



FRANCK; POULENC; STROHL; TOMBELLE Cello Sonatas

GRAMOPHONE

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by Charlotte Gardner

There's a nice feel of continuity and development to this two-disc celebration of the 19th-century French cello school from the young French cellist Edgar Moreau. His championing of under- and unrecorded repertoire continues with him giving the same treatment here, for instance, to Rita Strohl and Fernand de la Tombelle that he gave to Platti and Graziani on his 'Giovincello' disc of 18th-century cello concertos (12/15). This is also his first recital recording since his debut of musical shorts, 'Play' (6/14), meaning we get to hear how he fashions a programme of weightier musical fare.

It's a fantastic programme, too. From a lesser-spotted repertoire perspective, Strohl's *Titus et Bérénice* sonata is a cracker with its 35-minute, four-movement dramatic depiction of the ancient Roman tale. De la Tombelle's gentle *Andante espressivo*, meanwhile, is as exquisite as it is brief, as is the disc's premiere recording, Poulenc's poignant miniature *Souvenirs*, which was published posthumously only in 2014 having been rediscovered.

Still, the great thing we're learning about Moreau in the recording studio is that, while under-recorded repertoire has been something of a calling card thus far, ultimately this is just the icing on an overall story of a cellist whose recordings are worth hearing whatever he's playing. Take *Titus et Bérénice*, where he manages to capture its Parisian *grand opéra*-esque ardent drama with beautiful chamber intimacy. Likewise, his Poulenc and Franck sonatas stand out for their subtlety and poise. Also to be enjoyed are his exquisitely barely-there *pianissimos* and his glowing tone.

It's also a pleasure to hear Moreau in a sustained programme of emotionally meaty, slower-tempo works. On stage he's shown himself to be an eager virtuoso, and in fact 'Giovincello' featured the most dizzyingly fast third movement of Haydn's First Cello Concerto I've ever heard. Here though, in pyrotechnics-free repertoire relying entirely on the artist's ability to convey poetry, we can really appreciate his ability to sustain *cantabile* lines, to craft musical arguments and indeed to employ all that finger agility towards both overall stylishness and magical moments such as the delicate flutterings of the Poulenc Sonata's 'Ballabile'.

The partnership with Kadouch is also a fine thing, the two of them clearly singing from the same hymn sheet. The beginnings of a partnership akin to Erato's longstanding cello-pianist team, Gautier Capuçon and Frank Braley, perhaps? Who knows. What I can say with confidence is that this is a standout album.