

Solo Cello

Nina Kotova



50 YEARS



Maraís

Hindemith

Schnittke

Bach

Handel

Cassadó

Solo Cello

Nina Kotova

Marin Marais (1656–1728)

1. **Couplets des Folies d'Espagne from Suite in D Minor for Viola da Gamba**
arranged by Christian Döbereiner and Nina Kotova (6:33)

Paul Hindemith (1895–1963)

Sonata for Solo Cello, Op. 25 No. 3

2. I Lebhaft, sehr markiert (1:44)
3. II Mäßig schnell, Gemächlich (1:26)
4. III Langsam (3:27)
5. IV Lebhaft Viertel (0:36)
6. V Mäßig schnell (1:51)

Alfred Schnittke (1934–1998)

7. **Klingende Buchstaben** (Sounding Letters) (3:47)

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Suite No. 3 in C Major for Solo Cello

8. I Prelude (3:31)
9. II Allemande (3:35)
10. III Courante (3:23)
11. IV Sarabande (3:02)
12. V Bourrée I and II (3:58)
13. VI Gigue (3:02)

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

14. **Passacaglia from Suite No. 7 in G Minor, HWV 432**
freely arranged by Zinoviyn Dynov
Maestoso (6:58)

Gaspar Cassadó (1897–1966)

Suite per Violoncello Solo

15. I Preludio — Fantasia, Andante (5:35)
16. II Sardana (Danza) — Allegro giusto (3:49)
17. III Intermezzo e Danza Finale — Lento ma non troppo — Allegro marcato (4:50)

Total Playing Time: 61:06

The violin family of instruments, the most common of which are the violin, viola and cello, emerged in the mid-16th century in northern Italy. The influential instrument maker Andrea Amati made the earliest surviving cello in about 1560 for the court of King Charles IX of France. Known as the “King,” this cello is in the collection of the National Music Museum in Vermillion, South Dakota.

The cello developed in Italy from an accompanying instrument to a solo instrument, and by the end of the 17th century, Italian composers including Locatelli and Valentini were writing virtuoso sonatas for the instrument. The earliest works for solo cello, dated 1689, are the Seven Ricercari by Domenico Gabrielli, who worked in Bologna and studied composition with Giovanni Battista Vitali.

Johann Sebastian Bach’s Six Suites for solo cello, written about 1720, stand out as some of the greatest works for solo cello. During the 18th century, composers including

Tartini, Porpora, Abel, Vivaldi, Boccherini, J. C. Bach and Haydn wrote virtuoso concertos for the cello.

It wasn’t until the romantic style concertos written by Schumann, Saint-Saëns, Tchaikovsky, Dvořák and Elgar that the cello emerged as the eloquent, charismatic and sonorous instrument we know today. By the mid 20th century, it stood firmly on the pedestal of being one of the three most important solo instruments, after piano and violin.

Early in the 20th century, the six incomparable suites for solo cello by J. S. Bach became known to audiences, cellists and composers, thanks mainly to the great cellist Pablo Casals, who said, “The suites opened up a whole new world.” Outstanding 20th-century composers including Reger, Kodály, Britten, Cassadó, Bloch, Hindemith and Schnittke discovered the myriad possibilities of the sounds of unaccompanied cello and contributed major compositions for cello alone.

Marin Marais was a prolific composer and virtuoso performer on the viola da gamba, a bowed instrument with six strings and with a range similar to the cello’s. Marais wrote about 550 compositions, including five books of Pièces de viole, which are collections of suites for the viola da gamba. He studied composition with Jean-Baptiste Lully, court composer to Louis XIV; Marais also gained a position at the French Court.

Les Folies d’Espagne, also known as La Folia and Couplets des Folies d’Espagne, is a famous 17th-century melody used as a theme for variations by many composers of the Baroque era. Marais’ Couplets des Folies d’Espagne was written in about 1680; the intricate variations display the virtuosity of the performer, calling for double-stops, elaborate ornaments and passages in the upper range of the cello. The variations end with a return of the theme.

A towering figure in 20th-century music, **Paul Hindemith** composed, taught, and performed. He wrote music in every genre, including songs, motets, opera, piano music, music for symphonic band, symphonic music, concertos and chamber music, including sonatas for almost every instrument of the orchestra.

Hindemith composed his Sonata for Solo Cello in 1922 while he was at the second Donaueschingen Chamber Music Festival for the Encouragement of Contemporary Music. He described the astonishing birth of the composition: “One evening we held a competition to create cello sonatas and I managed to compose four movements in a single evening.” (We do not know who else was involved in this competition.) A few days later, Hindemith added a fifth movement. He dedicated the work to the cellist Maurits Frank, who gave the first performance. The sonata demands



from the performer breathtaking leaps, double-stops, strategic planning, dramatic capabilities and swift bow technique.

