



# CELLO SONATAS

*Edition*

ALKAN | BEETHOVEN | BOCCHERINI | BRAHMS | BRITTEN | CAPORALE | CASELLA  
CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO | CHOPIN | CILEA | DEBUSSY | FAURÉ | FRANCK | D. GABRIELLI  
GEMINIANI | GLAZUNOV | GRIEG | HANDEL | HUMMEL | JACCHINI | KAPUSTIN | KODÁLY | LANZETTI  
MARTUCCI | MENDELSSOHN | MOERAN | MOSCHELES | MYASKOVSKY | PERICOLI | PILATI  
PIZZETTI | PLATTI | PORPORA & COSTANZI | POULENC | PROKOFIEV | RACHMANINOFF  
RIES | RÖNTGEN | ROSLAVETS | RUBBRA | SAINT-SAËNS | A. SCARLATTI | SCHNITKE  
SCHUBERT | SHOSTAKOVICH | R. STRAUSS | TCHAIKOVSKY | THUILLE | VIVALDI | ZUCCARI

**Alessandro Scarlatti** (1660–1725) composed most of his extensive output while working in Naples and Rome. He is best known for his operas and chamber cantatas, but around 1690–1710 he contributed significantly to the emergence of the cello as a solo instrument. The three sonatas recorded here – two of them in minor keys – are attractive examples of the genre, notable for their melodic distinction and the intense lyricism of their slow movements.

The Bolognese composer **Domenico Gabrielli** (1659–1690) and his foremost pupil **Giuseppe Maria Jacchini** (1667–1727) were two very early pioneers in the development of cello technique and its solo potential. Though they – and others from this period who elevated the cello’s role – are now often overlooked, their importance should not be underestimated.

Bologna has great significance in the history of the cello. The San Petronio cathedral (its main door known as Porta Magna) had a music chapel that attracted some of the greatest musicians over a period of more than a century. One major development was the liberation of the cello (within only a few years) from its purely harmonic, basso continuo role. Gabrielli composed operas which enjoyed some success, while he was also one of the earliest known cello virtuosos. Judging from the music that has survived, Jacchini’s output was dominated by instrumental works, of which his trumpet concertos were much performed at San Petronio’s festive occasions.

**Antonio Vivaldi** (1678–1741) was employed as a violin teacher (and, from 1716, as *maestro de’ concerti*) at the Venetian girls’ orphanage Ospedale della Pietà. So outstanding was the orchestra of this institution that it became one of the city’s main tourist attractions. The indefatigable Vivaldi composed nearly 30 cello concertos and nine cello sonatas. The six sonatas recorded here (published in 1740) show Vivaldi’s particular feeling for the instrument, which scholar Michael Talbot describes as his ‘special empathy ... seriousness ... expressive depth ...’.

Probably born in Dosolo in the province of Mantua, **Francesco Maria Zuccari** (1694–1788) served as organist, then choirmaster, at Assisi Basilica. In the 1740s he became organist at Padua for eight years before returning to Assisi as choirmaster. His special interest in the cello is manifest in his *Exercises* for the instrument (1760). As the celebrated cellist Antonio Vandini happened to be in Assisi in 1750, it is likely that Zuccari’s sonatas were composed for him. Most of these works follow Corelli’s model of four movements: slow–fast–slow–fast, and are similar in structure to sonatas by Vivaldi and Benedetto Marcello.

Though his life began and ended in Naples, **Nicola Porpora** (1686–1768) travelled restlessly – Venice, Vienna, Dresden and London, where he directed an opera house, relatively unsuccessfully, in competition with Handel’s. Porpora composed nearly 50 operas and was the most celebrated singing teacher of his day. The six sonatas recorded here, unusually designated ‘for cello concertante, violin and basso continuo’, are based on the four-movement Corellian model. The composer and cello virtuoso **Giovanni Battista Costanzi** (1704–1778) is believed to have advised Porpora on matters of cello technique and may even have contributed to the musical substance of these compositions.

Composer and oboist **Giovanni Benedetto Platti** (c.1692–1763) was born in either Padua or Venice but moved to Germany in 1722 to work for the Prince-Bishop of Bamberg and Würzburg, Johann Philipp Franz von Schönborn. It has been estimated that Platti composed more than 20 concertos with obbligato cello. He also wrote twelve sonatas for cello and continuo (1725), six of which are recorded here. From the importance of the cello’s role in his music, one may assume that it was his favourite of the various instruments which he played. Generally eclectic in style, Platti composed sacred vocal works and instrumental pieces.

