

Camille Thomas, cello & Julien Brocal, piano

SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 3 PM
TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

NOTES BY KEN MELTZER

MAURICE RAVEL (1875–1937)

**Kaddisch, from *Two Hebrew Melodies*
(1914)**

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862–1918)

Cello Sonata (1915)

- I. *Prologue. Lent, sostenuto e molto risoluto*
II. *Sérénade. Modérément animé*
III. *Finale. Animé. Léger et nerveux*

MAX BRUCH (1838–1920)

Kol Nidre, Opus 47 (1880)

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810–1849)

**Introduction et polonaise brillante
in C Major, Opus 3 (1829–30)**

INTERMISSION

OLIVIER MESSIAEN (1908–1992)

**Louange à l'éternité de Jésus from
Quatour pour la fin du temps (1940–41)**

CÉSAR FRANCK (1822–1890)

**Sonata for Cello (Violin) and Piano
in A Major (1886) (arr. Jules Delsart)**

- I. *Allegretto ben Moderato*
II. *Allegro*
III. *Recitativo—Fantasia. Ben Moderato*
IV. *Allegretto poco mosso*

Kaddisch, from *Two Hebrew Melodies* (1914)

**Maurice Ravel was born in Ciboure, Basses-
Pyrénées, France, on March 7, 1875, and died in
Paris, France, on December 28, 1937.**

🕒 *Approx. performance time: 5 mins.*

📅 *SMF performance history: 4/12/19, 4/08/18,
3/29/04*

Kaddisch (*Kaddish*) is the first of *Two Hebrew Melodies* composed in 1914 by Maurice Ravel. The French composer wrote these works, originally scored for voice and piano, at the

request of Alvina Alvi, a soprano with the St. Petersburg opera. Alvi, with Ravel at the piano, gave the premiere of the songs in June of 1914. Ravel's rapt and beautiful setting of the Aramaic prayer ("May His great name be exalted and sanctified") has been arranged for numerous instrumental combinations as well.

Cello Sonata (1915)

Claude Debussy was born in St. Germain-en-Laye, France, on August 22, 1862, and died in Paris, France, on March 25, 1918.

🕒 *Approx. performance time: 12 mins.*

📅 *SMF performance history: 3/30/11, 3/25/07*

Claude Debussy's Cello Sonata was a product of the most desperate period in the French composer's life. With the outbreak of the First World War in August of 1914, Debussy experienced a feeling of helplessness. On August 8, Debussy wrote to his friend, music publisher Jacques Durand:

You know that I have no *sang-froid* and certainly nothing of the army spirit. I've never had a rifle in my hands. My recollections of 1870 and the anxiety of my wife, whose son and son-in-law are in the army, prevent me from becoming very enthusiastic.

All this makes my life intense and troubled. I am just a poor little atom crushed in this terrible cataclysm. What I am doing seems so wretchedly small. I've got to the state of envying (French composer Erik) Satie who, as a corporal, is really going to defend Paris.

Ten days later, Debussy wrote to Durand: "it's almost impossible to work! To tell the truth, I don't care. The side-effects of war are more distressing than people think." In addition to the horrors of war, Debussy was suffering from the cancer that would claim his life.

But the following year, Debussy found new inspiration for composing: "I want to work, not so much for myself, but to give proof, however small it may be, that even if there were thirty million Boches (French slang for German soldiers) French thought will not be destroyed." On October 9, 1915, he declared to Durand: "I shall be writing up to the last minute, like André Chénier who wrote poetry just before mounting the scaffold!" During this period, Debussy signed his compositions "Claude Debussy, Musicien Français."

In the summer of 1915, Debussy stayed in the seaside village of Pourville in Normandy. There, Debussy composed his *Douze Études* for solo piano, and pieces for two pianos, *En blanc et noir*. During that same period, Debussy also wrote two Sonatas—one for Cello and Piano, the other for Flute, Viola and Harp.

Debussy intended these to be the first in a series of six such compositions. The third Sonata, for Violin and Piano, came two years later. Debussy contemplated a fourth Sonata, for oboe, horn and harpsichord that he never composed. Debussy, who had been suffering the ravages of cancer, died on March 25, 1918, at the age of 55.