Alfred Schnittke was a boldly original composer. Despite the limitations imposed on him by musical censorship in the Soviet Union, where he spent most of his life, Schnittke was still able to experiment with many compositional techniques. He wrote *Klingende Buchstaben* (Sounding Letters) in 1988 as a 40th-birthday tribute to the cellist Alexander Ivashkin. The haunting beginning is based on the notes A–E–A–D–E, taken from the name Alexander. The piece explores the extremes of the cello's range and polar emotions, ending with scordatura (retuning) of both bass strings combined with whispered harmonics at the upper limits.

The Prelude of **J. S. Bach's** C Major Suite carries an improvisational flare. Based on arpeggios, it begins with a gesture that establishes the key and

follows with the dominant pedal. The musical development proceeds with modulations, melodic line and counterpoint; it comes to the glorious arpeggiated chords through a course of harmonic movement, arriving at the main key's scales that precede the finishing assertive chords in C major.

The suite, a set of stylized dances, was one of Bach's favorite forms: in addition to the six suites for cello, he wrote three sets of six suites for keyboard, three partitas for solo violin, and one for solo flute. The bourrée of the third suite is one of the best-known pieces for solo cello, and was often performed as an encore by the legendary Gregor Piatigorsky.

George Frideric Handel's Passacaglia is the last movement of a suite for harpsichord, written about 1720. It is a theme with a set of variations. The Norwegian composer and violinist Johan Halvorsen had the idea of using the theme and

variations as the basis for a set of virtuosic variations for violin and viola, dating from 1894. The set of variations for solo cello, by Zinoviï Dynov, takes off from the Halvorsen arrangement and ignites musical fireworks from one variation to the next, exceeding Handel's and Halvorsen's versions in breadth and technical challenges for the instrumentalist.

Gaspar Cassadó studied composition with Manuel de Falla and Maurice Ravel in Paris. He was a protégé of Pablo Casals and had a distinguished career as a cellist; the cello is central to most of his compositions. Cassadó seems to have had in mind his own abundant talent and expertise as a performer when he wrote his pieces for cello.

Composed in the mid-1920s, the *Suite per Violoncello* has a Spanish flavor. It is very personal, as if the music speaks with the voice of the composer himself. Rich rhythmical patterns pervade all three move-

ments of the suite. Cassadó alternates improvisational, pensive and fanciful sections throughout the piece. The suite is one of Cassadó's best known and most often performed compositions.

—Nina Kotova and David Brin

Russian-born cellist **Nina Kotova**, "a strong and individual artist whose depth of feeling and technical control are never in doubt" (*Gramophone*), has performed in recital and as a soloist with major orchestras across the globe, touring the capitals of Europe, Asia, and the Americas and performing in the world's great concert halls, including London's Wigmore Hall, New York's Carnegie Hall, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, the Berliner Philharmoniker, and the Great Hall of the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow.

Kotova belongs to the third generation of a family of musicians—most notably her father, the renowned virtuoso double-bass player Ivan Ivanovich Kotov. At the age of seven,

she was accepted into an adult cello class at the Moscow Conservatory. At fifteen, she won First Prize at the Prague International Competition, and at nineteen, having graduated from the Moscow Conservatory, she left her homeland to continue her studies in Germany and the United States.

Her previous releases on the Delos label include two works by Tchaikovsky for cello and orchestra—Variations on a Rococo Theme and Pezzo capriccioso, (DE 3531) and pieces by Ernest Bloch and Max Bruch as well as her own Concerto for Cello and Orchestra (DE 3305).

Additionally, Kotova has released albums on Sony Classics, Philips Classics and Warner Classics with repertoire ranging from Bach to Brahms, Reger, Schumann, Rachmaninoff and Prokofiev. She is a champion of contemporary music, and has commissioned and premiered works of leading composers including Christopher Theofanidis,

Jonathan Leshnoff, Dmitry Smirnov, Michael Nyman, and Sir Anthony Hopkins.

Her own compositions include the Triple Concerto for Flute, Oboe, Bassoon and Orchestra; Concerto for Cello and Orchestra; a second concerto for cello and string orchestra known as "The Tuscan"; "Dark Blue": Three Poems for Cello and Orchestra; and pieces for cello and piano and solo cello.

For more information, please visit ninakotova.com.

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