



## CELLO

### The Amazing Truls Mørk

by David Carter

On November 14, cellist Truls Mørk and pianist Kathryn Stott wowed a packed house at St. Anthony Park United Church of Christ, as part of the Music in the Park series. Mørk, a kind, soft-spoken soul from Norway, is clearly one of the world's top cellists. Caught at the end of a concert tour, he and Ms. Stott arrived that morning from Detroit. They proceeded to play a huge program and Truls even had the grace to take 30 minutes after the post-concert reception to play 3 of David Folland's celli. Then dinner at a nearby restaurant, and a flight the next day back to Norway. The life of a virtuoso today is clearly an exhausting proposition.

Truls Mørk, born in 1961 in Norway, began his cello studies with his father, a professional cellist who according to Truls "played beautifully." Mørk often had to plead for a lesson; his father told him not to practice too much or he might end up a musician! By age 17 Mørk began studying with Frans Helmerson, and credits the environment he was in with his 5 fellow students for great progress. Since Helmerson toured frequently, lessons only happened every few weeks; between lessons Mørk and the others would stay at school from 7 in the morning until 11 at night practicing, discussing music, listening to records, etc. Later he worked with the Russian cellist Natalia Schakowskaya, a pupil of Rostropovich. Mørk credits her with helping him with sound, improving his technique and teaching him a very high standard of playing. From this exposure to the Russian school, Mørk also learned what he refers to as the "melodic vibrato." This use of often changing vibrato helps shape phrases. It also gives his sound a great depth and projection, as evidenced by the audience on November 14<sup>th</sup>.

Mørk was the first Scandinavian to be

a finalist and prize winner in the Moscow Tchaikovsky Competition in 1982, later was a prize winner in the Naumberg Competition in New York in 1986 and the Cassado Cello Competition in Florence in 1983. Since 1989, he has appeared with major orchestras around the world and toured in recital and chamber music settings. Numerous recordings include the Britten *Suites for Solo Cello*, which won a Grammy award. Recently he recorded the Bach *Cello Suites* on the "Bass of Spain" Stradivarius, currently owned by a private collector in Seattle.



Truls Mørk

The recital on Nov. 14 featured Miaskovsky's *Sonata #1 for Cello and Piano*, a surprisingly lyrical and tonal work from the 1911, Prokofiev's *Cello Sonata*, the *Pohadka (Fairy Tale)* by Janacek, and Chopin's *Cello Sonata*. Throughout Mørk displayed his deep rich tone, constantly varied and beautiful. His dynamic contrast was breathtaking; the man sitting next to me said "I was afraid to breathe at times" as his pianissimos were mesmerizing. Mørk has, of course, flawless intonation and impeccable technique. The impression is that he is always where he needs to be with his left hand;

shifts are audible only when he intends them to be and he has complete command of the entire fingerboard. It is playing that transcends the instrument and lets the music speak. Kathryn Stott, who appears with Yo-Yo Ma on the *Paris: La Belle Epoch* album, is a pianist of great finesse and control, coming to the forefront when called for and supporting the cello deftly. Barely a glance passed between the two, yet their ensemble was amazing.

A final word about after the concert: Mørk took the time to play on 3 celli by Northfield maker David Folland before he was whisked off to dinner by Julie Himmelstrup, Music in the Park's founder. Though Truls plays on an old cello, a magnificent 1723 Montagnana, it was clear that he is also interested in modern violin making and was most appreciative of David's work. Coincidentally, one of the cellos he tried was based on the dimensions of the "Bass of Spain" Strad.

There are a number of resources to learn more about Truls Mørk. In the 1999 interview for the Internet Cello Society, Mørk describes many aspects of his approach to music and the cello: how the cello is not really suited to the violin's virtuosity, what great music making really consists of, and how he strives to sing through the cello to the audience. And of course, one can visit the website [www.trulsmork.com](http://www.trulsmork.com) for the usual information about this very unusual artist.

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