I. *Prologue. Lent, sostenuto e molto risoluto*—Debussy's original title for the Cello Sonata was *Pierrot fâché avec la lune* (*Pierrot Angry with the Moon*). The *Prologue* opens with a forceful introduction by the piano, followed by a flowing, wide-ranging cello passage. The cello introduces a sighing, melancholy theme, marked *dolce sostenuto*. The movement proceeds as a kind of arch, with the music becoming increasingly agitated. Finally, the tension subsides, as the cello's reprise of the sighing melody resolves to a whispered open fifth, punctuated by a single note in the piano's lower register.

The final two movements are played without pause.

II. *Sérénade. Modérément animé*—The second movement is a satirical, caustic *Serenade*, in which the cello explores an extraordinary range of colors and effects.

III. *Finale. Animé. Léger et nerveux*—The *Finale* opens in high spirits, suggesting a positive resolution to the unsettled and conflicted landscape of the first two movements. Suddenly, the mood shifts with a hushed, sepulchral episode (*Lento. Molto rubato con morbidezza*). A reprise of the opening section is capped by the cello's forceful descending passage, and the duo's vehement, *fortissimo* chords.

Kol Nidre, Opus 47 (1880)

Max Bruch was born in Cologne, Germany, on January 6, 1838, and died in Friedenau, near Berlin, Germany, on October 2, 1920.

🕒 *Approx. performance time: 10 mins.*

📅 *SMF performance history: SMF premiere*

German composer Max Bruch's earliest musical studies were with his mother, a noted singer and teacher. When he was 11, Bruch composed an

orchestral overture and some chamber music. By the age of 14, Bruch had written a symphony, as well as a string quartet that earned the Frankfurt Mozart Foundation Prize. Max Bruch ultimately established himself as a prominent composer, conductor, and teacher. During the course of his long and productive life, Bruch composed prolifically, and in a wide range of instrumental and vocal genres. But today, Bruch is chiefly remembered for a handful of works—his three Violin Concertos (1867, 1877, and 1891), the *Scottish Fantasy* for Violin and Orchestra (1880), as well as the *Kol Nidre*, Adagio on Hebrew Melodies for Cello and Orchestra (1880).

Bruch composed *Kol Nidre* while serving as the director of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society. Bruch dedicated the *Kol Nidre* to the German cellist Robert Hausmann, who was the soloist in the work's world premiere. Hausmann was also the cello soloist, alongside violinist Joseph Joachim, in the October 18, 1887, Cologne world premiere of the "Double Concerto," Opus 102, by Johannes Brahms. Brahms dedicated that work to both Joachim and Hausmann.

Bruch's *Kol Nidre* ("All vows") is based upon the ancient chant recited at the start of *Yom Kippur*, the Jewish holiday of atonement. The solo cello takes on the role of the cantor, singing the heartfelt, minor-key melody. The contrasting major-key melody is Bruch's quotation of Isaac Nathan's arrangement of the poem "O Weep for Those that Wept by Babel's Stream," from Lord Byron's *Hebrew Melodies*. In a letter of December 4, 1889, Bruch wrote to the cantor and musicologist Eduard Birnbaum: "Even though I am a Protestant, as an artist I deeply felt the outstanding beauty of these melodies and therefore I gladly spread them through my arrangement."

Introduction et polonaise brillante in C Major, Opus 3 (1829–30)

Frédéric Chopin was born in Żelazowa Wola, Poland, on March 1, 1810, and died in Paris, France, on October 17, 1849.

🕒 *Approx. performance time: 9 mins.*

📅 *SMF performance history: SMF premiere*

Chopin composed the early *Introduction et polonaise brillante* during two separate periods. The *polonaise* came first, in 1829, while Chopin was staying the estate of Prince Antoni Radziwiłł, an amateur composer and cellist. Chopin composed the *polonaise* for Radziwiłł and his daughter, Wanda. Chopin, who gave Wanda piano

lessons, hoped that she include the music as part of her practice. In a letter to his friend Tytus Woyciechowski, Chopin was rather dismissive of the work: "Nothing to it but dazzle, for the salon, for the ladies."

The following year, Chopin composed the *Introduction* for the Warsaw cellist Józef Kaczyński. When the work was published as Chopin's Opus 3, the composer dedicated the *Introduction et polonaise brillante* to the Austrian cellist Joseph Merk, whom he greatly admired. It is not certain whether Chopin or his Vienna publisher added the "*brillante*" portion of the title.

