



# FRENCH FAVORITES

Debussy, Franck, Ravel, Chopin

Dmitry Kouzov, cello  
Peter Laul, piano

DE 3552



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Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

***Sonata for Cello and Piano***

1. Prologue (4:15)
2. Serenade (3:11)
3. Finale (3:31)

César Franck (1822–1890)

***Sonata in A Major for Cello and Piano***

4. Allegretto ben moderato (5:46)
5. Allegro (7:34)
6. Recitativo-Fantasia (7:07)
7. Allegretto poco mosso (5:29)

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

8. ***Pièce en forme de Habanera*** (3:01)

Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849)

***Sonata for Piano and Cello in G Minor, Op. 65***

9. Allegro moderato (15:15)
10. Scherzo: Allegro con brio (4:37)
11. Largo (3:24)
12. Finale. Allegro (5:48)

Total Time: 69:17

## Program Notes

The title page of Debussy's Sonata for Cello and Piano reads "Six Sonatas for diverse instruments, composed by Claude Debussy." This is a cruel reminder that Debussy was only able to write three of the six sonatas before his death in 1918.

Discouraged by the events of World War I and by a diagnosis of cancer, Debussy wrote, "I spent nearly a year unable to write music . . . after that I've almost had to re-learn it. It was like a rediscovery and it seemed to me more beautiful than ever!"

Written in 1915, the Sonata is concise and employs a rich variety of tonal colors. Major and minor tonalities are mixed with whole-tone and pentatonic melodies, veering at times toward atonality. Debussy utilizes a wide range of musical effects in both the piano and the cello, including soaring melodies in the cello's upper register.

César Franck wrote his Sonata for Violin and Piano in 1886. It was dedicated to the famous violinist Eugène Ysaÿe, who performed it often. Ysaÿe's son Antoine acknowledged in a letter that "it has often been speculated that the work was first conceived as a sonata for cello and piano," and be that as it may, this recording confirms that the work is stunningly beautiful when performed on cello and piano. The transcription is by Jules Delsart, a professor of cello at the Paris Conservatory when the sonata was written.

The work is technically challenging for both instruments, with sweeping melodies in violin range for the cello and fistfuls of notes for the piano. (However, Kouzov and Laul experience no technical difficulties and are free to concentrate on bringing out the piece's passion, turbulence, tenderness, exuberance, and optimism.)

The last movement of the four-movement work begins with one of the most beautiful melodies ever written, marvelous because it is repeated note for note in the cello only one measure later. Franck continues this remarkable

counterpoint for thirty-two measures before introducing a contrasting section. The melody is repeated at intervals, in rondo-like fashion. After some episodes in minor keys, the piece ends triumphantly in A major.

Maurice Ravel was fond of Spanish music, and Spanish rhythms and tonalities can often be heard in his music. In his **Pièce en forme de Habanera**, the slow, alluring Cuban dance is his inspiration, as it was for George Bizet in his famous habanera from *Carmen*. Although Ravel's habanera was originally a song without words for bass voice and piano, he arranged the piece for cello and piano, and from that transcription came many other versions.

Frédéric Chopin was one of the very few great composers who wrote almost exclusively for one instrument only. That Chopin departed from his usual "piano only" practice to write the **Sonata for Piano and Cello** is a tribute to the cello's singing qualities and its ability to sustain the notes of a melody. There is no better example of a sustained, song-like melody written for cello than the magnificent melody of the middle section of the Scherzo movement of this sonata.

Written in Paris in 1846, toward the end of Chopin's short life, the sonata was dedicated to Auguste Franchomme, who gave the premiere performance with the composer in 1848. It was Chopin's last public concert.

A challenge facing all composers of music for cello and piano is to attain a balance between the two instruments. The piano can easily overpower the cello, especially in its middle register. Chopin achieves a true collaboration between the instruments by giving the cello the lead in much of the musical material. The two instruments are treated as equally as possible, which can be heard in the gentle third movement, where the cello and piano trade off playing and accompanying the heartfelt melody.

Chopin continues the dialog in the last movement, with many contrasting sections, some of them breathless. The piece ends in sunny G-major, but the penultimate chord, C minor, is a surprise.

