

KCET PRESENTS 'BORN TO TEACH,' A USC THORNTON PRODUCED DOCUMENTARY ON THE LIFE OF ELEONORE SCHOENFELD – AIRING AUGUST 24, 6:00-7:00 PM

In the life of a young musician, if you're lucky, you may have a chance to meet an extraordinary artist, an extraordinary teacher, an extraordinary human being, who really changes your thoughts on music and on life. In my life, Eleonore Schoenfeld was such a person. — Michael Tilson Thomas, Conductor

When 11-year-old Eleonore Schoenfeld took up the cello at the suggestion of her father, she no longer competed directly with her older sister, Alice, a violin prodigy. During her illustrious lifetime, the younger Schoenfeld went on to become one of the world's leading cello performers and teachers.

Her remarkable story is featured in *Born To Teach: Reflections on the Career of Cellist Eleonore Schoenfeld*, an original documentary airing on KCET on Sunday, August 24, 6-7 p.m. The program traces the life of the renowned professor who taught at the USC Thornton School of Music for nearly 50 years.

Nathan Cutietta and Mari Edelman wrote and directed *Born to Teach* and conducted all the interviews. Alan Chapman serves as narrator. Edelman is the executive producer, with the USC Thornton School of Music as producer. The music is performed by Marek Szpakiewicz and the Schoenfeld Duo. The music conductors are Lucinda Carver and Donald Crockett, and Larry Livingston is music director.

“To follow Eleonore’s career is like a portrait of music making and teaching in the 20th century,” said Robert Cutietta, dean of the Thornton School. “Not only was she a legendary figure in the Thornton School and Los Angeles, where she helped the classical music scene mature and prosper in the years following World War II, but her reputation spread throughout the world.”

Through still images, home movies and first-person accounts from former students and colleagues, the documentary offers insights into Schoenfeld’s lifelong commitment to performing and teaching by telling her story, from childhood through to her death in 2007 at the age of 81.

The documentary features interviews with former students, many of whom are accomplished in the classical music genre; included are Fang Fang Xu, cello soloist; Serge Oskotsky, a member of the Los Angeles Philharmonic; Joon-Sung Jun, professor of cello at Shepherd University; Ruslan Biryukov, winner of the 17th Mu Phi Epsilon International Competition; and Gal Faganel, associate principal cellist for the Phoenix Symphony.



Thornton faculty member Alice Schoenfeld also recounts her sister's childhood and their life together. Among the many colleagues and friends interviewed are violinist Midori Goto, chair of Thornton strings department; Donald McInnes, professor of strings at Thornton; and conductors Zubin Mehta and Michael Tilson Thomas.

Schoenfeld's close-knit family included parents who encouraged the artistic talents of both their daughters. From a childhood that included playing piano, dancing in the Berlin children's ballet and pursuing cello, Schoenfeld eventually became the principal cellist for her university's orchestra and a musical partner to her sister, forming in the renowned Schoenfeld Duo. During World War II, when Schoenfeld was in her 20s, she and Alice performed together regularly throughout Europe.

From the opening notes of composer John Corigliano's *Fancy on a Bach Air, Born To Teach* presents a touching memoir of a woman who left a successful music career in Europe when her family relocated to Los Angeles after World War II, re-established her career as a world-class performer and expanded her talents by taking a faculty position at USC Thornton. In the world of classical music, Schoenfeld was one of the best at preparing cellists for live performances and competitions. Her rigorous standards were imposed on aspiring musicians, who described her as tough yet caring.

Music selections in *Born To Teach* include self-published Schoenfeld Duo recordings of Bach, Haydn and Tchaikovsky, plus performances by former student Marek Szpakiewicz.

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