

Bernard Cavanna
Shanghai Concerto
(Double Concerto pour violon, violoncelle et orchestre)

Program notes in English

Noëmi Schindler

(violin)

Born in Zurich, Noëmi Schindler began studies on the cello in her hometown, before choosing the violin a few years later. She studied with Ami Flammer and Pierre Amoyal, and most influentially, Aïda Stucki-Piraccini.

Schindler graduated with the Prix de Virtuosité (Lausanne), as well as the Soliste distinction (Winterthur) awarded for her exceptional performance. She distinguished herself at her public debut during the UBS des Jeunes Solistes competition, where she was awarded first prize, and subsequently received the Zolliker Culture Prize (Switzerland).

Since then, Noëmi Schindler has toured the world as soloist and chamber musician, performing both classical and contemporary repertoire. She has appeared as soloist with major orchestras including the Philharmonic Orchestra of Radio France, the National Orchestra of the Pays de la Loire, the National Orchestra of Lille, the Swiss Chamber Orchestra (Schweizer Kammerorchester), the Bohemian Philharmonic, the Orquesta Simfonica de Neuquén, and Filarmonica Marea neagra...

Her recordings (on Harmonia Mundi and Abeille Musique) have been unanimously praised by the press.

Her intensely devotion to the contemporary repertoire has inspired many composers to write for her, notably Bernard Cavanna who dedicated 'Fauve' (solo violin), and the 'Concerto pour violon' (winner of the 2000 Victoire de la Musique and the Unesco Prize) to Schindler, as well as the 'Double concerto' for violon and violoncello.

She also gave the world premieres of two important concertos: 'Vers l'eau, vers le feu' by Dominique Lemaître, and 'Insomnia' by Danois Morten Olsen. Additionally, she gave the French and Italian premieres of 'Partita pour violon, piano et orchestre' by Witold Lutoslawski, and the French premieres of violin concerti by Régis Campo and Augusta Read-Thomas.

Noëmi Schindler has premiered more than one hundred works; many as a performer with the Ensemble Aleph (Paris), and as a regular participant during their annual International Young Composers Forum. In duo with cellist Christophe Roy, she has performed, in addition to the standard repertoire, many new works by Iannis Xenakis, Camille Roy, Jorge Pepi-Alos, and other modern composers. Since 2001 she is the solo violinist of the Ensemble TM+ (Paris). Noëmi Schindler teaches at the Ecole Nationale de Musique in Gennevilliers.

She plays an original Joannes Baptista Guadagnini violin.

Emmanuelle Bertrand

Cello

Discovered by a wide public when she won the young soloist category at the Victoires de la Musique Classique in 2002, Emmanuelle Bertrand is one of the leading representatives of French cello.

She was a pupil of Jean Deplace and Philippe Muller at the Conservatoires Nationaux Supérieurs de Musique of Lyon and Paris and went on to be a prizewinner in the 1994 Rostropovich International Competition in Paris. In 1996, she received first prize in the Japan Chamber Music Competition in Tokyo and was also awarded the Prix de l'Académie Internationale Maurice Ravel. Emmanuelle Bertrand held a grant from the Fondation d'Entreprise Natexis from 1995 to 1999.

In 1999 she met the composer Henri Dutilleux whose support has been essential since: "Among the young artists of her generation, Emmanuelle Bertrand belongs to those who impressed me the most... Her interpretation and the transparency of her playing filled me with great satisfaction, I do not hesitate to say that is for me a real revelation".

Edith Canat de Chizy, Nicolas Bacri, Janez Maticic and Pascal Amoyel have composed for her. In 2000 she gave the first world performance of Luciano Berio's latest work for cello solo "Chanson pour Pierre Boulez". In 2002, Emmanuelle was also awarded the Grand Prix de la Critique by the Professional Union of the Drama and Music critic, as the "Musical Revelation of the Year".

