

Zoé Knighton cello

Amir Farid piano

**A LITTLE
FRENCH
CELLO**



Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

1 Suite bergamasque: **Clair de lune** – L 75 ... 5'16"

Transcription by A Roelens

2 **Printemps** – L 61 ... 7'13"

Transcription by Lón Roques

3 **Rêverie** – L 68 ... 5'18"

Transcription by F Ronchini

Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979) – Trois Pièces (3 Pieces for Violoncello and Piano)

4 **No 1** in E flat minor – Modéré ... 2'54"

5 **No 2** in A minor – Sans vitesse et à l'aise ... 1'40"

6 **No 3** in C sharp minor – Vite et nerveusement rythmé ... 2'52"

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Arranged by Michael Staudt

7 **Les berceaux** (Cradles) – Op 23 No 1 ... 2'37"

8 **Sylvie** – Op 6 No 3 ... 3'13"

9 **Au bord de l'eau** (At the water's edge) – Op 8 No 1 ... 2'04"

10 **Toujours** (Always) – Op 21 No 2 ... 1'35"

Ernest Chausson (1855-1899)

11 **Pièce** (for Violoncello and Piano in C major) – Op 39 (1897) ... 8'32"

Jean Huré (1877-1930)

12 **Sonata** in F sharp minor for Violoncello and Piano ... 23'29"

Claude Debussy - Sonata (for Violoncello and Piano) (1915) - L 135

13 **Prologue**: Lent, sostenuto e molto risoluto ... 5'00"

14 **Sérénade**: Modérément animé ... 3'32"

15 **Finale**: Animé, léger et nerveux ... 3'45"

A LITTLE FRENCH CELLO

A retreat into French contemplation, with music in miniature form, and fresh discoveries to ignite a love affair with la musique française. An unusual collection of small works, larger works and a few unknowns, particularly the extraordinary Huré Sonata.

Zoé Knighton cello

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This CD began with us reading through a whole lot of music that had been sitting on Zoe's shelf, unplayed for decades. We quickly fell in love with these French pieces and the CD basically compiled itself. In fact, we recorded too much music and had to cut a short piece by Mompou – luckily he was actually from Barcelona.

Debussy is the quintessential French composer and for that reason, his works open and close this CD. As a composer, he was uncompromising in his unique approach to sound which ultimately changed the face of composition for the twentieth century.

Clair de lune is the third movement of “Suite bergamasque” by Claude Debussy, a piano depiction of a Paul Verlaine poem. Interestingly, Fauré also wrote a song based on the same poem. Written in 1888 when he was 26 years old, it shows how independent his musical language was becoming from his predecessors and contemporaries, and a departure from his beloved Wagner. The rest of the movements in the Suite are all based on Baroque. It is no accident that Debussy chose the key of D flat major. This key uses all the black keys of the piano and is meant to be one of the most romantic. (Rachmaninov used it for the 18th variation of his Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini).

Originally composed in 1887, *Printemps* was composed in Rome after Debussy had

won the Prix de Rome the previous year. Obligated to leave Paris (and his mistress of 8 years – a married woman), he was perpetually disgruntled. “The idea I had was to compose a work in a very special color which should cover a great range of feelings. It is to be called *Printemps*, not a descriptive *Printemps*, but a human one ... I should like to express the slow and labored birth of beings and things in nature, their gradual blossoming, and finally the joy of being born into some new life. All this is without a program, for I despise all music that has to follow some literary text that one happens to have got hold of. So you will understand how very suggestive the music will have to be – I am doubtful if I shall be able to do it as I wish.”

Rêverie was originally a solo piano piece composed in 1890. The epitome of the musical depiction of a daydream, one can easily imagine Debussy as the Casanova that he was with such delicate and sumptuous writing. In his lifetime, Debussy had numerous affairs, but it is said that his one true love was his daughter, Claude-Emma.

Three Pieces for Violoncello and Piano.

A student of Gabriel Fauré, Nadia Boulanger had a sister, Lili, six years younger who was also a composer. At the age of 19, Lili Boulanger was the first woman to win the Prix de Rome. After her sister's premature death at the age of 25 in 1918, she was no longer active as a composer. Nadia is most famous for teaching a number of outstanding twentieth century composers and

pianists: Lennox Berkeley, Elliott Carter, Aaron Copland, Jean Françaix, Thea Musgrave and Astor Piazzolla.

