

MON AMI,
Mon amour

Matt Haimovitz, cello
Mari Kodama, piano

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PENTATONE
OXINGALE SERIES



MON AMI, Mon amour

Francis Poulenc (1899–1963)

Sonate pour violoncelle et piano, FP 143

1	I. Allegro – Tempo di Marcia	5.56
2	II. Cavatine	6.24
3	III. Ballabile	3.24
4	IV. Finale	6.44

Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)

5	Papillon, Op. 77	3.03
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Darius Milhaud (1892–1974)

6	Élégie	4.19
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Lili Boulanger (1893–1918)

Deux pièces pour violon et piano*

7	I. Nocturne	2.58
8	II. Cortège	1.41

Nadia Boulanger (1887–1979)

Trois pièces

9	I. Moderato	2.37
10	II. Sans vitesse et à l’aise	1.30
11	III. Vite et nerveusement rythmé	2.37

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

12	Kaddish*	5.48
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Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Sonate pour violoncelle et piano en ré mineur, L. 135

13	I. Prologue: Lent, sostenuto e molto risoluto	4.29
14	II. Sérénade: Modérément animé	3.35
15	III. Finale: Animé, léger et nerveux	3.47

Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)

16	Après un rêve, Op. 7, No. 1	3.05
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Total playing time: 62.05

Matt Haimovitz, cello

Mari Kodama, piano

*Arranged by Matt Haimovitz



Years ago, when I first met composer Ned Rorem at his Upper West Side New York apartment, he philosophised, "Music is divided into two camps: French and German. And if you don't know to which you belong, then you are definitely in the German camp." Of course, *he* was a Francophile through and through. With all of the time he spent in Paris, I was surprised to learn that Ned never studied directly with Nadia Boulanger, the illustrious and ubiquitous composition pedagogue; rather, over the years, they became close acquaintances. In a May 23, 1982, *New York Times* book review, titled "The Composer and the Teacher," Ned concludes, "Her contagious enthusiasm was no tacit encouragement for random emoting, but a demonstration that structure, art's sovereign ingredient, need not be always dull, and that to write down your dreams you must be wide awake." If structure is the quintessential priority, then what exactly did Ned mean about the German and French camps? I always understood it to be

a debate between structure and color, or the abstract and the pictorial. We can all debate what makes this album French, but there is no question that the composers, as idiosyncratic as they all may be, proudly embrace a French identity and voice. In various ways each composer attempts to break from Germanic tradition and embrace exoticism, showing an openness to absorbing cultures from Asia and the New World, among others. Rather than renounce structure, they dream of bending forms, searching for new paths. They take classical symmetry and compositional norms only as a starting point, deliberately breaking rules to feed their free spirits, and their imaginations are steeped in the poetics of the French language. Even in the darkest, most ominous times, these composers never lose sight of their core *joie de vivre*.

Much of the music on this collection frames the twentieth century's two world wars. Although there are moments of darkness

and solemnity – notably Ravel’s *Kaddish* and Milhaud’s *Élégie* – the music is remarkably colorful, a celebration of life. The cello and piano are in constant conversation, intertwined, playfully teasing and provoking each other in their fantastical and carefree escapades.

At the heart of the program are two sets of short pieces by sisters Lili and Nadia Boulanger. Despite years of chronic illness, which took her life at the young age of 25, Lili managed to write prolifically, and was the first female composer to win the prestigious Prix de Rome, in 1913. Her older sister, Nadia, had been turned down for the same prize four times, and would continue throughout her life to consider Lili to be “the most important female composer in history.” As a result, Nadia eventually gave up composing, devoting herself instead to the promotion of her sister’s music, and to pedagogy. Nadia taught generations of important composers, including Elliott Carter, Aaron Copland, Leonard Bernstein,

Philip Glass, and innumerable others. Both sets of pieces on this album, Nadia’s *Trois pièces* (1914) and Lili’s *Deux pièces* from 1911 and 1914 respectively, shine with a youthful vibrancy. Lili’s two pieces, one a slumbering song (*Nocturne*), the other a wide-eyed, heart-skipping spectacle of a parade (*Cortège*), are originally for violin and piano. I have arranged them for cello, leaving much of the high-register string writing intact. Nadia’s *Trois pièces* are originally for cello and piano, and feature a dreamlike, floating melody over an impressionistic pond, a playfully naive canon between the two instruments, and a theatrical finale that pushes beyond the Victorian boundaries and hints at the musical risk taking of Francis Poulenc.

