

Igor Stravinsky

1-5 SUITE ITALIENNE

- I. Introduzione
- II. Serenata
- III. Aria
- IV. Tarantella
- V. Minuetto e Finale

Lili Boulanger

6 D'UN SOIR TRISTE

Nadia Boulanger

7-9 TROIS PIÈCES

- I. Modéré
- II. Sans vitesse et a l'aise
- III. Vite et nerveusement rythmé

George Enescu

10-13 CELLO SONATA NO. 2
IN C MAJOR, OP. 26 NO. 2

- I. Allegro moderato ed amabile
- II. Allegro agitato, non troppo mosso
- III. Andantino cantabile, senza lentezza
- IV. Final a la roumaine. Allegro sciolto

NOSTALGIA AND THE EARLY MODERNISTS

At the Salon Boulanger: Anastasia Feruleva and Frank van de Laar in conversation with Marco Frei

Paris at the turn of the century. Against the background of the First World War, in the capital of the “Grande Nation”, a new “Zeitgeist” is born, a new “Esprit du temps”. A new era is dawning, with the Boulangers in the cultural forefront. This family of musicians enjoy an excellent reputation. Since the end of the 18th century, they have had a decisive influence on the cultural life of the French capital. Nadia and Lili Boulanger are born into this family. Their mother, Raissa Myshetskaya, is a singer of Russian origin, their father Ernest Boulanger active as a composer. The parental home is an open salon where actors, musicians, writers and painters meet. Friends of the family include Charles Gounod, Jules Massenet and Camille Saint-Saëns. The Boulanger siblings grow up in this environment. While Nadia will go on to be remembered as an influential music teacher, her younger sister Lili will rise to prominence as a composer. Following in her father’s footsteps, Lili wins the renowned “Grand Prix de Rome” in 1913 in composition, the first woman ever to do so. At that time, chronic bronchial pneumonia and Crohn’s disease, from which Lili suffers from birth, are already at an advanced stage. Only five years after her “Rome victory” Lili dies at the age of 24. Throughout their lives, the Boulanger sisters continue the family tradition of developing contacts with the artistic community, particularly after the sudden death of their father in April 1900. In a sense, Anastasia Feruleva and Frank van de Laar revive this “Salon Boulanger” on their CD.

Around 1901 Lili Boulanger starts taking composition classes with Gabriel Fauré, where she meets not only Charles Koechlin, Florent Schmitt and Maurice Ravel, but also George Enescu. Since 1895, this Romanian musician has been studying composition in Paris with, among others, Massenet and Fauré. Nadia Boulanger also moves in this circle, becoming Fauré’s deputy organist in the church of La Madeleine in 1903. When Igor Stravinsky starts working with Sergei Diaghilev and his “Ballets Russes” in Paris in 1909, a close friendship is born between him and Nadia. She will later go on to teach Stravinsky’s son.

This album picks up on this network of relationships, with Enescu’s *Cello Sonata Op. 26 No. 2*, a work far too seldom played, marking the starting point. “For quite some years we have been intensively engaged with this work, having often played it in concerts, and each time discovering something new,” Anastasia Feruleva and Frank van de Laar explain. “We would like to champion this sonata because we consider it a unique masterpiece of the 20th century cello literature. Unfortunately, it has been neglected in concert halls to this day, most probably because of the complex score and the enormous demands on ensemble playing. However, this music is so incredibly rich and deserves to be performed. We have put great thought into how this work could be combined with other repertoire to create a meaningful programme.” The final concept of the programme unites parallels and contrasts while also creating a concise narrative. This common thread is the retrospective, nostalgic but by no means backward in approach,

through which early modernism treads new, independent paths. Essentially, this marks the new “Esprit du temps”. In the *Second Cello Sonata* of 1935, this retrospective appears not only in the simple personal sense, as evident through Enescu’s use of folk elements from his Romanian homeland in the rondo-like last movement, as well as in the *Andante Cantabile*. It goes beyond this, with the four-movement work following the classical form.

“Beneath numerous layers of the musical material and almost obsessive polyphonic elaboration, a clear structure and natural sense of phrasing always emerge,” says Frank. “The deeper you dive into the text, the more overwhelming the amount of highly differentiated patterns and shades that come to light.” Anastasia especially notes “the amazing harmonies and harmonic structures in the work. With this sonata, Enescu creates a unique and highly personal sound world that cannot be compared with any other style from this period.” The first movement is very broad in its conception, with complex phrases and melodic progressions that interweave or move in contrast, “It is like a film of early Surrealism in which many different elements come together.” What follows is a truly “crazy” scherzo with dazzling harmonic and metric shifts. Enescu’s score is notated in strikingly great detail. “We listened to historical recordings of Enescu interpreting his own works,” Anastasia explains. “He plays everything exactly as notated, but in a very natural way - almost like improvising. That was very enlightening for us.”