**Salvatore Lanzetti** (c.1710–c.1780) became one of the leading figures of the Neapolitan cello tradition. He composed 25 cello sonatas, the first group of twelve published in 1736 as Op.1 and further sets published a few years later. Some confusion arises from the subsequent publication (as Op.2) of flute versions of the sonatas comprising the second set. Cellists looking to extend their repertoire will find some gems here, pieces as idiomatically written as one would expect from a composer who elevated cello-writing to approach that of virtuoso violin works, while also extending the instrument’s expressive range immeasurably.

The Italian-born **Andrea Caporale** (c.1699–c.1757) was among the most celebrated cellists of his day. In 1746 a collection of twelve cello sonatas – six by Caporale and six by John Ernest Galliard – was published in London. The Caporale sonatas, characteristic of the late Baroque with *galant* and pre-Classical elements, have richly ornamented melodic lines. From the late 1730s or early 1740s Caporale was a member (eventually principal cello) of Handel’s opera orchestra. Several arias by Handel (in *Parnasso in festa*, *Alexander’s Feast* and *Deidamia*) include obbligato cello parts especially composed for Caporale.

**Francesco Geminiani** (1687–1762) was born in Lucca but established himself in London, where he spent many years as a prominent figure in its musical scene, while intermittently visiting other countries. He was one of the greatest violinists of his day, while as a composer he was venerated alongside Handel and Corelli. His six Cello Sonatas Op.5 are among the finest and most imaginative works of this genre in the Baroque period. Geminiani enhances the solo line with decorative figuration, not only in the slow movements but also in the livelier music. In common with many other composers, he follows the Corellian four-movement model.

Biographical details for **Pasquale Pericoli** (flourished 2nd half of 18th century) are very inadequate. Probably a Neapolitan, Pericoli produced operas in Stockholm for some years. His six cello sonatas are three-movement works in which not only the movements marked ‘cantabile’ have a lyrical quality. Stylistically they already show clear signs of sonata form, while characteristics of music from the previous 50 years are also present. The first movement of the Fourth Sonata is the most Classical, whereas the next two movements show earlier influences. For many years Sonatas 3 and 5 were attributed to Boccherini.

Born at Lucca, **Luigi Boccherini** (1743–1805) became a child prodigy as a cellist. He settled in Spain in 1770, joining the household of the Spanish Infante as resident composer and cellist. His output includes many works featuring a solo cello – especially twelve concertos and about 40 sonatas. Bad old editions of Boccherini’s music sullied his reputation, but more modern, enlightened scholarship has helped to reveal the quality of his finest works, which are characterised equally by elegance and brilliance. The sonatas recorded here derive from a manuscript in Milan Conservatory and are believed to be youthful works. In common with Boccherini’s cello music generally, they leave us in no doubt as to his outstanding facility on the instrument.

**Beethoven** (1770–1827) composed five cello sonatas (two Op.5, Op.69 and two Op.102). The early works broke new ground in establishing the concept of a genuine duo sonata for cello and piano. The glorious Op.69 Sonata is the most popular, while the Op.102 pair mark the beginning of the composer’s late period, though their significance in this context is often overlooked. All the sonatas are major works in the cello/piano repertoire, but Beethoven also composed three fine, typically imaginative sets of variations for this combination.

Born in Prague, **Ignaz Moscheles** (1794–1870) was one of the most outstanding piano virtuosos of his time. Marriage and the demands of his career took him to London (1825), but he later settled in Leipzig, where he became a close friend of Mendelssohn. In the first of his two cello sonatas – the Grande Sonate concertante Op.34 – the keyboard’s role is as demanding as one would expect from a virtuoso, though the central movement is more intimate.

Born in Bonn, **Ferdinand Ries** (1784–1838) became a piano pupil of Beethoven and then his secretary. His own music – over 200 works – shows many examples of Beethoven’s influence, yet his finest pieces, including the Cello Sonata Op.125, with its large-scale opening movement, are fresh and surprisingly individual.

In common with Moscheles and Ries, **Johann Nepomuk Hummel** (1778–1837) became friendly with Beethoven. Born in Pressburg (now Bratislava), he was also a virtuoso pianist. Only a few of his compositions are played today – one has to be selective to discover the finest –, the Trumpet Concerto being the most popular. In his ‘Grand’ Cello Sonata of 1824 the piano is prominent as an equal partner without being ostentatiously showy.

