

ENESCU

Cello Sonatas

Laura Buruiana, Cello
Martin Tchiba, Piano



George Enescu (1881–1955) Cello Sonatas

Lauded as a violinist throughout his lifetime, George Enescu was, as his pupil Yehudi Menuhin attested on numerous occasions, a protean all-round musician whose strongest desire was to enjoy comparable recognition as a composer. Despite early success, notably the two *Romanian Rhapsodies* [Naxos 8.550327], his work found real appreciation only among a small number of musicians and admirers. Prolific in his youth, during which he pursued studies first in Vienna then in Paris, the demands of performance and administration, not to mention upheaval in his personal life and in his beloved Romania, slowed his creativity so that he was able to complete only a handful of major compositions after the First World War. Yet the sheer quality of these works, which amalgamate his understanding of the classical masters with the achievement of the French and German romanticists, while transcending stereotypical notions of radical and conservative, has seen a gradual resurgence of interest over the past three decades.

Chamber music was a prominent feature of Enescu's music from his earliest years. Along with the two cello sonatas recorded here, there are four extant violin sonatas, two string quartets [Naxos 8.554721], two piano quartets [the second on Naxos 8.557159], a piano quintet [Naxos 8.557159], piano trio, string octet, and wind decet [Naxos 8.554173] as well as shorter pieces for various combinations. The cello sonatas give a good idea of the formal and emotional distance that Enescu travelled in the course of his composing: the first is indebted in many respects to Brahms and also his French contemporaries; the second, however, could only be by Enescu in its density of thought and a subtlety of expression that, while tonally elusive, is rarely without a sense of key to ground the formal design and also to direct the musical progress.

The *First Cello Sonata* was written seemingly in twelve days near the end of 1898, between the first two violin sonatas, the second of which marked Enescu's stylistic breakthrough as a composer. Brahms is evident

both in its formal expansiveness and motivic rigour, though not even he was so explicit in deriving a work's material from just one basic motif, here the three-note cell F-G-A flat which duly generates not only the work's melodic content but also its rhythmic vitality.

Launched by twofold reiterations of the three-note motif, the first movement proceeds with a pensive theme on piano while the cello maintains a stealthy underlying rhythm. This gathers momentum as the latter changes to pizzicato, before taking on the theme in an impassioned guise against volleys from the piano. A secondary theme for cello is comparatively relaxed and expansive, though the basic motif rumbles on in the piano's left hand, before the music subsides to near stasis. The development combines elements of both themes in an ingenious yet understated discourse, with the cello again playing pizzicato for much of the time, though the climax involves both instruments in virtuosic elaboration of the basic motif. The modified reprise focuses on the ruminative return of the second theme, this having been all but absent from the development, before a sparse coda makes laconic reference back to the basic motif as the music fades to nothingness. The second movement is a spirited intermezzo, or what might possibly be considered a slow scherzo, whose main theme features several motifs ideal for elaboration, with the two instruments engaging in a robust interplay of echo and anticipation. There is no separate trio section: rather the material evolves as a continual process of modified restatement, at length heading into a calmly speculative coda before the brusque conclusion; the basic motif conspicuous by its presence. The third movement opens with a barcarolle-like theme on the cello over a rocking accompaniment on the piano, the former employing its most mellow tone as the music eloquently unfolds. Rippling piano chords initiate a more anxious central section, against which the basic motif sounds ominously on cello, before piano effects a brief climax, the main theme returning with renewed intensity.

Despite some assertive gestures from the piano, the movement now heads towards its restful close. The finale plunges straight into vigorous contrapuntal activity between the instruments, the basic motif furnishing a host of related ideas. This is contrasted with a theme more songful and yielding, but the opening material soon steals back in so that the strenuous discourse can be resumed. There is a brief reappearance of the contrasting melody, but nothing can prevent the main idea from steering the music into a coda from which the basic motif makes one final and clinching appearance.

It was almost four decades before Enescu turned again to the medium, with his *Second Cello Sonata* composed during 1935 and dedicated to the Catalan cellist Pablo Casals. Only then did the composer release its predecessor for publication, the two pieces appearing as *Op. 26* and so pointing up the all-round distance between them. The latter typifies Enescu's mature music with its subtle folk inflections, and in an idiom where timbre and texture are integrated into the motivic discourse.

