



## Encores and Transcriptions • 3

**ELGAR  
HANDEL  
POPPER  
SCHUMANN  
BACH**

**Pablo Casals**

**Historical Recordings 1915 - 1916**

## Pablo Casals - Encores and Transcriptions • 3

The first important cello recordings were made in about 1901 by the great English player W.H. Squire, who continued to visit the studios regularly until 1929. The Russian-based Polish cellist Alexander Wierzbilowicz was another early recorder, although he made only a handful of 78rpm sides. It almost beggars belief that the man who, from at least 1905, was regarded as the finest cellist in the world, the man who influenced even his elders including Squire, did not set foot inside a recording studio until 1915, when he was 38. Well, in fact Pablo Casals did recall making records in 1903 in Paris, and he claimed to have recorded a duet with Eugène Ysaÿe in 1904, but no trace of those sessions has ever been found. In any case, Paris studios were notoriously ill-equipped, in comparison with those in London, so even if a long-lost test pressing did turn up, it would probably not sound very good. Indeed, such a failing was probably the reason why nothing from those 1903-04 sessions was released in the first place. It is inconceivable that Casals did not have other offers, for instance from Fred Gaisberg of HMV in London, but in those early days recording was regarded by most artists as a diversion from their main business of giving concert performances. When Casals did finally submit to having his playing documented, it took an American firm to do it. We can imagine a number of reasons why the Columbia Graphophone Company was successful where others had failed. In 1915 Casals was cut off from many of his audiences by the war in Europe. He was probably keen to build up his finances, as he had taken an American wife the previous year and was liable to be making frequent transatlantic trips, and the records would provide not only extra cash but good publicity for his playing in America.

The legendary Pau (or Pablo) Casals was born on 29th December 1876 in Vendrell, a little town in Catalonia where his father was organist and choirmaster. 'I owe nearly all my talent at music to the influence of my father,' he wrote. 'As soon as I could walk he took me to all the services at the church, so that the Gregorian chant, the chorales and the organ

voluntaries became part of myself and of my daily life.' Carlos Casals taught Pau to sing, play the piano and organ and even compose, and at six the boy had mastered the violin well enough to play a solo in public. Fascinated by a broom-handle strung like a cello, used by an itinerant Catalan musician, he described it to his father, who built him a little cello using a gourd for a sound-box. 'On this home-made contrivance I learnt to play the many songs my father composed, and the popular songs which reached the village from the outside world.' At eleven he heard a real cello, which confirmed it was the instrument for him. His father bought him a small one and gave him lessons; and soon he began studying at the Municipal School of Music in Barcelona. Cello playing had not greatly advanced since the days of Luigi Boccherini. The invention of the spike or endpin had freed the body of the instrument from being gripped between the knees, so that it resonated more freely, but some players were still operating in the old way, without a spike. Worst of all, the bowing arm was restricted. 'We were taught to play with a stiff arm and obliged to keep a book under the armpit,' recalled Casals. While playing in a café trio to pay for his keep, he was heard by the composer Albéniz. Soon he had an ensemble of seven at a grander café, and it was while he and his father were looking for music for this band to play that he found an edition of the Bach solo Suites. He met Sarasate and with Albéniz's help moved to Madrid, found a patron and became Queen Maria Cristina's favourite musician, studying at the Conservatory with Tomas Bretón and Jesus de Monasterio. He made his Madrid orchestral début with Lalo's *Cello Concerto* and in 1899 played it at the Crystal Palace in London and the Lamoureux Concerts in Paris. In 1901 he toured America and in 1905 he settled in Paris.

Hot-blooded and temperamental, Casals had a high-profile affair with his Portuguese pupil Guilhermina Suggia and a failed marriage to the singer Susan Metcalfe. In public he was quickly recognised as unique. Fritz Kreisler was making an impact with his

