second half of the 20th century, and both works provide unusual artistic testimonies to each composer’s respective language. I fell in love with these works in my early twenties, have lived with them for many years and have performed them throughout my whole career.”

The cello concerto “**Tout un monde lointain ...**” by Henri **Dutilleux**, first performed in 1970, is a mystical painting in five movements, each of them preceded by a poem from Baudelaire’s cycle “Les fleurs du mal”. During the

approximately 30-minute-long composition, this French “Van Gogh of classical music” (Die Welt) lives up to that nickname by whisking the listener into a faraway, magical dream world of tone colours.

The **cello concerto** by the Pole Witold **Lutosławski**, for its part, traces the struggle of the individual against the overpowering masses vividly and with explosive precision – a “story of the Don Quixote of the 20th century” put to music, as the soprano Galina Vishnevskaya once described it. Johannes Moser will be presenting this latter work to the German concert public twice live: on the **4 and 5 June 2019** in the **Konzerthaus Dortmund** with the Dortmund Philharmoniker under Antony Hermus.

But first, in late November 2018, Johannes Moser will be heading for Britain, where, as part of his role as “artist in residence” with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, he will take on the solo part in **William Walton's cello concerto** on four evenings. The British composer and conductor himself thought that this piece, first performed in 1957, was the best of his three solo concertos. In it, the neo-Romantic (film-music) past of Walton can still be felt only in traces. For, as his wife Susana wrote in her memoirs: “He saw his concertos more as chamber music, as fairly intimate works [...]. And the instrument for which he wrote always became a real personality for him.” Concertgoers in Germany will be able to hear this work by Walton in Johannes Moser's interpretation on **7 April 2019 in the Berlin Philharmonie**, with the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin under the baton of Ivan Repušić.

In December 2018, Moser will give two performances of **Tchaikovsky's “Rococo Variations”** (in 2002 he received a special prize at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Competition for his interpretation of this work) with the **Royal Scottish National Orchestra** in Edinburgh and Glasgow. And at the end of April 2019, during his second phase there as “artist in residence”, Johannes Moser will demonstrate his enormous stylistic range by again presenting John William's suite for cello and orchestra from “Memoirs of a Geisha” in Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow in a film-music programme dedicated solely to the composer.

Despite all his success, Johannes Moser has remained a down-to-earth musician in the best sense of the expression, something to which his teacher David Geringas greatly contributed: “*He first taught me humility before every piece and before the audience,*” Moser says of his first lessons with Geringas at 18, “*and then opened many new doors for me.*” Moser was and is curious enough to go through new doors again and again, whether as interpreter (two world premières in 2019, see below), as teacher (he holds a professorship at the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln) or as a music educator and bridge-builder for social projects, which are very close to his heart. Such projects will be a main priority for him as “artist in focus” in Berlin: with his cellist colleagues from the radio symphony orchestra there, he will put on so-called “**Pop-Up Concerts**” from **27 to 29 May 2019**. They will visit **social and medical institutions in Berlin** in small chamber-music ensembles and present programmes lasting around 40 minutes, including audience discussions. And on 30 May, Moser will also be offering amateur cellists the opportunity to play in a concert under his direction on the **Tempelhofer Feld** in collaboration with the **Berlin NaBu** (German Association for Nature Conservation).

By then, two other highlights of Johannes Moser's 2018/19 season will already lie several weeks in the past: on 24 January, 2019, he will give **the world première of the new cello concerto by US composer Andrew Norman**, who won the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 2012, as soloist with the San Francisco Symphony, and on 22 February, 2019, he will again play the solo part in Valladolid, Spain, at the **European première** of this work with the **Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León** under Andrew Gourlay.

And on 1 May, 2019, the German cellist will already be presenting the next new work: for the **world première of Jonathan Leshnoff's Suite for Cello, Strings and Timpani**, he will take to the stage of Poole's Lighthouse with the **Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra** under the direction of the Warsaw-born conductor Marta Gardolińska – with follow-up performances of the work directly afterwards in Sidmouth and Bristol.

Johannes Moser stresses that there is “no externally imposed” limit on his artistic work. And a look at his 2018/19 season in particular shows once again how truly fortunate that is: with education projects in **sensitive social areas of everyday life**, as a **champion of new music** and, of course, as an **interpreter in the concert hall** or on **CD**, he profoundly enriches the international cultural scene in many different ways, and will once more leave many a listener in a state of breathless amazement.

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