The first movement starts with music whose melodic aspect is unerringly proportioned between cello and piano. This unfolds at some length, before a second main idea channels the two instruments along notably separate lines. Elements of both themes are combined as the music builds to an unexpectedly forceful climax, before a transition into the second theme which is now more questioning than previously. From here the opening theme resumes to

restore the initial repose. The second movement begins with oblique gestures from the cello and a scurrying motion in the piano that gradually assume greater substance. Once again the music is marked by a high degree of instrumental interplay and, as in the comparable movement of the earlier work, proceeds in a state of constant development. Two-thirds of the way through the activity thins out markedly as the music heads into a spectral coda marked by registral extremes and motivic fragmentation. The third movement is pervaded by the soulful melody announced by the solo cello at the outset; a theme which is closely modelled on the *doina* or shepherd's tune that is central both to traditional Romanian music and Enescu's mature composition. The piano belatedly provides a poised accompaniment as the cello draws on ever greater reserves of subdued eloquence, at length arriving at a distilled simplicity from where it is but a short distance, temporally at least, to the conclusion. The finale is marked *à la roumaine*, which aptly describes its overall character and the profile of its material. Nor is this any less elusive than the previous movements, an animated if understated first theme followed by one where the piano readily evokes the sound of a cimbalom. There is a forceful central climax, after which these two themes are freely modified, on the way to a coda that itself opens out into an unexpectedly powerful apotheosis, ending the work in decisive fashion.

Richard Whitehouse

Laura Buruiana

Cellist Laura Buruiana was born 1980 in Bucharest (Romania). She studied at the National University of Music in Bucharest with Marin Cazacu, Serban-Dimitrie Soreanu and Vasile Tugui and at the Musikhochschule in Cologne with Frans Helmerson. Laura Buruiana won both the European and the International “Young Concert Artists Auditions” in Leipzig (2002) and New York (2003) as well as the “Premio Arturo Bonucci” in Italy (2004). Concert engagements have taken her to such halls as the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., the Konzerthaus and Philharmonie Berlin, the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, the Shanghai Grand Theatre and the Kaufmann Hall in New York. She has performed in festivals such as the Rheingau Musikfestival, the Berlin Young Euro Classic Festival, the Usedomer Musikfestival, the Spoleto Festival and the Enescu Festival in Bucharest. She has also appeared as soloist with orchestras such as the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, the Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra Bratislava, the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, the Chamber Orchestra of the Triangle in North Carolina, the Orchestra Sinfonica di Bari, the Canton Symphony Orchestra, the Romanian Radio and Philharmonic Orchestras in Bucharest and a number of other orchestras in Romania. Her radio recordings have been broadcasted in several European countries. Since 2004 cellist Laura Buruiana and pianist Martin Tchiba have formed a duo with international engagements for concerts and recordings.

Martin Tchiba

Born in 1982 in Budapest (Hungary), pianist Martin Tchiba lives in Germany. His concert appearances include performances in concert halls and festivals such as the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, the Tonhalle Düsseldorf, the Budapest Autumn Festival, the Spoleto Festival, the Braunschweig Classic Festival, the Flagey Brussels and the Europäisches Klassik Festival Ruhr. He has made numerous live and studio recordings and broadcasts for stations such as WDR Cologne, SR, Deutschlandradio Kultur in Berlin, Dutch Radio and TV and Hungarian Radio Budapest. After multiple successes in youth competitions he has focused on building up a personal artistic profile and a substantial repertoire ranging from traditional to contemporary music. He has played world premières of works by renowned composers. He was granted scholarships from the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and the German Academic Exchange Service and won the Cultural Award of the Federal State Capital Saarbrücken. After piano studies with Karl-Heinz Kämmerling in Hanover he studied piano with Thomas Duis at the Musikhochschule Saarbrücken and Jean-Jacques Düнки at the Musikakademie Basel. He also received significant impulses in master classes and sessions, e.g. from Lazar Berman and György Kurtág. In addition he studied composition with Michael Denhoff. Tchiba has been awarded a number of honours also as a composer.



Photo: Lianne Photographie

Chamber music was a prominent feature of Enescu's music from his earliest years. Though separated by almost four decades, the two *Cello Sonatas* were not published until 1935. The *First* is indebted in many respects to Brahms and to Enescu's French contemporaries, but the *Second*, dedicated to Pablo Casals, could only be by Enescu in its density of thought and subtlety of expression. The finale is marked *à la roumaine*, which aptly describes the work's overall character and the profile of its material.

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|---|--------------|
| Sonata in F minor for cello and piano, Op. 26, No. 1 | 39:03 |
| 1 Allegro molto moderato | 12:51 |
| 2 Allegretto scherzando | 8:30 |
| 3 Molto andante | 10:33 |
| 4 Presto | 6:59 |
| Sonata in C major for cello and piano, Op. 26, No. 2 | 29:32 |
| 5 Allegro moderato ed amabile | 10:08 |
| 6 Allegro agitato, non troppo mosso | 6:02 |
| 7 Andante cantabile, senza lentezza | 6:33 |
| 8 Final à la roumaine | 6:36 |



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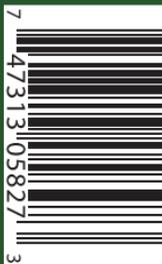


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 Playing Time
 68:46


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