

DIALOGUES

NOÉMIE RAYMOND - CELLO
ZHENNI - LI COHEN - PIANO
RACHMANINOV
CLARKE

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FUSION







NOÉMIE RAYMOND

Destined to "leave her mark on posterity through her immense sensitivity and immeasurable talent" (Journal des Citoyens), cellist Noémie Raymond-Frisset enjoys a diversified international career that has led her to perform as a chamber musician and soloist with renowned orchestras. From London's Royal Albert Hall to the Festival Internacional de Musica de Camara in Lima, her "passionate, hypersensitive and refined" playing has taken her to four continents, including performances with violinists Midori Goto and Pinchas Zukerman.

Recognized as one of the "30 Hot Canadian Classical Musicians under 30" by CBC, Noémie is also an accomplished and experienced educator.

Holder of a Doctorate in performance and literature of the prestigious Eastman School of Music, she is a cello and chamber music mentor for the Heifetz International Music Institute's junior program and teaches at the Festival del Lago in Mexico. She also acted as director of operations, development and communications at the Montreal Chamber Music Festival.

She has won several prizes in national and international competitions. She has also distinguished herself as a scholarship recipient on several occasions and as a laureate of the Canada Council for the Arts Musical Instrument Bank competition.

Noémie plays the beautiful Matteo Goffriller "Ex-Curtis" cello (1700) generously on loan to her by Canimex Inc. of Drummondville (Quebec).



ZHENNI LI-COHEN

Li-Cohen's riveting presence and passionate performances have brought audiences to their feet around the world. Hailed for her "torrents of voluptuous sound...Li-Cohen impresses as an artist of tremendous conviction, who fascinates even as she provokes" by Gramophone Magazine, "a thrillingly good pianist" by The New Yorker and for her "...big, gorgeous tone and a mesmerizing touch" by The Philadelphia Inquirer, Ms. Li-Cohen has performed in such notable venues as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, Merkin Concert Hall, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and WQXR's Greene Space in New York, the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C., Philadelphia's Kimmel Performing Arts Center, San Jose's California Theater, the Helsinki Music Center in Finland, the Grieghallen in Norway and the Berliner Philharmonie in Germany.

Upcoming engagements include concert appearances with the Bergen Philharmonic in Norway, Bucks County, the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, Dominican Republic National Orchestra, Fairbanks, Johns Hopkins, Lower Merion, Knoxville, Waterloo-Cedar Fall Symphony Orchestras. Deeply committed to the art of recording, Ms. Li-Cohen is passionate about memorializing lesser known works and sharing them with a greater audience as well as traversing the heights of the familiar giants of the repertoire and recently released her second album for the Steinway & Sons label featuring works by Sergei Bortkiewicz (A Letter), reviewed by Gramophone Magazine as "the most consistently beautiful Bortkiewicz recording in the catalogue" and "a must-add to your listening list" by American Record Guide; her third and fourth albums featuring Beethoven (Beethoven's Apotheosis), and traditional Chinese works (Legend of the Phoenix Queen) are upcoming, in addition to a recording project with the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra with Marin Alsop.



SERGEI RACHMANINOFF (1873 - 1943)



REBECCA CLARK (1886 - 1979)

THE COMPOSERS AND THE WORKS

This album features two monumental works for cello and piano, each being the product of remarkably distinct musical voices: those of a female and a male composer who were both virtuoso instrumentalists. She was English, and he, Russian. Both emigrated to the United States, Rachmaninoff fleeing the Russian Revolution as World War I waned, and Clarke being prevented from returning home during World War II.

Written the same year as his famous Piano Concerto No. 2 (1901), Rachmaninoff's Cello Sonata heralds the composer's comeback after a period of depression that resulted from the unfavourable reception of his First Symphony in 1897. One perceives the composer's mystical nature and states of mind in this Sonata. Rachmaninoff's most prolific period occurred at the heart of the modern era in the early 20th century, but he upheld and indeed exemplified Romanticism, which this work strikingly reflects and indeed, some consider it as his most accomplished chamber piece. Dedicated to his friend Anatoly Brandukov, who had served as principal groomsman at his wedding, the Sonata is a beautiful tribute to friendship. Brandukov was a celebrated Russian cellist in his time who premiered several works by Tchaikovsky, and it was he who inspired Rachmaninoff to give the cello line an expressiveness and intensity previously unheard in the repertoire for cello and piano, and to weave a complex exchange between the two instruments.

