

The Classics Labels



CC1031

Moór

Concerto for two cellos in D major, Op. 69

doubles

Brahms

Concerto for violin and cello in A minor, Op. 102



YONG SIEW TOH
CONSERVATORY
ORCHESTRA

QIAN ZHOU *violin*
QIN LI-WEI &
SEBASTIAN COMBERTI *cellos*
JASON LAI *conductor*

Moór doubles Brahms

Johannes Brahms (1833 – 1897)

Concerto for violin and cello in A minor, Op. 102

- | | | |
|---|-------------------|-------|
| 1 | Allegro | 17:01 |
| 2 | Andante | 8:03 |
| 3 | Vivace non troppo | 9:05 |

Emànuel Moór (1863 – 1931)

Concerto for 2 cellos in D major, Op. 69

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|-------|
| 4 | Molto moderato | 10:00 |
| 5 | Intermezzo (Allegro vivace) | 4:33 |
| 6 | Adagio | 6:25 |
| 7 | Finale (Allegro) | 5:48 |

Total Time 61:00

YONG SIEW TOH CONSERVATORY ORCHESTRA

QIAN ZHOU *violin*
QIN LI-WEI &
SEBASTIAN COMBERTI *cellos*
JASON LAI *conductor*

Emmanuel Moór (1863-1931) is hardly a household name today, either with musicians or concert audiences. And yet, for many years during his lifetime, he was not only a distinguished and highly successful pianist but also a much performed and admired composer. In addition to which, he devoted his latter years to inventing a Double Keyboard which attracted much praise from several world-renowned musicians.

His biographer, the pianist and teacher, Max Pirani, writing in 1959*, referred to the six months in 1921 which he spent staying with Moór at his house, St Eloi in Mont Pèlerin, near Lake Geneva as follows: *'Here was a dynamic personality like a whirlwind, waiting for no conventional conversational introductions, but plunging without delay into a series of revelations for which I was completely unprepared. There was a piano with two keyboards on which one could do the most fantastic things, which could provide new colours and give new grandeur to familiar works. Moór played on this instrument like a dervish, making a Bach Organ Prelude and Fugue sound rich and exciting, with effects of coupling and contrasting timbres that even the greatest arrangers and virtuosi had hitherto sought in vain'*.

Later he wrote: *'His was the most penetrating musical mind with which it has ever been my fortune to come into intimate contact. He transformed my outlook on the performance and on the fundamental significance of much music, predominantly that of Bach'*.

This was a view of Moór's interpretation of Bach that was also held by the great cellist, Pablo Casals, who wrote: *'Moór stimulated me in my feelings and convictions; he confirmed more than any other musician that my understanding of Bach was right'*.

Casals and his wife, Guilhermina Suggia, the dedicatees of the **Concerto for two cellos**, featured on this CD, were not the only celebrated musicians of their day to whom Moór dedicated many compositions and who performed works throughout Europe and the USA. The violinists Jacques Thibaud, Eugène Ysaÿe, Henri Marteau, George Enesco and Carl Flesch, the cellist Carlo Alfredo Piatti, the pianists Alfred Cortot, Mieczyslaw Horszowski and Harold Bauer, as well as the conductors Arthur Nikisch, Willem Mengelberg, Bruno Walter, Sir Henry Wood, Sir George Henschel and Leopold Stokowski all performed and praised Moór's compositions.

Besides five operas and eight symphonies his output also included: concertos for piano

(4), violin (4), cello (2), viola, and harp; a triple concerto for violin, cello, and piano as well as a concerto for string quartet; chamber music; a requiem; and numerous lieder.

There are well over a hundred and fifty-one opus numbers in addition to which there are almost a further seventy works without any opus number, all of which suggests an amazingly fecund creativity. This constant outpouring of works may have resulted in a certain lack of self editing, the result of which was, even at the time, considered to have produced works somewhat lacking in architectural clarity and of an identifiable structure.