Only a year following the Boulangers’ *Cortège* and *Trois pièces*, and in the midst of World War I, Claude Debussy set out to compose six sonatas in neo-baroque style, inspired by the 18th century French musical giants, Rameau and Couperin. Debussy

**“Structure, art’s sovereign ingredient,
need not be dull. To write down your
dreams you must be wide awake.”**

– Nadia Boulanger

sought to embrace and immortalize French history and culture, celebrating his nationalistic roots. Interrupted by his untimely death in 1918, the composer only completed three works of the cycle, including the *Sonata for Cello and Piano* (1915). Although he is striving for a purely French music, and although it is permeated by the baroque French Overture rhythmic contour, I have long thought Debussy's first movement to be a direct response to an Austro-Hungarian precursor. The opening of Beethoven's Op. 102 No. 2 Sonata, like the Debussy Sonata, begins with piano alone, the cello entering with a dramatic transitional gesture spanning a wide pitch range and offering an asymmetrical response to the tableau established by the piano. Debussy may be looking to break free of classical rules, but he is fully aware of and steeped in tradition.

A *commedia dell'arte* sensibility permeates the Sonata. I can hear the narrative of Pierrot Lunaire and his interactions with

Columbine throughout the work, perhaps most descriptively in the second movement, a seductive and ironic *Serenade*. The cello's guitar-like pizzicato strumming, the eerie timbre of the harmonics, the *flautando* high register, and the slapstick abruptness of the phrase punctuations all transport us to a dramatic stage filled with vibrant characters.

Only after the *Serenade* are we liberated from the shackles of an older age and another place. We finally arrive at the mountain's summit, where the cello can openly proclaim its freedom--illuminated by the bohemian exoticism of the third movement. Is there a brothel scene depicted in the piano's belly dance and the opium-den stupor of the *Lento* with its shifting and alluring rubatos?

A year before Debussy's *Sonata for Cello and Piano*, Maurice Ravel was commissioned by soprano Alvina Alvi for a set of two songs. Ravel composed and

accompanied her at the piano in his new work, *Deux mélodies hébraïques*. Nearly two decades after the seminal Émile Zola editorial "J'Accuse...!", which made public the antisemitic and unlawful jailing of Jewish French Army General Staff officer Alfred Dreyfus, Ravel shows his solidarity and empathy for the Jewish people and their culture. On this recording, I play my own instrumental arrangement of the second song, a rendition of the Mourner's Kaddish, the prayer for the dead in Jewish services. The cello takes on the role of cantor as the piano creates eternal ever-expanding space. Although Ravel was not Jewish, his setting is moving in its heartfelt simplicity and authenticity. The prayer begins with the words "glorified and sanctified be God's name"; never once is there a mention of death, only an exaltation of God and a call and cry for the creation of peace.

Born in Marseille to Jewish parents, the prolific composer Darius Milhaud was forced

to leave France in 1940 upon the invasion of his native country by Nazi Germany. The family emigrated to the United States, where Milhaud secured a teaching post at Mills College in Oakland, California. By this time, he had already embraced a range of musical styles and languages, most notably jazz, Brazilian influences, and polytonality. These colors can be heard in Milhaud's *Élégie*, a ballad composed in 1945, at the end of World War II. The melodic contour of the cello line, at times improvised in feeling, floats above and below a nostalgic *appoggiatura ostinato* figure in the piano. The cello part is notable for its wide pitch range—from moments of repose, breathing with the low C# pedal, to the final, hopeful, sustained A in the cello's heavenly upper register. Milhaud follows the advice he gave one of his well known students, the singer-songwriter Burt Bacharach, "Don't be afraid of writing something people can remember and whistle. Don't ever feel discomfited by a melody."



Gabriel Fauré certainly never shied away from composing a gorgeous melody. A teacher of Ravel and both Lili and Nadia Boulanger, Fauré was a prolific composer of art songs. *Après un rêve* (1878) is one of his most popular songs, a longing for dreams of a mysterious night, and an elusive, ecstatic love that withers in the light of day. Our instrumental song-without-words omits the text by Romain Bussine, who adapted an anonymous Italian poem. Fauré's *Papillon* was published in 1898, but commissioned fourteen years earlier. This short encore piece oscillates between virtuosic *moto perpetuo* writing, the butterfly wings flapping in flight, and a soaring melody in the cello accompanied by a descending bass line in the piano.

