

STÉPHANE TÉTREAU

Cello, Canada

For the Canadian musician, learning lesser-known repertoire has opened up unexpected career opportunities

When I was young – aged around ten or eleven – I entered a lot of music competitions, and these played an important part in helping me to focus and learn new repertoire at a very formative age. If the competition didn't go so well for me I would be reluctant to meet the jury afterwards, but I later learnt that to be open-minded and to consider what these very experienced people are saying can add to your store of knowledge and experience in surprising ways. When you are a student it is important to meet and play for as many people as possible and to be open to different schools of playing, because you may well find yourself at a masterclass and not be in agreement with what the teacher is saying – perhaps even be against what they are saying. But you can learn from people you are not in accordance with, and this can be really beneficial in shaping your own ideas about music.

The environment we are working in today as musicians is incredibly competitive. In Canada and the States there are many hugely talented young cellists, and needless to say in Europe too. But having met many of them at various auditions and masterclasses – for example the cellists at Gautier Capuçon's Classe d'Excellence in Paris earlier this year, and the Kronberg Academy masterclasses – I have found working with such fabulous musicians both humbling and inspiring. Far from being competitive, the atmosphere on these courses is accepting and respectful, with a real sense of camaraderie. Masterclass courses like these bring you into proximity with other players and teachers, which in turn create more opportunities.

An aspiring musician needs mentors to help guide and support them. I worked for the first time with conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin in 2012 in Quebec, and I will make my debut with him and the Philadelphia Orchestra this month. He's the most inspiring and generous person I've ever met – helping me by organising auditions for agents and concerts, and introducing me to important people in the industry. To work with him and receive his support has been wonderful. Another main figure in my life was my teacher Yuli Turovsky, who I studied with for ten years until his death in 2013.



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He opened up a lot of music for me – the standard concerto and chamber repertoire but also lesser-known concertos such as those by Milhaud, Honegger and Hindemith. Learning pieces that are not so frequently played, but that might be of interest to certain promoters, can create concert openings. Britten's *Cello Symphony* is a piece that has been very influential on the direction my career has taken. The work was first proposed to me by the Festival de Lanaudière in Quebec, which called up and asked if I could prepare it in three months. It has since proven to be a determining work in my career. >

ORCHESTRE MÉTROPOLITAIN / FRANÇOIS GOUPIL