Ferdinand Ries’s two earlier cello sonatas (Op.20 and 21 respectively) were dedicated to Bernhard Romberg, one of the foremost cellists of his generation. Romberg also introduced various practical improvements to the instrument. The two sonatas are finely crafted, engaging and serious without being pretentious.

**Felix Mendelssohn** (1809–1847) composed several works for cello and piano, the two sonatas being the most important. He wrote the First Sonata Op.45 for his brother Paul, an amateur cellist. More modest and intimate than the later sonata, Op.45 is unjustly neglected, though it elicited lavish praise from Schumann. Although Mendelssohn also composed Op.58 for his brother Paul, he dedicated it to Count Mateusz Wielhorski, a member of a very musical Polish–Russian family. The sonata begins with an irresistible élan reminiscent of the ‘Italian’ Symphony’s opening. As in the earlier sonata, the piano part is exuberant, often restless. Among the work’s strikingly original aspects is some pizzicato melodic material which, unusually, incorporates rapid grace-notes (second movement), and an extended passage of widely-spaced arpeggiated chords in the style of a chorale (third movement). Subsequently, the chorale is skilfully combined with recitative. Another work by Mendelssohn for cello and piano is the *Variations concertantes*, which he composed shortly before

his 20th birthday – also for his brother Paul. The serene, homely theme is followed by eight brief variations, the last two revealing the fiery aspect of Mendelssohn's character.

The Polish-born **Frédéric Chopin** (1810–1849) is primarily associated with music for solo piano, but he also wrote an ambitious, large-scale Cello Sonata in G minor (1846) for his good friend Auguste-Joseph Franck (1808–1884), one of the finest cellists of his time. The sonata is not his most superficially attractive work, but nonetheless deeply rewarding and still under-appreciated.

Like Chopin, the French composer **Charles-Valentin Alkan** (1813–1888) is also associated with solo piano music – of fiendish difficulty. Typically, his 'Sonate de concert' for cello and piano (1857) also has a very demanding keyboard part. This characterful piece, concluding with a brilliant saltarello, is yet another valuable addition to the cello repertoire, well worth investigating by performers seeking recital music that is not over-familiar.

Among the profusion of chamber music by **Franz Schubert** (1797–1828) is a sonata for the arpeggione, an instrument that soon became obsolete. Invented in 1823 by Viennese guitar-maker Johann Georg Stauffer, the arpeggione had six strings, was tuned and fretted like a guitar, held between the knees and bowed like a cello. Nowadays the sonata is most often played on the cello.

The wonderful Sonata in A major by Belgian-born **César Franck** (1822–1890) is most frequently played on the violin, but the alternative scoring for cello has become increasingly popular. In common with several of his most inspired works, it dates from his final decade.

The Italian composer **Francesco Cilea** (1866–1950) is chiefly remembered for his operas (especially *Adriana Lecouvreur*), but he also wrote a few orchestral, instrumental and chamber works. His most attractive Cello Sonata, dating from his student days, makes one wonder how his instrumental music might have developed had he not concentrated on opera.

**Claude Debussy** (1862–1918) planned a series of six sonatas for different combinations of instruments but lived to complete only the violin and cello sonatas and the sonata for flute, viola and harp. The Cello Sonata is an elusive work of wide expressive range, its relatively short duration encompassing frequently changing moods and tempo fluctuations.

The Russian composer **Nikolay Roslavets** (1881–1944) wrote a substantial number of chamber works including two cello sonatas. His earlier works were deeply influenced by Scriabin. In

common with many of his works in this form, the First Cello Sonata (1921) is a concentrated, single-movement composition.

Born in Naples, the late-Romantic **Mario Pilati** (1903–1938) composed a concerto for orchestra and several chamber pieces. His work on an opera was curtailed by his early death. The Cello Sonata is an engaging piece which deserves wider recognition.

Born in Bergen, **Edvard Grieg** (1843–1907) composed several chamber works including three violin sonatas and one cello sonata. The big-boned, fiery opening movement of the Cello Sonata is enough to disprove Debussy's dismissal of Grieg's music as 'a pink bonbon stuffed with snow'.

More readily associated with wind instruments, French composer **Francis Poulenc** (1899–1963) admitted to less fluency when writing for solo strings. Nevertheless, his Cello Sonata is an appealing and characteristic work in which are juxtaposed the contrasts – especially between flippancy and melancholy – typical of many of Poulenc's works.