Composed in 1919, Clarke's Sonata also marked a period of rebirth, three years after she had been expelled from the family home by her father and forced to relocate in the United States. An internationally renowned violist, she is often considered as a proponent of «English Impressionism,» and while the Viola Sonata (heard here in the version for Cello) recalls works by Debussy and Ravel, it also engages with Romanticism, an influence that reveals her poetic affinities. Clarke herself makes this clear by inscribing the first movement with the following lines from the French poet Alfred de Musset's *La Nuit de mai* (The Night in May): Take thy lute, poet, for the wine of youth Ferments even now as with a God's desire.

After submitting the Sonata to a prestigious competition for composers, Clarke placed second behind Ernest Bloch. It was unheard of and indeed, socially unacceptable in those years for a work of such great beauty to have been written by a woman. Some critics believed Rebecca Clarke was a pseudonym for Bloch, while others attributed the piece to Ravel. Steeped in English folklore reminiscent of Vaughan Williams, it is also one of Clarke's two major works, the other being her Piano Trio, composed in 1921. Unknown for most of her life, Clarke emerged from obscurity in the 1970s and today, this Sonata has taken its rightful place in the standard repertoire for viola.

Pairing Rachmaninoff and Clarke in a musical program may seem unusual, but doing so opens perspectives and contexts that shed new light on these composers' unique and only contributions to the duo sonata genre.

Moreover, Clarke's Sonata is rarely recorded on an album for cello. We thus engage in an unusual dialogue where two rich, intense universes, similar and distinct, coexist: those of two artists of genius.



The 2xHD Fusion Mastering System: In the constant evolution of its proprietary mastering process, 2xHD has progressed to a new phase called 2xHD FUSION, integrating the finest analog, with state-of-the-art digital technology. The mastering chain consists of a selection of high-end vacuum tube equipment. For the recordings on this album, the original 192/24 master was played on a Nagra HD DAC X high-end tube playback converter, wired with OCC silver cables to the 2xHD analog mastering electronic tube system permitting 2xHD FUSION to obtain a better resolution and 3D imaging. The resulting signal is then transferred back into high resolution formats by recording it in DXD using a custom 2xHD Technologies A to D converter. All analog and digital cables that are used are state-of-the-art Siltech. The 2xHD FUSION mastering system is powered by a super capacitor power supply, using a new technology that lowers the digital noise found in the lowest level of the spectrum.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people contribute to the making of an album. Zhenni and I wish to take this opportunity to thank them. A huge thank you to Lily and Forte Art & Music for their support and for believing in this project. A big thank you also to the Father Lindsay Foundation and Orford Music for their support in developing Dialogues. Thank you to the entire Leaf Music team for bringing our vision to life, to the collaborators present during the recording (Jeremy, René, and Michel), and to all those who supported us, both near and far, throughout our journey. - Noémie and Zhenni

Finally, on a more personal note, I extend heartfelt thanks to my partner Zhenni for accompanying me on this wonderful adventure, and to Canimex and Roger Dubois for their support over the years through the loan of the magnificent cello heard on this recording.
- Noémie



DIALOGUES

NOÉMIE RAYMOND - CELLO
ZHENNI-LI COHEN-PIANO

CREDITS

Noémie Raymond, Cello
Zhenni Li-Cohen, Piano

Jeremy VanSlyke
Executive Producer and
Recording Producer

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Recording and
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Nathan Cann
Audio Editing

Recorded at
Salle de concert
du Domaine Forget
de Charlevoix,
Saint-Irénée, PQ

Artwork – André Perry
2xHD executive producer –
André Perry

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF (1873 - 1943) Cello Sonata in G Minor, Op. 19

- 1 Rachmaninoff: Cello Sonata in G Minor, Op. 19:
I. Lento-allegro moderato (14:00)
- 2 Rachmaninoff: Cello Sonata in G Minor, Op. 19: II. Allegro scherzando (07:14)
- 3 Rachmaninoff: Cello Sonata in G Minor, Op. 19: III. Andante (06:06)
- 4 Rachmaninoff: Cello Sonata in G Minor, Op. 19: IV Allegro mosso (11:55)

REBECCA CLARK (1886 - 1979) Viola Sonata (Version for Cello & Piano)

- 5 Clarke: Viola Sonata (Version for Cello & Piano):
I. Impetuoso, Poco agitato (08:56)
- 6 Clarke: Viola Sonata (Version for Cello & Piano): II Vivace (04:14)
- 7 Clarke: Viola Sonata (Version for Cello & Piano): III. Adagio (12:07)

(Total run-time: 01:04:32)

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