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CLASSICS

# Martinù

## CELLO SONATAS

Riviera Lazeri cello · David Boldrini piano



**Bohuslav Martinů 1890-1959**  
**Cello Sonatas**

**Sonata No.1 H277 (1939)**

- |                          |      |
|--------------------------|------|
| 1. I. Poco Allegro       | 5'15 |
| 2. II. Lento             | 5'17 |
| 3. III. Allegro con brio | 5'56 |

**Sonata No.2 H286 (1941)**

- |                        |      |
|------------------------|------|
| 4. I. Allegro          | 7'02 |
| 5. II. Largo           | 6'16 |
| 6. III. Allegro comodo | 5'18 |

**Sonata No.3 H340 (1951-2)**

- |                               |      |
|-------------------------------|------|
| 7. I. Poco andante            | 7'23 |
| 8. II. Andante                | 5'28 |
| 9. III. Allegro ma non presto | 5'14 |

Riviera Lazeri *cello*  
David Boldrini *piano*

Through the course of a 60-year-career and with an industry hardly rivalled by any other 20th-century composer of substance, **Bohuslav Martinů** wrote for almost every classical genre and instrumental combination imaginable. The three sonatas for cello and piano occupy a special place in his chamber-music output, each one of them belonging to and reflecting a significant event in his life.

Though he famously spent much of his childhood gazing down on the inhabitants of his Bohemian home-town Polička from his home in the top of its church tower, Martinů had long been resident in Paris when he wrote the **First Cello Sonata** in May 1939, a few weeks after the Nazis had invaded his Czech homeland. He dedicated the Sonata to its first performer, Pierre Fournier, who gave the premiere in the French capital in May 1940, accompanied by another Czech exile, the pianist Rudolf Firkušný. Less than a month later, the Nazis occupied Paris, and Martinů came to recall the concert as 'a last greeting, a beam of light from a better world (which is the opinion of others, not my own). For several minutes we realised what music could give us and we forgot about reality.'

It is the piano that introduces the first movement's heroic main theme, to which the cello responds with passionate outbursts, sometimes lyrical, sometimes agitated, reflecting the turbulent mood of the time. The following slow movement intensifies the bleak mood with its dissonant harmony and fragmentary piano writing. From such brooding the finale's anger rises and then rushes unabated through its course in a nihilistic toccata, scarcely stemmed by an offbeat, jazz-inflected central section.

Forced to flee Paris, Martinů firstly travelled south with the aid of the conductor Charles Munch. The philanthropist and inveterate supporter of musicians Paul Sacher then helped him to sail to the US; he never saw his native Bohemia again. He arrived in New York on 31 March 1941 and was immediately cast into a depression as Bartók would be after him. But another Czech musician had taken Martinů's journey decades before him: Frank Rybka, a cellist and once a composition student of Leos Janáček. Rybka helped Martinů and his family to find a flat on the Jamaica Estate in

Long Island, and it was there in November and December that the **Cello Sonata No.2** was composed, almost the only work of significance from that highly turbulent year. He dedicated it with thanks to Rybka, and the premiere took place on 27 March the following year, given by Lucien Laporte and Elly Bontempo.

The Second Sonata initially seems to pick up where the First left off, with a chromatically wandering main theme (again introduced by the piano) of uncertain direction and character – both strong and fretful, yet with a distinctively Czech character showing through in its cadential tail. The second theme offers a more effective contrast than the hectic rigours of the same movement in the First Sonata, however, and the proportions are more classically organised. The succeeding Largo supplies a pool of repose, imbued with deep melancholy but formed as a continuous rhapsody or soliloquy. Further memories of Bohemia suddenly make themselves known with a real folk dance inserted in the midst of the finale's funky and optimistic dance – a synthesis of worlds old and new.

The **Third Cello Sonata** is harder to place. Martinů composed it between 10 September and 5 October 1952, and dedicated it to the memory of another cellist: the Dutch-born Hans Kindler, who had developed a career as a conductor in the US; in 1945 he gave the première of Martinů's *Thunderbolt P-47* with the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington. The Sonata's premiere took place back in Prague, in the hands of František Smetana and Jiří Hubička, and in its physical journey eastwards we may trace a musical and spiritual pilgrimage too, back home, even if the composer was prevented from returning himself by the Communist authorities; his music represented him.

There is a definite if often indefinably 'Czech' quality to the Sonata's melodies and its accompanying rhythms and harmonies, though the music itself is not at all borrowed by personal to a composer for whom melodies tended to come quite easily. Rather as in his later symphonies, the first movement's climax subsides as suddenly as it arrives. And in a similar vein, an impassioned climax is built from apparently

unpromising, almost naïve material in the central Andante: scales, thirds and fifths for the cellist, like warm-up exercises. The most modern movement of all three sonatas, though, is the Third's joyful finale, at once built from Bohemian materials yet assembled into an entirely new construction, one owing much more to his encounter with the US and its music of various genres as well as to the rhythms of a neoclassical gigue. Home at last, we might think, for a composer who carried his roots with him wherever he went.

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#### **Riviera Lazeri**

Riviera Lazeri studied at the Luigi Cherubini Conservatoire in Florence with Andrea Nannoni, having also attended masterclasses with Franco Maggio Ormezowsky, Mstislav Rostropovich and Lynn Harrell. As a chamber musician she has performed at venues including the Teatro Regio in Parma, Teatro San Carlo in Naples and the Parco della Musica in Rome.

As a member of a new-music ensemble Riviera Lazeri has played in many of the most prestigious concert halls of Europe and America. Musical partners include Ludovico Einaudi, Daniel Hope, Xavier Jiroto, and Antonello Salis. She has worked with many of today's composers, including Stefano Benni, Alessandro Haber, Davide Riondino, Dario Vergassola and Violante Placido. She has also commissioned several new works, including *Adagietto* by Silvano Bussotti, which she premiered in Messina, and a *Double Concerto* by Marco Betta. She has also given masterclasses at the conservatoire in Messina.

#### **David Boldrini**

David Boldrini is a musician equally at home in the roles of pianist, conductor, composer and organist. He studied piano, organ and composition at the Luigi Cherubini Conservatoire in Florence, and received instruction from musicians including Bruno Canino, Vincenzo Balzani, Paul Badura-Skoda and Pier Narciso Masi. Having won over 50 Italian and International competitions he began his career as a chamber pianist, playing with Katia Ricciarelli, Andrea Bocelli, Maria Luigi Borsi, Bruno Canino, Paolo Chiavacci, Franco Mezzena and with ensembles across Italy and farther afield. Since then he has made international tours across Europe, America and Asia, including appearances at Carnegie Hall, CRR Concert Hall of Istanbul and the Schloss Ribbek Festival, Berlin.

David Boldrini is also in demand as a conductor and repetiteur for Italian opera, and he is Artistic Director of Italian Opera Florence. As a composer, he has had both piano and orchestral works performed across Europe. This album marks his third release on Brilliant Classics.