**Camille Saint-Saëns** (1835–1921) played a major role in the overdue revival of interest in traditional Viennese instrumental forms in France, where opera and operetta had long dominated the musical scene. His three symphonies, ten concertos and numerous chamber works represented a challenge to German dominance in these genres. His two cello sonatas (1872 and 1905) are attractive works deserving wider circulation. The First Sonata was endowed with a new finale when the composer's mother disapproved of the original ('worthless'), while the more extended Second Sonata includes a Scherzo with variations and a serene Romanza. There is also a Suite in D minor Op.16, beginning with a Prélude influenced by Bach's cello suites and ending with a demonstration of contrapuntal skill.

**Johannes Brahms** (1833–1897) composed a substantial body of chamber music, including seven sonatas. The two sonatas for cello and piano, separated by over 20 years, are among the finest works in this repertoire. In E minor, the First Sonata presents problems of balance, a demanding piano part being combined with an often low-lying cello. The Second Sonata (1886) has an opening paragraph of passionate intensity and an almost orchestral texture. A robust scherzo is followed by the kind of lighter, more genial finale with which Brahms ends his Second Piano Concerto Op.83.

The Italian composer, concert pianist, conductor and teacher **Giuseppe Martucci** (1856–1909) played a significant role in the revival of orchestral and chamber music in his native country. Unlike most Italians, he wrote no operas. His orchestral music was consistently championed by Toscanini. His Cello Sonata is a very substantial work of great fluency, eloquence and charm. Martucci also composed shorter works for cello and piano, attractive and beautifully idiomatic – *Tre pezzi*, which he later transcribed for orchestra, and *Due romanze*.

The music of French composer **Gabriel Fauré** (1845–1924) has always been championed by a small number of prominent musicians, without ever becoming more widely popular. He wrote a substantial amount of chamber music, including sonatas for violin and piano and for cello and piano. The cello sonatas both date from his last few years, by which time his music had become less attractive on the surface, a little more distant – qualities quite possibly associated with his deafness. Nevertheless, with greater familiarity these sonatas are revealed as superb examples of Fauré’s craftsmanship and deeply satisfying, if sometimes elusive, musical language.

The Hungarian composer **Zoltán Kodály** (1882–1967) contributed immensely to 20th-century ethnomusicology, working alongside Bartók collecting and recording thousands of folk melodies from several countries. He also exerted a profound influence on music education. Although Kodály the composer is now overshadowed by his fiercely individual compatriot, a few of his own finest works have become repertoire pieces. His immensely challenging Solo Cello Sonata (1915) seems to have sprung from nowhere. It is his most inspired and original work, though his colourful *Dances of Galánta* and *Suite from Hány János* are justly popular. Kodály’s chamber compositions also include a sonata and three shorter works for cello and piano.

The Italian composer **Ildebrando Pizzetti** (1880–1968) composed about 20 operas but also wrote substantial quantities of orchestral and chamber music, choral works and film scores. His fine, thematically unified Cello Sonata from 1921 comprises two slow movements framing an agitated scherzo. Three years later he composed *Tre Canti*, a group of ‘songs without words’.

Another Italian who refrained from immersing himself in opera at the expense of other major genres, **Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco** (1895–1968) studied composition with Pizzetti. Inspired by the playing of Segovia, he composed about 100 works for guitar. In 1939 he emigrated to America,

where he wrote the scores for about 200 Hollywood films, a body of work which deeply influenced many later film composers. Toscanini, Heifetz and Piatigorsky all championed his music. His special love for the cello is reflected in his Sonata Op.50 (1928), a work of fluent, attractive lyricism. The second of the two movements is a set of variations on an elegant theme.

**Nikolay Myaskovsky** (1881–1950) was born within the Polish territories of what was then the Tsarist empire. He displayed remarkable loyalty to traditional forms, composing 27 symphonies, 13 string quartets and nine piano sonatas. Separated by nearly 40 years, his two rewarding cello sonatas are generously melodic, both equally characteristic of Myaskovsky’s innate lyricism.

**Sergei Rachmaninoff** (1873–1943) composed about a dozen chamber works, all dating from between 1889 and 1901. The last and finest of these is his Cello Sonata in G minor, dedicated to Anatoly Brandukov, one of the most admired cellists of his day and a personal friend of Rachmaninoff. Although he was a virtuoso pianist, Rachmaninoff generally avoids the most obvious danger of overpowering the cello part. The luxuriant but concise Andante, with its increasingly rich piano texture, is among the most beguiling movements in Rachmaninoff’s music.