subtle use of vibrato on the violin and Casals worked on similar lines with the cello, astonishing his peers with the freedom of his bowing, his use of 'expressive intonation' and his technical innovations. After studying the Bach *Suites* for a dozen years, he started performing them in public in the early years of the twentieth century, often programming one alongside a concerto. In 1905 he began playing trios with Alfred Cortot and Jacques Thibaud in an ensemble that would last until 1934. For more than three decades Casals toured the world as the leading exponent of the cello. In 1919 he returned to Catalonia, settling in Barcelona, where he quickly founded the Orquestra Pau Casals – its first concert was given in 1920 and in 1931 he conducted it in a performance of Beethoven's Ninth to mark the birth of the Spanish Republic. The civil war and the Fascist victory caused a rift in his life and career. A man of deep principle who refused to play in Hitler's Germany, Casals was implacably opposed to Franco's regime and in 1939, threatened with execution if he returned to Spain, he went into exile in southern France. After World War II, feeling that Britain and America were appeasing Franco, he abruptly stopped playing in public, breaking off a London recording session with Haydn's *Concerto in D major* two-thirds done. From 1950, however, American admirers organized a festival around him at his new home town, Prades, and in his old age Casals had a new lease of life as chamber musician, teacher, conductor and musical guru. In 1956 he moved to his mother's native country, Puerto Rico, and the following year he married his young pupil Marta Montañez. He played in 1958 at the United Nations and in 1961 at the White House. He died in Puerto Rico on 22nd October 1973.

Casals was provided with a small pick-up orchestra

for a number of his early recordings, including the four made on the first day. Otherwise he was accompanied by the pianist Charles A. Baker. The repertoire consisted partly of the encore pieces which were so popular with the concert-goers and record buyers of that era: among them was Casals's own most famous arrangement, Fauré's song *Après un rêve*, now regarded almost as if the composer had written it for cello. Elgar's piano piece *Salut d'amour* was fair game, as it already existed in a version for orchestra and was most popular in its guise for violin with piano or orchestra. Then there were works from the cello repertoire, sometimes truncated so as to fit on to one twelve-inch side (or two in the case of Bruch's *Kol Nidrei*). Among them were four out of the six movements of Bach's *Suite in C major*, the slow movement of a Tartini concerto, two pieces by the Czech cellist and teacher David Popper, and the inevitable *Swan* from Saint-Saëns's *The Carnival of the Animals*. The double-sided discs began to be issued within months, in both North America and Britain, but in the United Kingdom production was soon moved to the single-sided Purple Label, and a number of Casals's acoustic recordings were never made available to his British audience. The performances still sound amazingly fresh and show that the famous Casals sound was already present in all its essentials in 1915. His buoyant rhythm, his heartfelt *portamento* and above all, his beautiful vibrato, infinite in its variety, are to be heard on these precious artifacts. We must be thankful that, for whatever reason, the 'cellist of cellists' was at last persuaded to break his embargo on recording.

