



87287

YO-YO MA
KATHRYN STOTT

PARIS
LA BELLE ÉPOQUE

THE MUSIC OF

FAURÉ
FRANCK
MASSENET
SAINT-SAËNS



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KATHRYN STOTT

PARIS
LA BELLE ÉPOQUE

*Yo-Yo lovingly dedicates this album to his wife Jill,
in honor of their 25th Anniversary.*

JULES MASSENET (1842–1912)

1 "Méditation" from *Thaïs* 5'48"

(transcribed for Cello by Yo-Yo Ma)

GABRIEL FAURÉ (1845–1924)

Sonata No. 1 in A Major for Violin and Piano, Op. 13

(transcribed for Cello by Yo-Yo Ma)

2 I. Allegro molto 8'00

3 II. Andante 7'49

4 III. Allegro vivo 4'07

5 IV. Allegro quasi presto 4'38

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS (1835–1921)

6 *Havanaise*, Op. 83 8'54

(transcribed for Cello by Yo-Yo Ma)

CÉSAR FRANCK (1822–1890)

Sonata in A Major for Violin and Piano

(version for Cello and Piano)

7 I. Allegretto ben moderato 5'47"

8 II. Allegro 7'31

9 III. Recitativo - Fantasia: Ben moderato 7'19

10 IV. Allegretto poco mosso 6'02



“AWAKENING THE MYSTERIOUS DEPTHS OF OUR SOUL”



It was in the Paris studio of Étienne Vatelot, the renowned *maitre-luthier*, where a four-year old Yo-Yo Ma took his first cello lesson, perched on a stack of telephone directories because no chair was tall enough. Now, more than four decades later, after exploring the music of the Silk Road that connected his ancestors' home in China with the Europe of his childhood, Yo-Yo Ma has made this recording to revisit the city of his birth and his earliest musical memories. The music on this recording represents the Paris of the *belle époque*, its golden age in the years around 1900. This was a Paris so seductive that it enticed Hiao-Tsiun Ma to pack up and leave China in 1936 in order to see what the city had to offer first-hand – and it was this mix of old-world China and modern Paris that gave his son his first taste of the multi-cultural world he would one day captivate with his cello playing. The four pieces Yo-Yo Ma has recorded here, all originally composed for violin and transcribed for cello, recall his own love for a time and place that, through music – that great connector of legend, memory, and experience – are still part of him today.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Paris was a new-born city, alive with art and ideas, and sporting a face-lift courtesy of the baron Haussmann's grand civic plan. From the top of the Eiffel Tower, which opened to the public in 1889, one could see broad tree-lined boulevards radiating from the Arc de Triomphe. This was the Paris of Monet and Cézanne, of the Moulin Rouge and the new brasserie. This is the city where the Statue of Liberty was built before being shipped to the U.S.A., where Louis Pasteur tested a new vaccine on a boy bitten by an infected dog – where Renoir painted a boating party lunching on the banks of the Seine, and Seurat captured a perfect Sunday afternoon on La Grande Jatte.

At Madeleine Lemaire's Tuesday night salons on the rue de Monceau, Camille Saint-Saëns and his student Gabriel Fauré often played the piano, and Jules Massenet sometimes dropped by as well. One night at the nearby Salle Villiers, Marcel Proust listened to César Franck's great A Major Sonata, a landmark of the era; music, he wrote, more than any other art, can “awaken in us the mysterious depths of our soul.” It was Franck's Sonata, along with music by Saint-Saëns

and Fauré, that Proust recalled when he invented Vinteuil, the fictional composer of *À la recherche du temps perdu* (In Search of Lost Time), who writes his own sonata.

This recording is anchored by two celebrated sonatas. Fauré's A Major Sonata, first performed in 1877, was one of the earliest musical signposts of the new age, and it was Fauré's first masterpiece. It is unmistakably the work of a young man, rich in impetuous rhythmic drive and a flow of melody in which, as Proust commented, “infinity seems to unfold.” Its classic beauty and grace mask an underlying strength; this is music of quiet power. It was Fauré's first success, and as Saint-Saëns wrote in his review of the premiere, “With a single leap, M. Fauré has taken his place alongside the great masters.”

The Franck Sonata, written in 1886 (for violin but soon transcribed for cello because of its wide-spread popularity), is a monument of the *belle époque*. In its masterful cyclic form, with all four movements related by recurring musical ideas and subtle cross-references, Proust found the model for Vinteuil's sonata, with phrases that disappear and return later, transformed.

