

The Violin Sonata in A was written in 1886, when Franck was 63, as a wedding present for the 31-year-old violinist Eugène Ysaÿe. Twenty-eight years earlier, in 1858, Franck had promised a violin sonata for Cosima von Bülow. This never saw the light of day, but it has been speculated that whatever work Franck had done on that piece was put aside and eventually ended up in the sonata he wrote for Ysaÿe in 1886.

Franck presented the work to Ysaÿe on the morning of his wedding on 26 September 1886. After a hurried rehearsal, Ysaÿe and the pianist Léontine Bordes-Pène, a wedding guest, played the Sonata to the other wedding guests.

The Sonata was given its first public concert performance on 16 December of that year, at the Musée Moderne de Peinture (Museum of Modern Painting) at Brussels. Eugène Ysaÿe and Léontine Bordes-Pène were again the performers. The Sonata was the final item in a long program that started at 3 pm. When it came time for the Sonata, it was now dusk and the gallery was bathed in gloom, but the gallery authorities permitted no artificial light whatsoever. Initially, it seemed the Sonata would have to be abandoned, but Ysaÿe and Bordes-Pène decided to press on regardless. In the event, they had to play the last three movements in virtual darkness, from memory. Vincent d'Indy, who was present, recorded these details of the event.

Ysaÿe kept the Violin Sonata in his repertoire for the next 40 years of his life. His championing of the Sonata contributed to the public recognition of Franck as a major composer. This recognition was quite belated, as Franck would be dead within 4 years, and did not have his first unqualified public success until the last year of his life (19 April 1890, at the Salle Pleyel, where his String Quartet in D was premiered).

The Franck Sonata regularly appears on concert programs and on recordings and is in the core repertoire of all major violinists. Jascha Heifetz played the Sonata in A at his final recital in 1972.

The piece is further notable for the difficulty of its piano part, as compared to most chamber repertoire; technical problems include frequent extreme extended figures - the composer himself having possessed very large hands - and virtuoso runs and leaps, particularly in the second movement (though some passages can be facilitated by employing a spare hand to cover some notes).

The Cello Sonata is a late work by the French composer Claude Debussy. It was the first of a planned series of 'Six sonates pour divers instruments', however Debussy only completed two others, the sonata for violin and the sonata for flute, viola and harp. The sonata for cello and piano was written in 1915, and is notable for its brevity, most performances not exceeding 11 minutes. It is a staple of the modern cello repertoire and is commonly regarded as one of the finest masterpieces written for the instrument.

It is divided into three short movements:

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

The two final movements are joined by an attacca. Instead of sonata form, Debussy structures the piece in the style of the eighteenth-century monothematic sonata, and was particularly influenced by the music of François Couperin.

The piece makes use of modes and whole-tone and pentatonic scales, as is typical of Debussy's style. It also utilises many types of extended cello technique, including left-hand pizzicato, spiccato and flautando bowing, false harmonics and portamento. Not surprisingly, the piece is considered technically demanding. Whether descriptive comments related to characters of the Commedia dell'arte were actually given by Debussy to cellist Louis Rosoor remains unclear.



Daniil Shafran plays Franck and Debussy Anton Ginzburg-piano

One of the greatest cellists of the twentieth century, a performer who combined technical brilliance with soulful expressiveness, Danil Shafran was born in 1923, in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg). Shafran's first teacher was his father, who was the principal cellist of the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra. At the age of eight, Shafran started studying with Alexander Shtrimer, at the Special Music School for Children. Two years later, he was among a group of students selected to advance directly to the Leningrad Conservatory. When he was eleven, Shafran made his debut with the Leningrad Philharmonic, continuing his studies with Shtrimer, who taught the young cellist to appreciate music in the wider context of humanistic culture and of art in general. In 1937, Shafran won the All-Union competition for cellists and violinists. The prize was a magnificent 1630 Amati cello, which Shafran played until the end of his life. This instrument had a delicate, but gorgeous, tone, and Shafran was sometimes criticized for playing an instrument that was perceived as more appropriate for chamber music. In 1950, the year he graduated from the Leningrad Conservatory, Shafran won the Prague International Cello Competition. Although Shafran toured Europe, the U.S., and Japan, he shunned the glamour of international fame, preferring to perform and record in the U.S.S.R. His recordings, for the Melodiya label, include much of the standard cello repertoire, with particular emphasis on Romantic and -century Russian music. For example, he recorded Kabalevsky's Cello Concerto No. 1 in 1954, creating, two years later, a legendary recording of the Cello Sonata by Shostakovich, with the composer at the piano. One of the high

points of Shafran's career was his 1967 performance of Kabalevsky's Cello Concerto No. 2, one of the most demanding works of the cello repertoire. Written as a musical monument to the victims of World War II, and dedicated to Shafran, Kabalevsky's extraordinarily difficult work provided the cellist with an opportunity to display his prodigious technique and profound musicality. Throughout his career, Shafran sought to enrich the cello repertoire by playing transcriptions of works for other instruments. Many of these transcriptions, which include the Franck Violin Sonata and the Shostakovich Viola Sonata, are miniatures by composers such as Schumann, Chopin, and Brahms, which he often offered as recital encores. Shafran's performances of these familiar encore miniatures, such as Schumann's "Träumerei," from the Kinderszenen for piano, were truly magical, for his playing could transform a familiar piano piece into cello music of unearthly beauty. Shafran was particularly known for his rich, expressive tone; his vibrato was unique, and when he played without vibrato, Shafran used his prodigious bowing technique to enrich his tone. A hallmark of Shafran's highly personal style, in addition to his finely nuanced and profoundly expressive tone, was his inimitable rubato. All in all, Shafran was a stupendous virtuoso whose breath-taking technical skill was totally subservient to a profound, overwhelmingly powerful musicality. Always in total control of the formal aspects of the music he played, Shafran constantly sought, as he revisited a particular piece, to probe deeper into its inner being, methodically striving to reveal the sometimes incomprehensible complexity of the music that he played. He died in 1998.

Daniil Shafran plays Franck and Debussy

Anton Ginzburg-piano

Franck Sonata For Violin (transcribed for Cello) and Piano In A Major

1. **Allegretto ben moderato**
2. **Allegro**
3. **Recitativo - Fantasia**
4. **Allegro poco mosso**

Debussy Sonata For Cello And Piano In D Minor

5. **Prologue: Lent, sostenuto e molto risoluto**
6. **Sérénade: Modérément animé**
7. **Finale: Animé, léger et nerveux**

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