Certain press reviews seem to have noted some of Moór's compositional characteristics. After Eugène Ysaÿe and Henry Wood had performed the G major Violin Concerto at the Queen's Hall on November 30th 1907, The Tribune commented: *'It was thoroughly modern, dreamy, striving and nervous, yet not restless. The hand of a clever musician and a fine musical painter is everywhere apparent.'* The Musical Standard remarked, somewhat cryptically, on *'its rhapsodic qualities; so full of ideas that only a transient impression of the composition can be gained at first hearing.'*

Le Monde Musical commented in February 1908 on the speed with which Moór composed, suggesting that he ought to devote *'more thought to construction'*, but balancing this verdict with the more complimentary observation: *'Yet how infinitely preferable are the admirable improvisations of M. Moór to those dry painful productions without inner continuity of ideas – works which are loudly acclaimed as being fully correct in form.'*

Harold Bauer gave the first performance in the USA of the piano concerto in D flat, Op. 57 with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in April 1908. The Boston critic noted the work's rhapsodic nature, the melodic beauty and improvisatory cadenzas, but nonetheless added the qualifying reservation that *'It is possible that a study of the score might reveal more of a scheme than we discovered at this first hearing.'*

Compared with the works of Richard Strauss, Mahler, Debussy, Scriabin, Ravel and Stravinsky, Moór's musical language may be considered to have been almost conservative in its harmonic and rhythmic elements. Indeed at times, and this is apparent in his **'Concert pour deux Violoncelles' Op. 69**, there is a rich eclecticism in which the influences of

Dvořák, Smetana, Liszt and Brahms may be heard which is hardly surprising, given his family background, cultural heritage and musical training.

Emánuel Moór was born in Kecskemét, Hungary in 1863 and died, aged 68, in Chardonne, Switzerland in 1931. His paternal grandfather, Eberhardt Moór, was a furrier with a successful business and was closely involved with the town synagogue. Emánuel's father, Raphael, broke away from his religious background for a while, and pursued a successful career as a tenor both on the concert platform and in opera, singing the title role in Wagner's *Lohengrin* at the opera house in Lemberg (Lvov). Some unidentified crisis caused him to return to Kecskemét and take up the position of cantor at the town synagogue. Emánuel and his brother Willy showed early signs of a musical talent. By the age of six, Emánuel's piano playing was exhibiting evidence of being something of a 'Wunderkind'.

Emánuel went to study in Prague and in 1876, aged 13, was awarded the Gold Medal of the Organ School. In addition to studying the piano and the organ, he later also studied with Friedrich Robert Volkmann (1815-1883), professor of harmony and counterpoint at Budapest's National Academy of Music, where Franz Liszt was the director. Between 1885 and 1897 Moór toured Europe as a soloist and ventured as far afield as the United States.

His proficiency as an organist had major consequences; he developed a profound love of, and insight into the music of J.S.Bach whose vast output he sought to emulate. His expertise as an organist also contributed to his growing frustration with the limitations of the conventional piano; from about 1920 onwards, he devoted his energies to the production and marketing of his invention, the Double Keyboard, an instrument with two keyboards lying one above the other, that allowed, by means of a tracking device, one hand to play a spread of two octaves. The great French pianist, Alfred Cortot quoted Bruno Walter as saying that *'within ten years' time, the Moór Double-Keyboard Piano will have completely superseded the old'* [Pirani].

On the evidence of the Concerto for two cellos featured on this CD, his creative process would seem to move away from conventional structures, such as strict Sonata Form, with the usual sections of an Exposition, in which 'First' and 'Second' subjects are presented, leading to a Development and Recapitulation section. Following more in the line of Franz Liszt, Moór

explored a development of his initial compositional 'building blocks' with a kaleidoscopic and continual transformation of thematic material. In this way, certain melodic, harmonic, rhythmic and even contrapuntal ideas are explored in an almost improvisatory manner, with subtle variants, so that each apparently new idea is closely and sometimes imperceptibly descended from material already presented so that everything appears somehow related. Words such as 'rhapsodic', 'lyrical' and 'episodic' seem to characterise his thoughts.

