



Camille Thomas | Photo: Ben Russel

## GREAT LEAP FORWARD: CELLIST CAMILLE THOMAS PERFORMS AROUND THE WORLD AND HAS AN EXCLUSIVE CONTRACT WITH DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON

*At the soloist marathon in 2017, Camille Thomas completed her concert exam "with honors". The Paris-born cellist, who studied with Prof. Wolfgang Emanuel Schmidt in Weimar, performed Camille Saint-Saëns' Concerto No. 1 in A minor accompanied by the orchestra of the Music University. Already then, the young musician, who plays a Château Pape Clément cello by Ferdinand Gagliano dating from 1788, was already a shooting star in the music scene. She received an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon in 2017 and won an ECHO Klassik award.*

### **Ms. Thomas, is classical music your sole passion?**

Yes, I began when I was four years old and have been a musician ever since. That is not a vocation for me - but rather an existential goal in life. Music was always a part of me and I feel that I have something to give, and that is my motor in life. Everything I do is connected with music. People who love music also love life, food, everything that is beautiful, because music helps us to live in a more beautiful, great and intense way.

I love literature, cinema, opera and am very romantic. That is really super important to me! I also like sports, swimming, because it is also important to be physically fit in this vocation, since it is very demanding. Music and true love are the same thing. I want to make people optimistic with my music. Music carries us upwards, and without any words it shows us that it is worthwhile to live and fight for what is good.

**What does the exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon mean to you?**

I was very fortunate to receive this contract, and it is a great joy! It offers me so many opportunities. For me, it is important to reach many people, not just those who go to concerts. That is possible with a big label like this, and it gives you the best conditions for recordings with good halls, sound technicians, orchestras, conductors and the professional team of Deutsche Grammophon.

**How did that come about?**

I was discovered in the ARTE TV-show Stars von morgen by Rolando Villazón. One year later I had a concert in Berlin, and a week after that the contract was in my mailbox. It is important to plan the CDs on the long term in order to build up something good. This exclusive contract is special, because there are also individual contracts for individual countries, but my contract is international. The CDs will also be sold worldwide.

**Why did you choose Saint- Saëns for your debut CD at Deutsche Grammophon?**

This CD is the first time I present myself with an orchestra - and I wanted to tell my story with it. Actually, it is my third CD: The first was influenced by Russian and the second by French literature. And now this "Paris" recording of works by Camille Saint- Saëns and Jacques Offenbach.

This CD is like a bridge: French music with a German influence. Both composers wrote works that are full of joy and youth. Saint- Saëns was only 37 years old and the Cello Concerto in A minor was his first great success - it made him very famous. Offenbach was also a cellist, and his works were very virtuoso. This is a very happy time of my life, and I would like to make other people happy with this music.

**What was Prof. Schmidt able to teach you?**

He is so important to me! I had studied with Frans Helmerson for five years in Berlin, and that was brilliant. After that, I didn't know what to do next. Then I studied with Wolfgang Emanuel Schmidt at a master class in 2013 and decided I must definitely study with him. He helped me so much in Weimar and gave me so many concrete tips for my presentation on stage. He is generous and shares all of his own experience as a soloist with me. It is beautiful to experience how much he loves his students, and that is also the secret of his success. And he knows everything about musicality and technique! He is a fantastic performer: a truly genius cellist and musician! My studies with Prof. Schmidt were another unbelievably great leap forward for me.

**What is your favorite repertoire?**

I am a romantic person. As a cellist, I can't really specialize on that, because we don't have enough concertos. You have to be able to play everything from early baroque to contemporary music. We can be soloists, but also chamber music performers, and we are also a foundation of the orchestra. I think that these characteristics make up a very special mixture.

*Thank you very much!*

*Jan Kreyßig led this interview.*

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