The *Suite Italienne* by Stravinsky functions as a clear, conscious contrast to the Enescu Sonata. In this work too, modernism is presented through the retrospective lens, but here with the worlds of the Italian Baroque and the *Commedia dell’arte*. The basis of this composition is the ballet *Pulcinella* composed by Stravinsky for Diaghilev in 1920. The *Suite Italienne* for cello and piano is distilled from the dances of this ballet. Stravinsky wrote this suite in 1933, with cellist Gregor Piatigorsky assisting him in arranging the cello part. Like the ballet *Pulcinella*, the *Suite Italienne* is a tribute to Giovanni Battista Pergolesi. Stravinsky believed that the trio sonatas from which he took the themes were by Pergolesi. However, recent study has found that Domenico Gallo, a contemporary of Pergolesi who worked in Venice around 1750, appears to be the actual creator. The first two movements follow the original work relatively closely, but in the third movement Stravinsky goes his own way. The music becomes more dissonant and percussively more distinctive in its rhythm. As the suite progresses, the Italian *Pulcinella* gradually becomes the Russian Petrushka, who Stravinsky had previously monumentalized in his 1910-11 ballet. The result is a harlequinade, a commonly used motif in early modernism, not least in paintings by Pablo Picasso, a friend of Stravinsky.

Nadia’s “*Trois pièces*” from 1913 and Lili’s “*D’un soir triste*” from 1917-18 form the centrepiece of this “*Salon Boulanger*”. What unites both works is a foundation in the impressionistic world. Most notably, “*D’un soir triste*” reveals how ahead of her time Lili Boulanger was as a composer, walking her own independent path. “She dares to experiment with bold harmonies, and through modulation and voice leading clearly

leaves convention, glimpsing into the future,” and it is precisely here that Anastasia hears profound parallels with Enescu’s *Second Cello Sonata*. “Their compositional means and languages are both very personal and sometimes peculiar in their effect”. “*D’un soir triste*” is one of the very last works that Lili Boulanger composed shortly before her death on March 15th, 1918. This “*Sad evening*” is on one hand a counterpart to “*D’un matin de printemps*” (“Spring morning”) of 1918, and on the other hand, the piece has its match in songs such as “*Dans l’immense tristesse*” (“*In tremendous sadness*”), where sorrow and gloom are expressed in a similar manner. It refers to two fateful events, namely the First World War and the unstoppable, fatal illness of Lili Boulanger.

While parts of Paris are under artillery fire, Lili spends her last months in Mézy-sur-Seine. There she is cared for devotedly by a friend and her sister Nadia. Lili is already so weakened that she can no longer write “*D’un soir triste*” with her own hands. She dictates the work to her sister Nadia, often under time pressure, which is noticeable in the original manuscript. “In some places the cello part is not completely notated,” Frank says. “At times, some notes are missing, with scarce dynamic and articulation markings, but otherwise the music is written with incredible clarity.” Frank and Anastasia have reconstructed the missing elements from the original manuscript. The manuscript can be found in the “Bibliothèque Nationale de France” in Paris but has not yet been published, unlike the two other versions of “*D’un soir triste*”, for piano trio and for orchestra. Although a recording of the version for cello and piano may be found, it is not based on the original manuscript. “Duos sometimes perform a simple transcription of the piano trio version, with the cello playing the violin or cello part alternately,” tells Frank, “but interestingly, the original manuscript for cello and piano reveals many differences when compared to the trio version: divergent harmonies, additional voices, and at times completely new bars of music.” In this way, “*D’un soir triste*” on this album is a genuine first recording. The music demonstrates the extent to which Lili conceived this piece in vocal terms. “The cello voice could just as easily be sung,” Anastasia and Frank add. “The melodic lines and phrases are long and intense, inviting one to breathe as a singer would.” Above all, the piece expresses “instability, fragility and vulnerability”. “As the work draws to a close, the music disappears, withdraws - like the course of fate. Lili, so young yet so mature, bids a serene farewell. When we perform this work in concert, after the final note is played a silence prevails – a lasting stillness.”

Liner notes by Marco Frei











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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Brendon Heinst'.

recording & mastering engineer at TRPTK

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Liner notes	Marco Frei

This album was recorded between August 21st to 24th 2020, at the Westvest90 Church in Schiedam (NL). Frank van de Laar plays on a Steinway Model D Concert Grand.

EQUIPMENT

Microphones	DPA d:dicatE 4006A DPA d:dicatE 4015A Sony C100
AD/DA converters	Merging Technologies Hapi Merging Technologies Anubis
Master clock	Grimm Audio CC2 at 352.8 kHz
Monitoring	KEF Blade Two loudspeakers KEF LS50 loudspeakers Hegel H30 amplifiers Sennheiser HD800S headphones
Power conditioning	Furutech Daytona 303E CAD Ground Control GC1
Cabling	Furutech custom microphone cables Furutech custom balanced interlinks Furutech custom power cables Furutech custom loudspeaker cables
Misc.	JCAT NET Card FEMTO JCAT M12 Switch Gold Furutech e-TP609E NCF Furutech NCF Boosters R.T.F.S. acoustic modules

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