The slow-tempo (*Lento*) *Introduction* opens with a sprightly flourish by the piano, juxtaposed with the cello's introspective, lyrical response. The cello then sings a beautiful, flowing melody, delicately accompanied by the piano. A closing flourish leads to the *polonaise* (*Alla polacca. Allegro con spirito*) a vigorous dance in triple meter. To piano accompaniment, the cello introduces the sparkling central *polonaise* melody. It returns throughout, juxtaposed with various episodes. As both Chopin's description and the work's title suggest, there is ample opportunity for virtuoso display by the duo. Three emphatic chords bring the work to a rousing close.

Louange à l'éternité de Jésus from Quatour pour la fin du temps (1940–41)

Olivier Messiaen was born in Avignon, France, on December 10, 1908, and died in Paris, France, on April 27, 1992.

🕒 *Approx. performance time: 10 mins.*

📅 *SMF performance history: 3/26/13*

With the outbreak of World War II, French composer Olivier Messiaen enlisted in the army and served as a hospital attendant. In 1940, he was captured and placed in the Görlitz prisoner camp in Silesia. There, Messiaen completed his *Quatour pour la fin du temps* (*Quartet for the End of Time*) for clarinet, violin, cello, and piano. It was in the Görlitz camp that the *Quatour* received its first performance, on January 15, 1941, with an audience comprising Messiaen's fellow prisoners. The performers were Jean Le Boulaire, violin, Étienne Pasquier, cello, Henri Akoka, clarinet, and the composer at the piano.

The Quartet's title is inspired by a from a passage in the Book of *Revelation*, Chapter 10:

And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a

rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire...and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth...And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

The composer describes the work's fifth movement, *Louange à l'éternité de Jésus* ("Praise to the Eternity of Jesus"):

V. Praise to the Eternity of Jesus. Jesus is here considered as one with the Word. A long phrase, infinitely slow, by the cello, expiates with love and reverence on the everlastingness of the Word. Majestically the melody unfolds itself at a distance both intimate and awesome. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Sonata for Cello (Violin) and Piano in A Major (1886) (arr. Jules Delsart)

César Franck was born in Liège, Belgium, on December 10, 1822, and died in Paris, France, on November 8, 1890.

🕒 *Approx. performance time: 25 mins.*

📅 *SMF performance history: SMF premiere*

In the final decade or so of his life, César Franck composed numerous masterpieces, including the Piano Quintet in F minor (1879), the *Prélude, Choral, and Fugue* for solo piano (1884), the *Symphonic Variations* (1885), and the Symphony in D minor (1888). Perhaps the most beloved work from that period is the Sonata for Violin and Piano in A Major. Franck composed the Sonata as a wedding gift for his friend, the legendary Belgian violinist, Eugène Ysaÿe (1858-1931). Franck presented the Sonata to Ysaÿe in September of 1886, on the morning of the violinist's wedding. After a quick rehearsal, Ysaÿe and Franck performed the Sonata for the wedding guests.

Three months later in Brussels, on December 16, 1886, Ysaÿe and pianist Marie-Léontine Bordes-Pène gave the Sonata's public premiere. To this

day, the Franck Sonata in A remains a favorite of the violin-piano repertoire. This concert features an arrangement for cello and piano by the 19th-century cellist Jules Delsart.

I. *Allegretto ben Moderato*—After a brief, hushed introduction by the piano, the cello sings the opening movement's principal melody; beguiling, and cast in a flowing 9/8 meter that suggests a barcarolle. The melody serves as the basis for rhapsodic statements by the duo, both solo, and in tandem. A *forte* statement of the melody resolves to a *pianissimo* whisper.

II. *Allegro*—The second movement, in stunning contrast to the first, opens with the piano's fiery, virtuoso episode, with brilliant, agitated writing that would be very much at home in a Chopin *Scherzo*. The tumultuous, chromatic music alternates with more lyric episodes, including hints of the opening movement. The final measures hurtle to a stirring close.

III. *Recitativo—Fantasia. Ben Moderato*—The third movement opens with a conversation between the piano and cello, by turns passionate and tender. The sense of rapt, affectionate dialogue continues throughout. As the movement approaches its *pianissimo* resolution, Franck offers echoes of the first movement, as well as premonitions of the finale.

IV. *Allegretto poco mosso*—The piano launches the finale's principal melody (*dolce cantabile*), echoed in canon by the cello. Soon the roles are reversed, and the cello initiates the canonic exchange. The finale's wealth of tender lyricism culminates in a glowing restatement of the Sonata's opening melody, leading to the brilliant final bars.