Like his colleague Milhaud, Francis Poulenc was a member of Le Groupe des Six, a composer collective active in Paris from 1916-1923. The group came together to counter the overbearing musical influences of Richard Wagner, as well as

the impressionism of Debussy and Ravel. Poulenc began sketching his Cello Sonata in 1940, but his work was disrupted by World War II. He finally completed the Sonata in 1948, dedicating it to the legendary French cellist, Pierre Fournier, who reportedly participated in shaping some of the technical aspects of the cello part. Neo-baroque and neo-classical in style, the four-movement work is filled with melodic inspiration and irony, the relationship between the cello and piano displaying a complex camaraderie and an operatic grandiosity. Although emanating from one of the most oppressive historical periods, in Poulenc's Sonata, love trumps darkness, filling us with a vibrant, soaring narrative that never loses its sunny optimism.

It was the Poulenc Sonata, with its mixture of love, irony and dramatic events, that first set me on the path to recording a program of French music. On a cold January day in my home studio in Montréal, a gifted student was playing the Poulenc

part for me to comment. In the midst of a discussion, my cello in my hand, I reached for the score, tripped, and lost my balance. In that uncertain moment, I had a decision to make: I could let my body crash down on top of the cello, or I could open my hand and let the instrument fall away as I pulled my weight in the opposite direction. It all happened in a split-second, but for me, time stopped. I let the cello go, twisting away to right myself. Stunned, I looked down at the oceanic turquoise of my studio's Persian rug, and there lay my companion of thirty years, my friend, my musical voice, arrayed in broken pieces. The headless body lay immobile, the neck cleanly ripped off its torso leaving a gaping open wound. And, for some reason, what was even more surreal at the time? No blood.

Trying to keep my composure, I set aside the pieces of my Matteo Goffriller cello, made in 1710 Venice, and continued teaching. The fragmented, vibrant contours of Poulenc

“Don’t be afraid of writing something people can remember and whistle. Don’t ever feel discomfited by a melody.”

– Darius Milhaud

continued from across the room. I continued the back and forth with my visitor. We immersed ourselves in sculpting sound and painting phrases through bow-stroke detail. Maybe it was a dream or a nightmare? Maybe my beloved cello was still whole and ready to return to the acrobatic and effervescent world of Poulenc. But alas, it remained next to me on the floor, lifeless, its body shattered.

After delivering the pieces of my cello to pupate in the workshop of my luthier, where it would go through meticulous and painstaking reconstructive surgery over a span of fifteen months, all I could do was wait and hope that it would regain its former glow and voice. Perhaps, as with the Japanese art of *kintsugi*, in which the cracks and flaws of an object are celebrated with decorative gold, my cello's new wounds would become part of the instrument's identity. Perhaps this catastrophic event in its life was an opportunity to celebrate its resilience and ever deepening character.

This is the first album on which my beloved Goffriller and I are reunited. My butterfly finally emerged from its chrysalis. And now, two years later, in quarantine for the last four months in Montréal, who could have predicted that the world as we knew it would also be completely turned upside down.

It all feels like a dream, the 2019 recording sessions with the ever graceful and insightful Mari Kodama, my colleague and friend. Making music without a care in the world, and with no worry of social distancing and masks. We played the music of French masters to our heart's content, and breathed the crisp, eucalyptus-scented air as we roamed the grounds of Skywalker Ranch. So bright were the stars in the mysterious night.

Matt Haimovitz

June 2020 Montréal, Québec



Après un rêve

Dans un sommeil que charmaient ton image
Je rêvais le bonheur, ardent mirage,
Tes yeux étaient plus doux, ta voix pure et sonore,
Tu rayonnais comme un ciel éclairé par l'aurore;
Tu m'appelais et je quittais la terre
Pour m'enfuir avec toi vers la lumière,
Les cieux pour nous entre ouvraient leurs nues,
Splendeurs inconnues, lueurs divines entrevues.
Hélas! hélas, triste réveil des songes,
Je t'appelle, ô nuit, rends-moi tes mensonges;
Reviens, reviens, radieuse,
Reviens, ô nuit mystérieuse!

– Romain Bussine

After a dream

In a sleep charmed by your image
I dreamt of happiness, ardent mirage,
Your eyes were softer, your voice pure and singing,
You shone like a sky illuminated by the dawn;
You called to me and I left reason behind
To fly with you towards the light.
The heavens divided the clouds for us,
Revealing unknown splendours, divine glimmers.
Alas, alas, sad awakening from dreams!
I beg you, O night, give me back your lies;
Return, return, radiant,
Come back, O mysterious night!