(And, at the same time, he saw in miniature the essence of his entire novel, in which themes are stated, abandoned, and recalled for further investigation.) The unusual third movement, with its cadenza-like recitative, is especially impressive in the way it revisits themes and then previews what will happen to them in the finale. Throughout the sonata, the interplay of the two instruments is a marvel of shared discovery; what Proust writes of Vinteuil's sonata might also be said of Franck's: “It was as at the beginning of the world, as if there were as yet only the two of them on the earth.”

The “Méditation” from *Thaïs* is a signature melody of the age. Massenet's opera was based on a novel by Anatole France, the Nobel Prize-winning writer who was the inspiration for the character of Bergotte in Proust's novel. The story of a monk who converts the prostitute Thaïs only to fall in love with her, France's work was published first in serial form and then as a best-selling book in 1890. Massenet's opera, which followed four years later, wasn't a comparable hit – although it did cause a stir when the California-born soprano, Sibyl Sanderson “accidentally” exposed her breasts at

the premiere – but the famous Act 2 “Méditation” caught on immediately. Often dismissed as salon music over the years, this is in fact a highly serious depiction of the heroine’s conversion, its supple melody both chaste and yet alluring as it slowly rises to its climax.

Saint-Saëns was the subject of an article written by Proust early in his career, and he was the first composer to give Proust an idea of the kind of music Vinteuil might write. The 1887 *Havanaise* reflects the late-nineteenth-century vogue for exoticism, and the French fascination with Spanish music. Saint-Saëns’ *havanaise* (*habanera* in Spanish) is no less seductive than the one Bizet’s *Carmen* had introduced to Paris a decade earlier (to an indifferent opening night crowd), but it covers a much wider emotional spectrum and, as it explodes with fiery passion, it becomes a virtuoso showpiece.

This is the music that Proust knew – the sounds of a world that now seems irretrievable. It’s difficult today to realize that people then listened to music with a real hunger, not knowing how long they might wait to hear a favorite piece again. For a while Proust subscribed to the new *Théâtrophone* service that allowed him to listen to concerts over the receiver of his home telephone. If he lived today, he would be thrilled to know he could hear the music he loved over and over, so that he could try to uncover all its secrets – even though he recognized that drawing connections between music and experience is inexhaustible. What he wrote of Vinteuil’s composition could just as easily be said of Fauré or Franck today: “Since I was able to enjoy everything that this sonata had to give me only in a succession of hearings, I never possessed it in its entirety: it was like life itself.”

~ Phillip Huscher ~

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KATHRYN STOTT

One of today’s most versatile pianists, Kathryn Stott enjoys a busy career as soloist, chamber musician, and recording artist.

Following her studies at the Yehudi Menuhin School, where her teachers included Vlado Perlemuter and Nadia Boulanger, the Lancashire-born Stott graduated to the Royal College of Music where she studied with Kendall Taylor. Her international career was launched in 1978 when she was a prizewinner in the Leeds International Piano Competition. Since then, she has performed with many major orchestras worldwide. Her schedule also includes extensive international recital and chamber music performances, including regular performances with Yo-Yo Ma, Michael Collins, Isabelle van Keulen, Federico Mondelci, and the Skampa Quartet.

A dedicated follower of contemporary music, Stott has given the world premieres of new works for

piano and orchestra by many of today’s foremost composers. These have included the Michael Nyman Piano Concerto, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies’ Piano Concerto, and more recently Marc Yeats’ *The Round and Square Art of Memory*.

Stott has led a number of international music festivals. For her work as Artistic Director of a 1995 festival celebrating the music of Gabriel Fauré, she was appointed Chevalier dans l’Ordre des Arts et Lettres by the French Government in recognition of her achievements as an ambassador of French music. She was also Artistic Director of Piano 2000 and Piano 2003 in Manchester.

Kathryn Stott and Yo-Yo Ma’s previous collaboration was the critically-acclaimed, Grammy® Award-winning “Soul of the Tango,” featuring the music of Astor Piazzolla.

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THIS DISC IS DESIGNED FOR USE IN SUPER AUDIO CD PLAYERS ONLY.

Produced by STEVEN EPSTEIN

DSD Authoring Engineer: ROBERT WOLFF

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