Written in 1914, these three character pieces were originally written for organ with clear references to Debussy and Messiaen. 1. *Modere, E flat minor*. 2. *Sans vitesse et a l'aise, A minor*. 3. *Vite et nerveusement rythme, C sharp minor*.

The first is muted and full of the colour of the harmony – evasive, intriguing and passionate. The second is a canon at a quaver's distance, referring to pre-Baroque music. The last uses an oriental scale with a flattened second giving in to a gypsy style full of wit and dry humour.

The four pieces by Fauré are all transcriptions of songs and indeed, his songs are sung by nearly every student of voice. He chose his texts carefully and used them to inspire the twists and turns of his harmony and melody. These four songs tell of varying experiences of love from the love of a mother, to the despair at being rejected.

Les berceaux Op 23 No 1 (1879) is set to a poem by Sully Prudhomme. The song describes large ships that are rocked by the water and don't notice the women rocking their cradles. Eventually these babies grow into men and are lured by the horizon. The women weep as the men are carried away from their cradles and the ships are momentarily held back by the spirit of the distant cradles.

Sylvie Op 6, No 3 (1878) with the original text by Paul de Choudens is a true declaration

of love. Birds that fly to the one who will love him, night time being the time that love awakes, and finally, without you in my life Sylvie, everything is, for my heart, only suffering.

Au bord de l'eau Op 8 No 1 (1875) is based on text by René François Armand (Sully) Prudhomme who was a French poet and essayist, and the first ever winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1901. He trained in engineering and was determined to create scientific poetry for modern times. This poem is about cherishing the moment with a loved one and watching the world pass by as the love lingers on, and doesn't pass by. A beautifully structured poem, it seems worlds away from scientific inspiration.

Toujours Poeme d'un jour Op 21 No 2 (1878) has text by Charles Jean Grandmougin that despairingly tells of a rejected lover asking how they can possibly stop loving the one they love. Essentially saying : you might easily ask the stars to fall out of the sky, the ocean to dry its waters or the night to turn into day but don't think I can turn off this sorrow.

Piece for *Violoncello and Piano*. Ernest Chausson originally studied law to please his wealthy family and only at the age of 25 did he properly start studying composition with Massenet who thought he was a very talented artist. He was well established in artistic circles and as the president of the Société Nationale de Musique. he received many prominent artists and musicians at his home. Just as he was beginning to really

develop his composition, he died at the age of 44 when he hit a brick wall while riding his bike. Chausson is probably best known for his "Concerto for violin and piano" written for violin, piano and string quartet.

Jean Huré was born in 1877 and was largely self taught. He wrote four cello sonatas, and this first one in the unusual key of F sharp minor shows him as a true romantic. An organist, he worked in the Paris churches of Notre-Dame-des-Blancs-Manteaux, Saint-Martin-des-Champs and Saint-Séverin. As well as the cello sonatas, he wrote 2 violin sonatas and 2 string quartets as well as ballets, a comic opera and symphonies.

For us, recording the Huré has been the biggest joy of this CD. A relatively unknown composer, this work is an exercise in musical expression and gives an insight into a man that wore his heart on his sleeve, knew his own mind and was determined to travel his own compositional path. He helped to found the Paris Mozart Society in 1911 and had a wide range of interests from medieval music to anthropology (it is easy to understand the connection between these two interests).

The *Sonata* is in three connected movements and seems to be a true epic essay of love and heartbreak. The middle movement is a scherzando with lighter gestures balancing the gargantuan nature of the outer movements. Nothing is subtle and there is nothing miniature about this piece – we just love it.

One of the biggest injustices as a musician is unfinished business from a composer. Schubert's unfinished (obviously), Beethoven's 10th, Mahler's 10th, Mozart's Requiem ... the list goes on. Towards the end of his life, Debussy was planning to write a set of six sonatas for various combinations of instruments. Only three were completed. Cello and piano (1915); flute, viola, and harp (1915); and violin and piano (1917). The ones we will never hear were to be written for oboe, horn and harpsichord; for trumpet, clarinet, bassoon and piano; and a final sonata that would have included all the instruments from the five earlier sonatas.

