



Edgar Moreau, cellist

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Edgar Moreau: A Star

Jacqueline Thuilleux | *Le Figaro Magazine (France)* | July 3, 2014

He is not even 20 years old, but for the past five years, this young musketeer of the bow has been captivating all of his audiences. He is the rising star of the French cello.

This spring, he will turn 20. With his curly, sometimes tousled mane of hair, his sleepy, youthful face, his sulky pout, and his loud bursts of laughter, he certainly doesn't look his age. But when he takes hold of the bow, the metamorphosis of this so-called "Little Prince" is striking: everything expands- his respiration, his shoulders, his facial expression. A breath takes hold of the young man, who becomes one with this cello, carried by its song. His 20th birthday coincides with the release of his first CD on the Erato label, and Edgar Moreau will celebrate the occasion in all the places where his growing reputation is taking him: from Paris in March with the Orchestre national de France, to the Festival de Pâques in Aix-en-Provence in April and the Festival de Saint-Denis in June. International projects on the horizon include engagements in Japan, in the United States, in South America and in Berlin, and the charismatic Russian conductor Valery Gergiev hasn't let him out of his sight since they met in Moscow during the Tchaikovsky competition in 2001.

Pianists are known to be solitary creatures who keep to themselves; violinists often dream with their eyes closed; the winds exude a sense of balance. The cellist, on the other hand, is like an untamed animal: like Paul Tortelier with his white mane, or Pablo Casals and Mstislav Rostropovitch- real forces of nature. Without a doubt, the fact that he "straddles" the instrument and that the position of his left arm is more natural than that of other string players allows the cellist's body to move more freely. As for Edgar Moreau, he imagines himself as a cheetah, and he certainly has the speed and the spring for the part.

Of course, some of these cello giants were world celebrities: for example Jacqueline du Pré, taken too soon from the music world by illness; and today, Yo-Yo Ma, passionate about international projects. But since it is so often dependent on other instruments, the cello is rarely the star of the show: the repertoire written for the cello, with the exception of Bach's *Suites for solo cello*- at once hellish and heavenly for a performer- requires the support of the piano, collaboration with other instruments of a quartet, or the presence of the orchestra in the few famous concerti that electrify audiences: Haydn and Schumann, Dvorak, Saint-Saëns and Elgar. As a result, cellists have to find a partner who breathes the same air as they do: Edgar Moreau has found one in the person of the talented pianist Pierre-Yves Hодique, who accompanies him on his CD. "Some people never find it, but we have a mutual affinity which we discovered four years ago and which is enduring."

He discovered the sound of the cello at 3 and a half years old

His history begins like a fairy tale: his father is an antique dealer, his mother a Hebrew translator; he has one sister and two brothers. High culture is an important part of family life, but not necessarily music, until one day the boy has a Eureka moment. Edgar remembers: "I was in a boutique in the



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Gifted with astonishing reflexes, the young artist brandishes his bow like a foil.

Drouot neighborhood with my father when, suddenly, from the back of the store emerged the sound of the cello. There was a little girl who was having a private lesson. I immediately fell in love with the instrument. I was only three and a half years old, but I wouldn't stop pestering my parents about it, until they finally contacted professor Carlos Beyris, who taught the Suzuki method. Everything afterwards unfolded seamlessly, from the conservatory in Boulogne-Billancourt (where I also studied piano), all the way to the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique. And I never for a minute doubted my partnership with the cello, for me the most complete of all the instruments."

As soon as his family becomes aware of the boy's talents, they are fully supportive and commit to his career, traveling with him to the great European musical centers, including Salzburg. The child hears all the great performers, notably Rostropovich among them: "I heard him the last two times he played Haydn at the Salle Pleyel... I must have been four years old, and he fascinated me." In 2001, there is even a meeting with a younger "elder," a certain Gautier Capuçon, Renaud's brother, who gives the young boy an autograph which the latter holds on to faithfully. What's more, his father buys him a magnificent cello, a 1711 David Tecchler, setting it aside for a later time... That time comes when Edgar is 15, at the Rostropovich competition in Paris, where he wins the top prize for a young soloist. "That's when my dad entrusted me with [the cello], and I still play it. It is a marvel of marvels." We definitely cannot deny that fact. In 2011, Edgar is awarded second prize at the prestigious Tchaikovsky competition in Moscow, before being named Best New Classical Artist by Adami in 2012, Best New Artist at the 2013 Victoires de la musique classique (the French equivalent to the US Grammy awards, France's top music awards), and again soloist of the year at the 2014 Victoires. The wheels had started to turn.



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While Edgar Moreau is the young beacon, a generation of superb French cellists is currently shining: Gautier Capuçon, Yan Levionnois, Jean-Guihen Queyras, and of course talented female cellists like Anne Gastinel and Emmanuelle Bertrand. Held back for so long by the difficulty of playing the instrument in a skirt- even going so far as to play “sidesaddle”- women have been freed by the arrival of pants! But what is it that gives Edgar an edge? Is it personality, charisma, musical intuition? His technique is golden, his sonority expansive, generous, velvety, and without the vibrato that tends to thicken the voice of the cello. The character pieces on his CD, including Bloch’s *Prière*, and Fauré’s *Elegie*, are gripping in their profound, solemn lyricism. Then, in Popper and Paganini, he takes off with the lightness of a hummingbird. Stunning! In his playing, one clearly senses the finesse of the French school, where the manipulation of the bow evokes the art of fencing for its flexibility and the speed of its reflexes.

“Today,” Edgar says, “I’m curious about everything, from baroque music to Xenakis, and I am still too young for my musical path to be set. [Georges] Braque said that one day, an artist finds himself. I will wait for my time, with the hope, for example, of playing under the baton of Daniel Barenboim, and with the dream of being able to realize a few projects with Renaud Capuçon, who has always supported me. I admire him so much, I owe him so much. I have really had so much luck, even if today my father is no longer alive. But the adventure continues: my sister Raphaëlle, a violinist, is incredibly talented, and my brothers David and Jeremy are following the same path.” When will we see a Moreau quartet? Rodin said, “It is force which produces grace.”