Moór possessed a gift for the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic language rooted in Hungarian, Czech and Jewish folk music, often combined with a contrapuntal facility based on his academic training. And whereas he indulges in chromatic flourishes, his harmonies are mostly based on various contrasting key centres, often not closely related. He travels from one key to another, flitting from one to another like a hovering butterfly which never settles. This is both unexpected and engaging. The two solo parts interweave in a complimentary fashion, although neither cello part can stand independently from the other. It is less a dialogue between the two soloists and more a duet.

The writing for the cello is, at times, awkward, especially in the high *tessitura*. There are lyrical as well as florid passages, the latter especially exploring chromaticism, in which the two parts dash around, often at intervals of thirds, sixths and octaves, presenting challenges of ensemble and intonation in the more florid virtuosic passages.

The first movement does fall into three sections, with a much foreshortened recapitulation, even though the ideas are developed in a continuous and perpetual transformation, reminiscent of Liszt's compositional structures. Although starting and ending in D major, the composer seems unwilling to remain in any one key for very long as he shifts from one harmonic 'key centre' to another in a restless but organic explorative modulation. His ideas are like small musical atoms; nothing is wasted; much is recycled. The second movement, marked *Intermezzo*, is a *Scherzo and Trio*, in which there is a constant rhythmic *ostinato* motif which chases various key centres in a *moto perpetuo* of energetic frenzy. The third movement, marked *Adagio*, is elegiac, and shows Moór's unusual gifts for lyrical melodic invention and poignant harmonies. The *Finale* starts with a short orchestral introduction which opens at a harmonic tangent until the two soloists establish the home



key of D major in a firm, almost bucolic $\frac{3}{4}$ dance. *"The first performance of the concerto was given in Brussels on January 19th, 1908 by Casals and Suggia, under the conductorship of Ysaÿe. The prominence given to this work by these two great artists during the years immediately following its composition was responsible, perhaps more than anything else, for the building up to its climax of Moór's reputation as a composer. They played it on every tour that they made; in France, in Germany, in Switzerland, in Russia it was featured on their programmes, and everywhere it was acclaimed as a work eminently suited to display their great artistry and skill. It met with real appreciation from the public, and on several occasions a movement had to be repeated, a rare tribute to an unfamiliar work."* [Pirani].

During the first rehearsal of the Concerto for String Quartet with the *Philadelphia Orchestra*, Leopold Stowkowski is quoted as having remarked: ‘*The man who can write such melodies today is unique*’; in the 150th anniversary of Moór’s birth, it is perhaps long overdue to research and resurrect some of his vast output.

Igor Kennaway © 2013

*“Emànuel Moór” by Max Pirani, published by P.R. MacMillan Ltd., London, 1959

Max Pirani (1898-1975) was for many years Head of the Piano Faculty at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where the present author studied with him from 1971 until his death in 1975. For many years an original Emànuel Moór Double-Keyboard Piano was kept in Professor Pirani’s room.

Qian Zhou *violin*

Described by Philip Roth in *The Strad* as “a significant world-class artist”, Qian Zhou is recognized internationally as a violinist, recording artist and teacher of the first rank. Born in Hangzhou, China, Qian Zhou had her early training at the Shanghai Conservatory, winning first prize in the China National Competition in 1984. In 1985, she went to the United States where she completed her studies with Berl Senofsky at the Peabody Conservatory. At the age of only 18, Qian Zhou received instant world-wide recognition at the 1987 Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud Competition in Paris, winning the First Grand Prize and all five major prizes. Her victory and the international attention it drew enabled her immediate access to the major halls and performing opportunities around the globe. A frequent recitalist and soloist with orchestras in Europe, United States, Asia and Africa. Qian Zhou’s ten CDs with the Naxos, Hugo and Hungaraton labels have embraced a wide range of repertoire from Bach to Bartok, drawing praise of the highest calibre. As the founding Head of Strings at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, she has combined her very active performance career with a passion for teaching which has now received equivalent high-level endorsement to that

of her playing. With students already achieving considerable international success in Europe, Asia, America and Australasia, she is in much demand world-wide for masterclasses and as a participant in international juries.