**Sergei Prokofiev** (1891–1953) first heard the virtuoso cellist Mstislav Rostropovich in 1947. It would be fair to say that it was Rostropovich’s phenomenal artistry that kept Prokofiev’s inspiration burning during a fraught period for Soviet composers. Encompassing the noble bearing of its opening melody, the poetic end of the first movement, the playful scherzo and genial finale, Prokofiev’s Cello Sonata is a major work characteristic of his most accessible style.

**Richard Strauss** (1864–1949) is best known for his symphonic poems and operas, but he did compose a few chamber works early in his career. Influenced by Mendelssohn, his Cello Sonata (whose revised version dates from 1883) also has many suggestions of Strauss’s mature style, including the heroic manner of the opening, confident sweep and exuberant energy.

Born in what was then the Tyrol (now Italy), **Ludwig Thuille** (1861–1907) composed a number of major chamber works, his Sextet for piano and wind being the most frequently performed. His musical language may be defined as a balance between Viennese Classicism and the ‘New German School’, but he was always wary of progressive, modernist tendencies. His Cello Sonata (1902) is a work of passion and lyricism in its outer movements and restraint in the central Adagio.

Born in Turin, **Alfredo Casella** (1883–1947) was another Italian composer who preferred abstract forms to operatic ventures. He composed three symphonies, four concertos and sizeable amounts of chamber and instrumental music. The first of his two cello sonatas (1906–07, dedicated to Pablo Casals) reveals various influences, including Debussy, Mahler and Strauss, but his own musical personality is equally strong. Both urgent and contrastingly lyrical, the opening movement begins with a theme derived from Mozart's C minor Piano Concerto. Typically serious, even ominous at times, the central movement is followed by an intense, often dramatic finale with a dignified second theme. Composed 20 years later, the impressive Second Cello Sonata shows the influence of 18th-century forms (Casella described the work as 'baroque in its monumentality'), as in the opening Preludio and the Bourrée (scherzando).

Northampton-born **Edmund Rubbra** (1901–1986), whose compositions include eleven symphonies, four string quartets, vocal works and many songs, was regarded as one of the leading English composers of his time, but now his music is rarely heard. Undemonstrative, sometimes austere, his musical language is often based on simple materials and a purity of expression. In his Sonata Op.60 the cello's natural singing character is fully exploited, but the work also accommodates contrapuntal writing and an animated scherzo.

**Ernest John Moeran** (1894–1950) was English-born but of part-Irish extraction. His Symphony in G minor is one of his finest works, if sometimes touchingly indebted to Sibelius. Moeran's marriage to the cellist Peers Coetmore inspired him to write a concerto and a sonata for the instrument. Dating from 1947, the sonata may seem typical of the English pastoral tradition, but Moeran is very capable of shattering this mood as well as generating dramatic intensity.

The richly diverse output of **Dmitri Shostakovich** (1906–1975) includes 15 symphonies and 15 string quartets, both sequences among the greatest since Beethoven. He also composed several other chamber works – such as the Piano Quintet, the Second Piano Trio and the Cello Sonata – which are regarded as some of the most outstanding of the 20th century. Much of the Cello Sonata (1934) is deceptively innocent and straightforward, but unsettling elements – bleak, prickly, grotesque, even brutal – often come to the surface.

**Alfred Schnittke** (1934–1998) was initially considered to be the natural heir of Shostakovich, though his subsequent compositions, often using polystylistic techniques, explore much wider extremes and contrasts. His extensive output includes nine symphonies, several concertos and more than 30 chamber works. The inspired First Cello Sonata (1978) comprises two melancholy slow movements flanking a tempestuous Presto.

**Benjamin Britten** (1913–1976) was inspired by the phenomenal playing of Mstislav Rostropovich. He composed several works for him, including the masterly Cello Sonata in C Op.65. Its five-movement structure may suggest a suite, but its epigrammatic, elusive and probing qualities contradict this idea. A three-movement sonata which Britten wrote at the age of twelve was premiered in 2012.

Having acquired a reputation as a jazz pianist during the 1950s, the Ukrainian composer **Nikolay Kapustin** (born 1937) assimilated this influence into his classically based music. His output extends to over 150 published works. His two cello sonatas (1991 and 1997) are both consistently engaging, often driven by energetic syncopation and with entertaining digressions into overt Romanticism and even Broadway music. The three shorter pieces recorded here all typify Kapustin's restless inventiveness.

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