As a soloist, she is regularly invited by major Orchestras such as l'Orchestre Métropolitain du Grand Montréal, the Ukrainian National Orchestra, Moscow Soloists, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, the Orchestra Musica Vitae from Sweden, the Orchestre Symphonique de Québec, RTV Slovenija Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg, the Orchestre National de Lille, the Orchestre National de Lorraine, the Orchestre de chambre d'Auvergne, the Orchestre de Bretagne, the Orchestre des Pays de Savoie...

For several years, she has constituted a duo with the pianist Pascal Amoyel with whom she explores original works as well as the Grand Répertoire. In 2005-2006, they created together the Block 15, theatrical performance staged by Jean Piat, rehabilitating the statements of two musicians saved by music during World War 2. This show has been adapted for French television.

Her recordings released by Harmonia Mundi (solo or duo with Pascal Amoyel) all received highest awards: 10 in Répertoire/Classica, CHOC du Monde la Musique, ffff In Télérama, Diapason d'Or de l'Année, Cannes Classical Award... Her latest recording dedicated to Edvard Grieg has just been released.

In 2004, the Ministry of Culture named her "Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres".

Double Concerto for violin, cello and orchestra

Shanghai Concerto

(2007-2009)

Commissioned by Radio-France and the Orchestre National de Lille

The concerto, comprised of four movements and two moments or pauses, offers an itinerary through an archaeological site in the realm of the imagination, featuring, inter alia, fragments of a Bach Partita in the first movement (one bar from the Third Partita for violin), a traditional Chinese theme for the second movement (Jasmine), plus a few chords and phrases, apocryphal or otherwise, borrowed from the Mass by Machaut.

The first movement, with the indication "in D" following the title, has a simple form of verse and refrain, with the two solo instruments considered as a single, hybrid eight-stringed instrument, producing a constant display of virtuosity with difficult bowing.

The second movement (Transparent) has a second title "Variations on a well concealed pentatonic theme." The Jasmine theme is constantly scrambled through a number of harmonies, sometimes filtered through effects, being imagined or non-existent, altering the timbre, then appearing sometimes, stealthily, when least expected. There is a clear correspondence here between polyphony and timbre. Other "sound objects" from different traditions, long-standing or more recent (e.g. Tibetan ritual and the Internationale) are scattered around, merging with the context. This is a piece bearing recollections verging on the sentimental, not disavowing nostalgia, mystery, distance, disappearance or vestiges.

The third movement is a cadence where the virtuosity of the solo strings competes with the more awkward virtuosity of the brass.

The fourth movement, written after the death of Aurèle Stroë (October 2008), pays tribute to this composer of genius, the man who loved complex contrasts and the golden ratio.

A theme with chords arranged in thirds alternates with lines reminiscent of the Mass by Machaut. The theme played in chords develops according to principles used in early forms of electro-acoustic music (e.g. harmonies produced by adding or subtracting frequencies, changes in speed and/or density, or filtering timbres). At one point, the movement stops on the characteristic chord of the double leading note, scanning to the beat (message in Morse code), then a final choral movement, following an ascending path set by the soloists, to conclude the pièce.

Dedicated to

Noëmi Schindler and Emmanuelle Bertrand (First Movement)

Gilles Zaepffel (Second Movement)

Noëmi Schindler and Emmanuelle Bertrand (Third Movement)

Aurèle Stroë (Fourth Movement)

Bernard Cavanna was very young when he decided to be a composer and he went on to embark on the career, mostly self-taught. Cavanna, who is an intuitive and clearly original creative artist, received encouragement from Henri Dutilleul who urged him at an early age (in 1968) to pursue his chosen path. Paul Méfano and Georges Aperghis then helped him produce his first concerts, but Cavanna was drawn to Eastern Europe and was greatly impressed by the music and ideas of the Romanian composer, Aurèle Stroë (1932-2008). In 2000 Cavanna and Laurence Pietrzak made a film tribute and portrait of Stroë, a very moving film which won the Jury's special award at the festival, *Classiques en images/Musée du Louvre*; it was also selected for the International Documentary Film Festival in Lussas, and released in Paris (distributed by Films d'ici and shown at the MK2 Hautefeuille cinema).

