



CHAMPS HILL
RECORDS

RÊVE D'ENFANT FRANCK, RAVEL, YSAÏE

Sophie Rosa *violin*
Benjamin Powell *piano*



TRACK LISTING

	VIOLIN SONATA IN A MAJOR CÉSAR FRANCK (1822–1890)	
1	Allegretto ben moderato	5'50
2	Allegro	7'51
3	Recitativo-Fantasia: Ben moderato	6'58
4	Allegretto poco mosso	6'08
5	ANDANTINO QUIETOSO IN E-FLAT MAJOR Op.6 CÉSAR FRANCK	8'01
	SONATA FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO NO.2 IN G MAJOR MAURICE RAVEL (1875–1937)	
6	Allegretto	5'24
7	Blues: Moderato	3'50
8	Perpetuum mobile: Allegretto	3'49
9	PIÈCE EN FORME DE HABANERA MAURICE RAVEL, arr. GEORGES CATHERINE	2'54
10	RÊVE D'ENFANT (CHILD'S DREAM) Op.14 EUGÈNE YSAÏE (1858–1931)	4'51
	<i>Total playing time: 56'55</i>	

Produced, Engineered and Edited by Matthew Dilley
Recorded from the 30th June to 2nd July 2014 in the Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex, UK
Executive Producer for Champs Hill Records: Alexander Van Ingen
Label Manager for Champs Hill Records: Matt Buchanan

FOREWORD

I still remember the distinct impression César Franck's Violin Sonata made upon me after hearing it for the first time. The music of Franck, Ravel and Ysaÿe has always been incredibly alluring to me. There is something about the sound world, colour and atmosphere of this music that I find so fascinating. It therefore seemed fitting to choose works of these composers for my debut album at Champs Hill Records.

Having played the Franck and Ravel sonatas for many years, Ysaÿe's *Rêve d'enfant*, was a relatively more recent discovery for me and I was particularly struck by its eerie beauty and hypnotic quality. I am pleased to have included Franck's *Andantino Quietoso*, which is not heard so often in the concert hall these days.

To look at this repertoire again in the spectacular surroundings of Champs Hill has been so inspiring. I hope that that you will enjoy listening to these beautiful works just as I will enjoy performing them for many years to come.

My warmest thanks go to David and Mary Bowerman whose support and generosity never ceases to amaze me. Thank you to Benjamin Powell for his wonderful musical partnership, to Matthew Dilley and Alexander Van Ingen for their expert input and to photographers Helen Rae and Sebastian Siwko. I would also like to thank my past teachers and family who have been there every step of the way.

I am grateful to Andrew Winter for the loan of a Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume violin dated 1845 (Stradivarius model), which was used for this recording.

Sophie Rosa



PROGRAMME NOTE

Success came very late to the Belgian-born composer César Franck (1822–90), and arguably not entirely until after his death. His appearance was neither that of an unruly genius like Beethoven, much though he admired and sometimes emulated that composer; nor a suave man of the salon such as Fauré. Rather, he appeared a befuddled professor of the organ, often seen out in the streets in Paris wearing a too short pair of trousers and an overcoat too large for him, absent-mindedly grimacing as he hurried either to the Conservatoire where he taught organ, or to Sainte-Clotilde where he regularly played. He took innocent delight in hearing his own music performed, even when the musicians and audiences were either hostile or simply bemused.

It was only when he was approaching his sixtieth birthday that he began to compose the several works for which he remains most widely known and loved. These include *Le Chasseur maudit* (1882), the *Symphonic Variations* (1886), his multi-movement symphonic poem *Psyché* (1886–88), and his Violin Sonata, composed in 1886 as a wedding present for the 31-year-old violinist Eugène Ysaÿe (1858–1931). Franck arranged for this to be delivered to Ysaÿe on the morning of his wedding, and the violinist, after a hasty rehearsal with the pianist Marie-Léontine Bordes-Pène, performed the work to his wedding guests.

The Sonata has been described – by the late Professor David Brown, amongst others – as a parable about marriage (Franck himself married in 1848, climbing over the barricades of the Parisian rebels in order to reach the church). Broadly, the thesis goes, the four movements successively portray blossoming love; strife; dialogue and reconciliation; then finally harmonious marriage, symbolised by violin and piano playing the same music in canon, with the piano taking the lead. Marcel Proust may well have been inspired by the third movement of Franck's Sonata, when he described Swann's perception of the dialogue between

piano and violin in the Sonata by the fictitious Vinteuil: "At first the piano complained alone, like a bird deserted by its mate; the violin heard and answered it, as from a neighbouring tree. It was as at a very beginning of the world, as if as yet there were none but these two upon the earth, or rather in this world closed against all the rest, so fashioned by the logic of its creator than in it there should never be any but themselves; the world of this sonata."

Some 42 years earlier, when in his early twenties, Franck composed a short but touching movement for violin and piano, the *Andantino Quietoso*. This was written for himself to perform as a pianist with his young violinist brother, Joseph. A possible model for the work is Schubert's *Nocturne* for piano trio, written in the same key. Franck dedicated his work to the Count of Montendre, one of several aristocratic patrons who had supported the Franck brothers when they were embarking on a performing career.