About the Artists

Renowned as a musical pioneer, Grammy-nominated cellist **Matt Haimovitz** is praised by *The New York Times* as a “ferociously talented cellist who brings his megawatt sound and uncommon expressive gifts to a vast variety of styles” and by *The New Yorker* as a “remarkable virtuoso” who “never turns in a predictable performance.” He brings a fresh ear to familiar repertoire, champions new music, and initiates groundbreaking collaborations, as well as creating innovative recording projects. In addition to his relentless touring schedule, Haimovitz mentors an award-winning studio of young cellists at the Schulich School of Music of McGill University in Montréal and is now the first-ever John Cage Fellow at The New School’s Mannes School of Music in New York City.

Haimovitz made his debut in 1984, at the age of 13, as soloist with Zubin Mehta and the Israel Philharmonic. At 17 he made his

first recording with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, for Deutsche Grammophon. He has gone on to perform on the world’s most esteemed stages, with such orchestras and conductors as the Berlin Philharmonic, the New York Philharmonic with Zubin Mehta, the English Chamber Orchestra with Daniel Barenboim, the Boston Symphony Orchestra with Leonard Slatkin, and the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal with Kent Nagano.

Haimovitz’s recording career encompasses more than 20 years of award-winning work on Deutsche Grammophon (Universal), Oxingale Records, and the PENTATONE Oxingale Series. His honors include the Trailblazer Award from the American Music Center, the Avery Fisher Career Grant, the Grand Prix du Disque, and the Premio Internazionale “Accademia Musicale Chigiana.” He studied with Leonard Rose at the Juilliard School and graduated magna cum laude from Harvard University. Haimovitz plays a Venetian cello, made in 1710 by Matteo Gofriller.





Born in Osaka and raised in Germany and Paris, **Mari Kodama** is consistently praised for her virtuosity across a wide range of repertoire, including orchestral, chamber and solo works by composers of all periods. She studied piano with Germaine Mounier and chamber music with Genevieve Joy-Dutilleux at the Conservatoire National in Paris, in addition to private studies with Tatiana Nikolaeva and Alfred Brendel. Kodama is a benchmark interpreter of Beethoven, known for her natural musicality and tonal expressiveness with a clear form.

Since her New York recital debut at Carnegie Hall in 1995, Mari Kodama has performed with renowned orchestras and conductors including the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia London, Berliner Philharmoniker, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin and Orchestre symphonique de Montréal. In her native Japan, she has played with the NHK Symphony Orchestra in Tokyo and the symphony orchestras of Kyoto, Hiroshima,

and Osaka, among others. Kodama's festival appearances include the Verbier Festival, the Festival International de Piano de la Roque-d'Anthéron, the Aldeburgh Festival of Music, Mostly Mozart, the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival and Kissinger Sommer.

Mari Kodama's performance activities have brought infrequently heard gems of the piano repertoire to global audiences, including performances of Stenhammer's Piano Concerto no. 2 and Alban Berg's Chamber Concerto for Piano and Violin with Viviane Hagner. In 2013 she premiered Jean-Pascal Beinthus' Double Piano Concerto together with Momo Kodama and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte Carlo, in addition to performing in the Canada premieres of Jörg Widmann's Valse Bavaoise and Humoresken in 2010. Highlights of Mari Kodama's discography include the release of the complete thirty-two sonatas and five concerti of Beethoven, and a recent release of

Beethoven string quartets arranged for piano (PENTATONE). Mari Kodama has worked with PENTATONE for many years, with previous albums showcasing her broad repertoire. Special projects include an album featuring the Martinů Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra with Momo Kodama and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Marseille, piano concertos by Chopin and Loewe with the Russian National Orchestra (PENTATONE) and Prokofiev's Piano Concertos No. 1 and 3, as well as his Piano Sonata No. 7 with the Philharmonia Orchestra (ASV).

Acknowledgments

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English Translation of *Après un rêve* © by Luna Pearl Woolf and Nessa Rose Woolf

This album was recorded on June 25 - 28, 2019 at Skywalker Sound, a Lucasfilm, Ltd., company, Marin County, CA

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Congratulations, you are now holding the brainchild of the synergy between PENTATONE and OXINGALE RECORDS.

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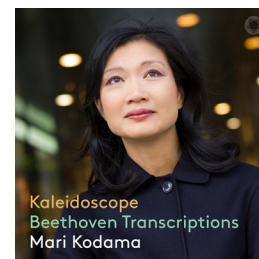
recordings, as well as the quality of the relationship with their customers.

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