**Tully Potter**

# **Pablo Casals - Encores and Transcriptions • 3**

## **Complete Acoustic Recordings • 1**

- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| <b>[1] ELGAR: Salut d'amour, Op. 12</b>   |              |
| Recorded on 15th January 1915. Matrix No. 37129-2. Cat. No. A 5679              | <b>2:47</b>  |
| <b>[2] HANDEL: Largo from Xerxes</b>  |              |
| Recorded on 15th January 1915. Matrix No. 37130-1. Cat. No. A 5649              | <b>3:54</b>  |
| <b>[3] RUBINSTEIN: Melody in F major, Op. 3</b>                                 |              |
| Recorded on 15th January 1915. Matrix No. 37131-1. Cat. No. A 5649              | <b>2:57</b>  |
| <b>[4] TARTINI: Adagio from Concerto in D minor</b>                             |              |
| Recorded on 15th January 1915. Matrix No. 37132-2. Cat. No. A 5654              | <b>4:14</b>  |
| <b>[5] BRUCH: Kol Nidrei, Op. 47</b>  |              |
| Recorded on 18th January 1915. Matrix Nos. 37133-1 and 37134-1. Cat. No. A 5722 | <b>8:27</b>  |
| <b>[6] POPPER: Spanish Serenade, Op. 11</b>                                     |              |
| Recorded on 24th January 1915. Matrix No. 37149-2. Cat. No. A 5650              | <b>2:54</b>  |
| <b>[7] SAINT-SAËNS: The Swan</b>  |              |
| Recorded on 24th January 1915. Matrix No. 37150-2. Cat. No. A 5650              | <b>2:46</b>  |
| <b>[8] CAMPAGNOLI: Romance</b>  |              |
| Recorded on 27th January 1915. Matrix No. unknown . Cat. No. A 5654             | <b>3:55</b>  |
| <b>[9] FAURÉ arr. CASALS: Après un rêve</b>                                     |              |
| Recorded on March 1915. Matrix No. unknown. Cat. No. A 6020                     | <b>3:04</b>  |
| <b>[10] SCHUMANN: Träumerei, Op. 15</b>   |              |
| Recorded on 14th April 1915. Matrix No. 37252-1. Cat. No. A 5679                | <b>3:07</b>  |
| <b>[11] POPPER: Mazurka in G minor, Op. 11</b>                                  |              |
| Recorded on 23rd April 1915. Matrix No. 37256-1. Cat. No. A 5697                | <b>3:04</b>  |
| <b>[12] LISZT: Liebestraum</b>  |              |
| Recorded on 5th March 1915. Matrix No. 37262-1. Cat. No. A 5656                 | <b>4:12</b>  |
| <b>[13] J.S. BACH: Air from Orchestral Suite No. 3 in D major, BWV 1068</b>     |              |
| Recorded on 5th May 1916. Matrix No. 37263-1. Cat. No. A 5656                   | <b>4:26</b>  |
| <b>J.S. BACH: Suite for Solo Cello No. 3 in C major, BWV 1009</b>               | <b>13:27</b> |
| <b>[14] Prélude</b>   | <b>3:44</b>  |
| Recorded on 23rd April 1915. Matrix No. 37257-1. Cat. No. A 5782                |              |
| <b>[15] Sarabande</b>   | <b>3:42</b>  |
| Recorded on 23rd April 1915. Matrix No. 37259-1. Cat. No. A 5782                |              |
| <b>[16] Bourrée</b>   | <b>3:15</b>  |
| Recorded on 23rd April 1915. Matrix No. 37258-1. Cat. No. A 5697                |              |
| <b>[17] Gigue</b>   | <b>2:46</b>  |
| Recorded on 15th April 1916. Matrix No. 48697. Cat. No. A 5875                  |              |
| Tracks 1-5, 10, 12 and 13 with orchestra (conductor unknown)                    |              |
| Tracks 6-9 and 11 with Charles A. Baker, Piano                                  |              |
| Special thanks to Lawrence F. Holdridge   |              |



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ADD

Pablo Casals

(1876-1973)

Playing  
Time  
63:14

**The Complete Acoustic Recordings • 1**

US Columbia 1915-16

Tracks 1-5, 10, 12 and 13 with orchestra (conductor unknown)

Tracks 6-9 and 11 with Charles A. Baker, Piano

- 1** ELGAR: Salut d'amour, Op. 12 2:47
- 2** HANDEL: Largo from Xerxes 3:54
- 3** RUBINSTEIN:  
Melody in F major, Op. 3 2:57
- 4** TARTINI: Adagio from  
Concerto in D minor 4:14
- 5** BRUCH: Kol Nidrei, Op. 47 8:27
- 6** POPPER: Spanish Serenade, Op. 11 2:54
- 7** SAINT-SAËNS: The Swan 2:46
- 8** CAMPAGNOLI: Romance 3:55
- 9** FAURÉ (arr. Casals): Après un rêve 3:04

- 10** SCHUMANN: Träumerei, Op. 15 3:07
- 11** POPPER: Mazurka in  
G minor, Op. 11 3:04
- 12** LISZT: Liebestraum 4:12
- 13** BACH: Air from Orchestral  
Suite No. 3 in D major, BWV 1068 4:26
- BACH: Suite No. 3 for Solo Cello  
in C major, BWV1009 13:27
- 14** Prélude 3:44
- 15** Sarabande 3:42
- 16** Bourrée 3:15
- 17** Gigue 2:46

One of the greatest and by far the best-known cellist of his generation, Pablo Casals recorded a series of encore pieces and staples of the cello repertoire during 1915-16. In them we catch much of the essence of Casals's playing, from a superb sense of rhythm in the dance movements to his wonderful *parlando* quality. This volume in Casals' complete 78rpm acoustic recordings includes Casals's most famous arrangement, Fauré's song *Après un rêve*, now regarded almost as if the composer had written it for cello.

A complete tracklist can be found in the booklet

**Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Ward Marston**

Special thanks to Lawrence Holdrige

Cover Photograph: Pablo Casals  
(New York, 1917ca) (Private Collection)

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CANADA