—David Brin

## Artist Biographies

A versatile performer, cellist **Dmitry Kouzov** has performed worldwide with orchestras, in solo and duo recitals, and in chamber music performances. He has appeared with such orchestras as the St. Petersburg Symphony (Russia), as well as National Symphony of Ukraine, and the South Bohemian Chamber Philharmonic (Czech Republic), to name a few. He was awarded First Prize at the International Beethoven Competition in the Czech Republic and he is a two-time laureate of the International Festival-Competition "Virtuosi of the Year 2000" in Russia. He is also a winner of the New York Cello Society's Rising Star Award. His credits include numerous performances at many prominent concert venues throughout his native Russia, including both St. Petersburg Philharmonic Halls, the conservatoire halls of Moscow and St. Petersburg, and the Mariinsky Theater. Mr. Kouzov made his New York orchestral debut at Alice Tully Hall in 2005, under the baton of Maestro Raymond Leppard. Since that time, he has also made recital appearances in New York at the 92nd Street Y and Bargemusic.

Highlights of Mr. Kouzov's recent seasons include his debuts with the Symphony Orchestra of St.



Petersburg Philharmonic, the St. Petersburg Symphony Orchestra, Johannesburg Philharmonic, recordings with the Sinfonia Varsovia and St. Petersburg Symphony Orchestras, solo appearances with the chamber orchestra "Soloists of St. Petersburg Philharmonic Society," duo recitals in Moscow and St. Petersburg with all Brahms and Beethoven Sonatas with Peter Laul, and chamber music appearances at the Ravinia and Caramoor Festivals Rising Stars Series. As a recording artist, Mr. Kouzov is featured on the Delos, Naxos, Marquis Classics, Onyx, and Albany recording labels.

Mr. Kouzov has appeared in command performances before Mikhail Gorbachev and Prince Andrew, Duke of York. In 2005 and 2006, he was a guest artist at the Verbier Festival, International Bach Festival (Switzerland) and Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival (Germany). Additionally, he has performed at the "May of Janacek" International Festival (Czech Republic), and at the "Art-November" International Festival (Russia), and the "Kiev Summer Music Nights" International Festival, among others.

A consummate chamber musician, Mr. Kouzov has collaborated with Joshua Bell, Yuri Bashmet, Krzysztof Penderecki, Shmuel Ashkenasi, Evgenii Sudbin, Nicholas Angelich, Ilya Gringolts, and the Pacifica and Jupiter String Quartets among others. Mr. Kouzov is a founding member of the Manhattan Piano Trio, with whom he has toured extensively throughout the United States. The trio captured First Prizes at the Plowman and Yellow Springs National Chamber Music Competitions.

In addition to his concert activities, Mr. Kouzov is a devoted teacher. Currently he is Associate Professor of Cello at the University of Illinois. Prior to this appointment he was on faculty at the Juilliard School and Oberlin Conservatory. Mr. Kouzov holds bachelor's and master's of Music degrees from the Sibelius Academy, Helsinki, and an Artist Diploma from the Juilliard School. His principal teachers were Mark Reizenshtock, Victoria Yagling, Joel Krosnick, and Darrett Adkins.

Pianist **Peter Laul** was born into a musical family in St. Petersburg, Russia, and received his education at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, where he studied with Alexander Sandler, and where he has since become a faculty member. In 1997 he won the first prize and a special prize in the Bremen International Piano Competition for the best Schubert sonata performance. He had won third prize and a special prize for the best Bach performance in 1995 at that same competition. He also won first prize at the Scriabin International Piano Competition in Moscow in 2000, and in 2003, he was awarded the honorary medal "For achievements in the Arts" by the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation.

Peter Laul has performed as a soloist with the Saint Petersburg Philharmonic, the Mariinsky Theater Orchestra, the Moscow Symphony Orchestra, and the Moscow State Kapella Orchestra, as well as with numerous other Russian orchestras under the direction of conductors Maxim Shostakovich, Valery Gergiev, Vassily Sinaiski, Eri Klas, Jean-Claude Casadesus, Nikolai Znaider, Nikolai Alekseev, and others. He has also performed with the Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie, Südwestdeutsche Rundfunk, the Dessau, Bremerhaven, and Oldenburg Theatre Orchestras in Germany, the Brazilian National



Symphony Orchestra, the Estonian National Symphony, and the Tallinn Chamber Orchestras (Estonia) as well as "Les Siècles" (France) under François-Xavier Roth.