Cavanna's repertoire has some thirty pieces covering most musical genres and featuring three concertos making distinctive use of one of the instruments of the ensemble which could be described as his musical fetish, the trio of violin, cello and accordion. There is his Violin Concerto (commissioned by Radio France for the violinist, Noëmi Schindler and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France), the Double Concerto for Violin and Cello (commissioned by the Orchestre National de Lille for Noëmi Schindler and the cellist, Emmanuelle Bertrand), and Karl Koop Konzert, sub-titled "comédie pompière, sociale et réaliste," written for accordion and orchestra and dedicated to the accordionist, Pascal Contet, plus family remembrances.

The composer invariably sees the concerto form as a conflict situation with the soloist struggling against massive, shattering or thundering orchestral forces. This predilection for conflict, confrontation and contrast is even more apparent in *Messe, un jour ordinaire* (1994), a seminal work that may be described as emblematic; it features the traditional prayers from the Ordinary of the Mass which are then disrupted and disturbed by the sensitive, tragic and mocking voice of Laurence, the young woman and extraordinarily moving character in the documentary film on drug addiction, *Galères de femmes*, by Jean-Michel Carré, which provided the inspiration for Cavanna's work. Laurence, a soprano, has been played by Isa Lagarde in many performances of this Mass which is not really a mass, a composition that takes the audience on mysterious wanderings from the Kyrie Eleison through to the Marie-Salope*.

Other striking works in Cavanna's repertoire are *Io* (1980/81), one of his early works showing the influence of Xenakis, composed for voice and eleven instruments; *La Confession impudique* (1987/1992), an opera based on *The Key*, a short story by Tanizaki, which has had a number of productions; the *Sept chants cruels* for soprano and orchestra, first performed in 2006 by Rayanne Dupuis (soprano) and the Ensemble Intercontemporain (conducted by Jonathan Nott); and *Gennevilliers Symphony* (commissioned by the Orchestre National des Pays de la Loire, which gave the premiere performance, conducted by Daniel Kawka, in 2006).

Cavanna's works are regularly programmed in France and internationally and often requested by contemporary music ensembles (Ensemble 2e2m, Ars Nova, Ensemble Intercontemporain, TM+, Ensemble Modern, and Nuova Consonanza) and by symphony orchestras.

Cavanna's compositional aesthetics are distinctively free of any dogma, showing genuine inventiveness based more on intuition than speculation, thereby producing a delightful eclecticism with the composer willing to accept the most unexpected combinations, ranging from popular style to the legacy of the romantics. This may be explained, at least partially, by his rejection of cliques and clans and by his openness to a wide range of sources extending to popular realms. It may also explain the influence of two references he sometimes cites, even if spoken in jest: Bernd Alois Zimmermann and Nino Rota. "Zimmermann (erudition as a disturbing collage) and Rota (a Latin Weill)." [Pascal Huyn]

What is important is the fruitful nature of these confrontations with their unusual vigour which, while sometimes adding brutality to the pleasure of detail and refinement, is matched only by a certain form of eloquent fervour - clear evidence that this unclassifiable composer and master of both timbre and composition never writes unless driven by an inner urge.

Bernard Cavanna has received a number of distinctions, including the grant for original creative work from the French Ministry of Culture (*Bourse annuelle de la création*, 1984), a residency at the Villa Médicis in Rome (1985/1986), the SACEM award for the best original contemporary work (*Messe un jour ordinaire*, 1998), the winning citation at the UNESCO International Rostrum of Composers (1999), a Victoire de la musique award (*Concerto pour violon*, 2000) and the SACD Grand Prix for music (2007).

He is currently contemplating the prospect of composing a piece to be called "musique faite exprès" [music written deliberately] for and on the text *A l'agité du bocal* by Louis-Ferdinand Céline, a composition for three tenors (opera, baroque and operetta style) and instrumental ensemble.

Virginie Palu

[* Translator's note: the term *marie-salope*, meaning a barge used to clear sludge, translates literally as the name "Mary" and an insult.

Shan Benson (translator)