Qian Zhou plays a 1757 J.B. *Guadagnini*, generously loaned by Mr and Mrs Rin Kei Mei.

Li-Wei Qin cello

'Li-Wei drew the audience in with his artistry, his brilliant virtuosity and his very refined musicality and sincerity of interpretation' was the description of the cellist following his performance at the 11th Tchaikovsky International Competition where he was awarded the Silver Medal. He also won the First Prize in the prestigious 2001 Naumburg Competition in New York.



Since then, Li-Wei Qin has appeared all over the world as a soloist and chamber musician, enjoying successful artistic collaborations with renowned ensembles such as the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, London Philharmonic, Prague Symphony, BBC Philharmonic, Osaka Philharmonic, BBC Symphony, KBS Symphony, Sydney Symphony, BBC Scottish Symphony, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Sinfonia Varsovia, NDR Sinfonieorchester Hamburg, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Deutsch Staatsphilharmonie, Shanghai Symphony, Korean Symphony, Singapore Symphony, Auckland Philharmonia and Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, Kremerata Baltica and the Munich, Zurich and Australian Chamber Orchestras.

In recital and chamber music, Li-Wei is a regular guest at Wigmore Hall, the BBC Proms and the City of London, Jerusalem, Rheingau and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Music Festivals, the Lincoln Centre Chamber Music Society, New York, the Australian Festival of Chamber Music, Townsville and Musica Viva. Li-Wei's chamber music collaborators have included musicians such as Daniel Hope, Nobuko Imai, Mischa Maisky, David Finckel, Wu Han, Vladimir Mendelssohn and Peter Frankel.

Li-Wei Qin is an exclusive Universal Music China Artist and has recorded concertos with the Singapore Symphony and London Philharmonic orchestras. He has also recorded an acclaimed set of complete Beethoven Cello Sonatas for Decca.

Sebastian Comberti *cello*

Born in London, Sebastian Comberti studied in Italy with Amedeo Baldovino and later with Derek Simpson and Sidney Griller at the Royal Academy of Music. He was a founder member of the Bochmann Quartet until 1983 when he became principal cello with the London Mozart Players. He plays with a number of chamber groups including Trio Goya and Divertimenti.

A keen interest in historically informed performance has resulted in participation with a great many of London's period instrument groups, appearing as principal cello and soloist with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and the Hanover Band.

As a member of several chamber groups he has recorded for CRD, EMI, Harmonia

Mundi, Hyperion, Meridian, Phoenix and RCA and CPO. In April 2001 Sebastian Comberti founded the Cd label **Cello Classics**, devoted to recordings of rare repertoire and artists, himself releasing several Cds of sonatas by Boccherini, Stephen Paxton and early 19th Century works with fortepiano, and concertos by Haydn and Zumsteeg with the OAE.

Jason Lai conductor

Jason Lai is a leading light in a new generation of Asian conductors. Early success came when he won the BBC Young Conductors Workshop in 2002 and was awarded the post of Assistant Conductor to the BBC Philharmonic. He has been the the Principal Conductor of the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory Orchestra since 2010 and was also recently appointed Associate Conductor of both the Singapore Symphony Orchestra and Hong Kong Sinfonietta. He has also conducted the London Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen. In addition to his conducting Jason is also a broadcaster and he has appeared on various shows for BBC including Young Musician of the Year, Classical Star and The Culture Show. He was the winning conductor in the BBC2 series Maestro.

Cover picture of Pablo Casals by Henrik Moór, courtesy of Sparkasse Fürstenfeldbruck

Cover Design – Tan Wei Boon

Booklet design – Hannah Whale

Booklet photographs – Bryan Lee Kit Meng

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | – | 3 |
| 4 | – | 7 |

 Recorded live in concert at Yong Siew Toh Conservatory, Singapore on 10th March 2012
Recorded at Yong Siew Toh Conservatory, Singapore on 22nd-24th January 2013

Producer – Bernard Lanskey

Engineer – Zhou Xiaodong



www.celloclassics.com • info@celloclassics.com