Peter Laul's recital performances have taken him to the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Halls, the Concert Hall of the Mariinsky Theater, the Moscow Conservatory Halls, the Moscow Tchaikovsky Hall and the new Moscow International House of Music. In Paris he has performed in the Auditorium du Louvre, the Théâtre de la Ville, Théâtre du Châtelet and the Musée d'Orsay; he has performed at the Opera Lyon and Salle Moliere in Lyon, Lincoln Center in New York, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Vredenburg in Utrecht, Casino Basel, Die Glocke in Bremen, the Montpellier Corum, Sapienza University in Rome, Verdi Hall in Milan, Suntory Hall and Opera City Hall in Tokyo, the Luxembourg Philharmonic Hall, Le Theatre de la Monnaie in Brussels and in numerous venues and festivals throughout Russia, Europe, Japan, and the United States. His most recent performances have been at the Serres d'Auteuil festival in Paris, "Progetto Marta Argerich" in Lugano, the "Les Musicales" Festivals in Colmar, "Arts Square," "The Stars of White Nights" and "The Faces of International Pianism" in St. Petersburg, "Art November" in Moscow, the Kamchatka Spring Festival, the Saint-Riquier Festival, the West Cork Chamber Music Festival in Ireland, the Lancut Spring Festival in Poland, and "Le Printemps des Arts" in Monaco.

In 2015 he performed all 32 Sonatas by Beethoven at the Small Philharmonic Hall of St. Petersburg. During the 2016–17 season he performed the same cycle at the Small Hall of the Moscow State Conservatory.

Mr. Laul is a superb chamber musician. In addition to Dmitry Kouzov, his chamber music partners include the Borodin Quartet, Marc Coppey, Maxim Vengerov, Viktor Tretyakov, Ilya Gringolts, Graf Mourja, Sergey Levitin, Alena Baeva, Valery Sokolov, Alexander Ghindin, Diemut Poppen, Françoise Groben, Maja Bogdanovic, Gary Hoffmann, David Grimal, Lawrence Power, Paul Meyer, Romain Guyot, François-Frédéric Gui, Laurent Korcia, and Tedi Papavrami.

Peter Laul has recorded for Harmonia Mundi, Aeon, Onyx, Naxos, Marquis Classics, Querstand, Integral Classics, King Records, Northern Flowers and numerous TV and Radio stations in Russia and abroad. This is his first recording for Delos.



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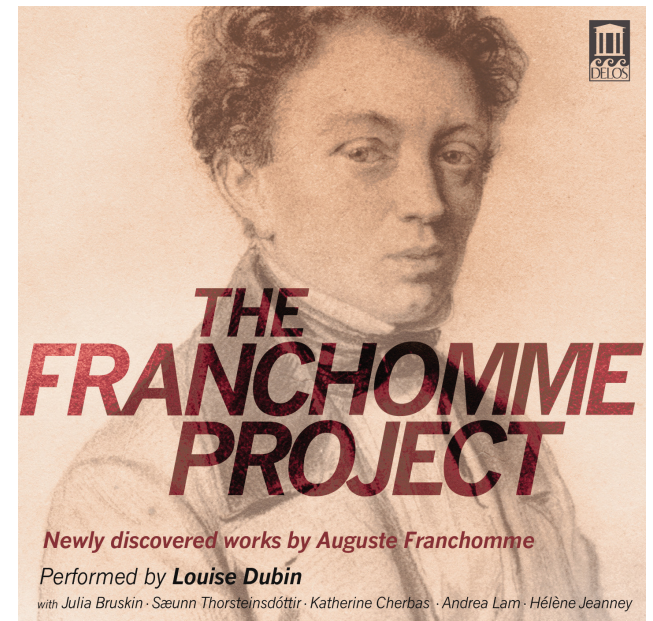
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