

Cellists' Corner

Brief Career Details of Important Cellists

prepared by David Johnstone from public information

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SPECIAL FEATURE on OPHÉLIE GAILLARD

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Born: 13th June, 1974 - Paris, France

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The French-Swiss cellist and conductor Ophélie Gaillard was born in Paris. She trained at the Paris Conservatory (CNSM), where she was awarded three premiers prix: one in chamber music in the class of Maurice Bourgue, another one in cello in the class of Philippe Muller, and also one in baroque cello in the class of Christophe Coin. She subsequently followed a series of further advanced classes with Maurice Bourgue. She also has a teaching diploma (cello) and a degree in musicology from the Sorbonne (she has held teaching duties since 2000).

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She had a big breakthrough in 1998, when she won third prize in the International Johann Sebastian Bach Competition in Leipzig. This must have certainly built up her confidence as an accompanied solo performer. Ophélie Gaillard soon distinguished herself as a versatile musician, performing with equal passion music of the Baroque, Classical, Romantic and Contemporary periods; indeed she was voted 'Revelation: Solo Instrumentalist of the Year' at the prestigious French Classical Music Awards ('Victoires') in 2003. As a result she gives recitals in some of the world's great concert halls, and champions the solo cello repertoire, everything from J.S. Bach's Suites to works by Benjamin Britten, Henri Dutilleux, Crumb and the composers of the younger generation. Her recordings from the Ambroisie label of the solo Bach cello suites, Britten's cello suites, and his cello sonata with pianist Vanessa Wagner were noticed by music critics internationally.

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However it is not only as an unaccompanied performer where she shines. Ophélie Gaillard makes solo appearances with the Orchestre de Cannes-Provence-Alpes Côte d'Azur, Polish Radio Orchestra (conductor Gabriel Chmura), Orchestre de Picardie (Edmon Colomer), European Camerata, orchestra Les Siècles, Ferenc Liszt Chamber Orchestra of Budapest, and Japan Philharmonic Orchestra.

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She is equally comfortable as a chamber music artist! Since 2004, she has worked with accordionist Pascal Contet. In 2005, Ophélie Gaillard founded Pulcinella, a chamber ensemble dedicated to playing Baroque music on period instruments. It is a chamber ensemble composed of some of the finest soloists, with which she explores the vast repertoire of concerted cello works. Their recording of the Antonio Vivaldi complete cello sonatas were acclaimed by the international press. Keenly interested in early music, and a recognized expert, Ophélie Gaillard has often taken part in Baroque vocal works directed by Christophe Rousset and Emmanuelle Haïm. She also founded the ensemble Amarillis, and has played in this group for over 10 years. Her more recent recording of Gabriel Fauré's works for cello and piano, with Bruno Fontaine, was singled out by The Strad Magazine. She also records for radio (France Musique, BBC Radio 3) and television (France 2, Mezzo, Arte).

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Ophélie Gaillard versatility has given her many opportunities at major music festivals and especially in France (such as Saint-Denis, Quimper, Messiaen at La Meige, Orangerie de Sceaux, Sablé-sur-Sarthe, Beaune, Evian, Montreux, Festival Bach de Lausanne, October in Normandy, Reims Flâneries Musicales, Toroella de Montgri) and at theatres including those of Bordeaux, Avignon, Poissy and Paris (Châtelet). She also likes to combine different artistic disciplines; for example, she works with dancers such as Daniel Larrieu and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui.

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She regularly gives recitals and master-classes in Japan and Korea, Latin and Central America and Canada.

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Ophélie Gaillard principally plays a cello made by Francesco Goffriller in 1737, loaned to her by the CIC. She suffered a big shock in 2018, when the cello was forced from her after a knifepoint robbery in Paris on 15th February that year. Widely reported and shared on Facebook, it was anonymously returned two days later - sometimes Facebook does indeed play a crucial social role! I believe that she also owns an 1855 Bernardel cello, which she uses for more romantic and modern music



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