Debussy had terminal cancer, and World War I was in full force (Paris was under attack the day he died there). He describes his *Sonata for Violoncello and Piano* as "interesting from a documentary viewpoint and as example of what may be produced by a sick man in time of war". The cello sonata is only 12 minutes long, more like a miniature sonata. This is not a sonata that is developed, but one which uses themes and fragments of themes.

The first movement, at only 51 bars long, is packed full of nuance and detail with tempo indications every few bars. The second movement was apparently originally titled "Pierrot Angry at the Moon". There seems to be fantastical story-telling in this second movement and indeed, one of the directions on the score is "fantastique". Ending this miniature sonata is one last declamation from the cello, only to be interrupted by the piano in a final flourish towards the end.



Zoe Knighton is a founding member of Flinders Quartet and has toured internationally through Sweden, Canada and the UK. Flinders Quartet appears regularly at Australian festivals as well as their own celebrated subscription series. “Flinders Quartet ...whose players give such care and unanimity of musical thought to Australian Chamber Music”
Peter McCallum,

Sydney Morning Herald

Building on their 2006 Limelight Award, identification amongst Australia’s most influential artists, and their 2007 Melbourne Prize for Music nomination, Flinders, in collaboration with new music ensemble Halcyon, was nominated for a 2007 ARIA (Australian Recording Industry Association). In 2010, Flinders was again nominated for the Melbourne Prize for Music, and in 2011 received an ARIA nomination for their CD release with Karin Schaupp (guitar), Fandango.

In 2008, Zoe founded the Melbourne Chamber Feast and in 2009 was the Artistic Director of the Montsalvat 20 concert series. She was an adjudicator for the 2009 Asia Pacific Chamber Music Competition and

regularly acts as panel member and assessment advisor.

Herself a passionate educator, Zoe learned from Christian Wojtowicz, Michel Strauss (Paris) Nelson Cooke, Angela Sargeant, and Jill Kahans. Zoe coaches chamber music and cello studies at the The University of Melbourne where in 2008, she was Acting Coordinator of Strings. In demand as soloist, she has performed Elgar, Dvorak, Brahms double, Lalo, and both Haydn concertos with various Melbourne Orchestras and continues her Bach series every year. She has been guest lecturer at the Tasmanian conservatorium of Music and guest principal cellist with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra.
www.flindersquartet.com/zoe.html

Winner of the 2006 Australian National Piano Award, pianist **Amir Farid** has been described as “a highly creative musician – a pianist of great intelligence and integrity. He brings strong musical substance to all that he does, imbuing it with his own particular experience and understanding”, and who “in a well-populated field...distinguishes himself for all the right reasons”.

Throughout his career, Amir has been working and developing under the guidance of Professor Ronald Farren-Price, with whom he completed a Bachelor (Honours) and Master of Music degree at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. He also attended the Australian National Academy of Music studying with Rita Reichman, Geoffrey Tozer and Timothy Young, and the Royal College of Music London, studying with Andrew Ball.

He has performed concerti with major orchestras around Australia. As a chamber musician, he is pianist of the Benaud Trio (www.benaudtrio.com), winning the Piano Trio prize at the 2005 Australian Chamber Music Competition. As an accompanist, he was winner of the prize for best pianist at the

2006 and 2012 Mietta Song Competitions, and the 2007 Geoffrey Parsons Award. In 2013 he was awarded the inaugural Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust Repetiteur scholarship.

Amir is the recipient of various awards and scholarships, including the Australian Music Foundation, the Ian Potter Cultural Trust, the Royal Overseas League, the Swiss Global Artistic Foundation, the Tait Memorial Trust and the University of Melbourne’s Donovan Johnson Memorial Scholarship.
www.amirfarid.com



Zoe Knighton and **Amir Farid** debuted at Melbourne Recital Centre in 2009 and have since released three CDs on the Move label (Mendelssohn cello, Argentine cello and Beethoven cello), performed in the ABC Sunday Live series, the Saturday Sessions (ABC), the Port Fairy Spring Music Festival and throughout regional Victoria.

“... a well-balanced partnership indeed.”

Clive O’Connell, The Age

“... the phrasing is remarkably sensitive ...”

D. Moore, American Record Guide

“... Knighton and Farid make a sensitive and attentive duo.”

Phil Vendy, 2MBS Fine Music Magazine

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