One great if unexpected admirer of Franck's Violin Sonata – of its first movement in particular – was Maurice Ravel (1875–1937). Franck's influence appears fleetingly in the one movement Ravel composed of a prospective Violin Sonata, when aged 22, in 1897. However the Sonata he composed in his maturity in 1923–27, the G major (known as "No.2" since 1975 with the publication of Ravel's earlier Sonata), is stylistically quite removed from the Franck. Certainly post-First World War Europe was a very different world – more brittle and far less voluptuous in sensibility (though still sexually charged) than had been the previous three decades. It was an era soaked with jazz, and which also – encouraged by Diaghilev of the Ballets Russes – affected a taste, even if with self-conscious irony, for the pre-Romantic rococo world of neo-classicism.

Ravel had originally intended the Sonata for a close friend, the violinist Hélène Jourdan-Morhange; unfortunately her increasingly crippling rheumatism

prematurely ended her performing career. Possibly this, as well as a bout of depression on Ravel's part, hindered the Sonata's composition. Ravel wrote at least one alternative version of the finale which, though much admired by those of his friends and colleagues he showed it to, he finally burned and replaced with a *Perpetuum mobile* which – though “not so good” as music – fitted more appropriately with the preceding two movements.

In the opening *Allegretto* there is a spiky quality to the dialogue between piano and violin, and yet a sense of tender resignation as in the final pages of that movement piano and violin finally co-exist in parallel rather than in harmonious union. *Blues* is Ravel's tribute to a style of music he professed to like “far more than grand opera”. Indeed, he had demonstrated his relish for American musical culture in his almost contemporary opera *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, which paid tribute to what he called “the spirit of American musical comedy”. Yet in *Blues* there is, one senses, something more bitter in this piece with its “implacable” rhythms: indeed, the biographer Roger Nichols has suggested that Ravel's *Blues* contains a repressed or stylised anguish, which was more nakedly expressed in the anti-colonial “Aoua!” of his *Chansons madécasses* composed 1925–26. The Sonata's final *Perpetuum mobile* brilliantly combines all these elements – the neo-classical toccata style with blues-inflected melodies – in an almost carefree display of virtuosity.

The almost percussive dotted-rhythmic accompaniment of the *Habanera*, one of Spain's best-known dances, is particularly well known through its use in Bizet's *Carmen* as the basis of the heroine's opening aria. Given Ravel's attraction to Spanish music (he himself being half Basque) and the many Spanish-inspired

works he composed, it is not surprising to find one of his earliest characteristic compositions was the ‘Habanera’ movement of his two-movement *Sites auriculaires*, which he composed aged 20 in 1895. So quintessentially Ravelian was its style that he later orchestrated it and made that *Habanera* the penultimate movement of *Rapsodie espagnole*, composed in 1907. It was in that same year that he composed a *Vocalise-étude en forme de habanera* to a commission by the Paris Conservatoire voice teacher A.L. Hettich: this was just one of a series of studies written by contemporary composers for Hettich to use in his classes. Ravel's sultry vocalise was soon arranged for various alternative instruments, including violin. Here we hear the arrangement by Ravel's near contemporary Georges Catherine (1872–1958), a prominent violin pedagogue who played with the orchestra of the Paris Opera.

Sophia Rosa ends her recital with a work by the dedicatee of Franck's Sonata, Ysaÿe. Some months after the birth of his fourth child, Antoine, on 11 April 1894, the Belgian violinist toured the United States. During a stop at Niagara Falls, he wrote to his wife, Louise: “Tears come to my eyes at the thought of Antoine... precious mite... how I am longing to take him in my arms...” Six years later, while touring Dresden, Munich and Copenhagen, Antoine was very much on his mind as the six-year-old boy was seriously ill. Anxiously awaiting news, Ysaÿe composed *Rêve d'enfant*, dedicating the work to “À mon p'tit Antoine”. Though originally written for violin and small orchestra, Ysaÿe published a version for violin and piano in 1901.

Daniel Jaffé



I SOPHIE ROSA *violin*

One of the UK's most exciting violinists, Sophie Rosa was awarded the Second Prize and Audience Prize at the 2nd Manchester International Violin Competition 2011. She has performed across the UK as a recitalist in venues including the Royal Festival Hall, the Purcell Room and Bridgewater Hall as well as appearing with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and the Manchester Camerata. Sophie has broadcast for Radio 3 and Classic FM.

Sophie has performed regularly throughout the UK and internationally from a very young age. In 2006 she was a finalist in the BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition and was the First Prize winner of the Lions European Music Competition, Cannes. Sophie studied at Chetham's School of Music and the Royal Northern College of Music. She was a recipient of the RNCM Gold Medal and was also awarded the Worshipful Company of Musicians Silver Medal in recognition of her musical achievements. Sophie was also a recipient of the MBF Ian Fleming Charitable Trust Award. After completing her Masters Degree with Distinction, Sophie completed the RNCM International Artist

Diploma in Solo Performance and furthered her studies in America with Midori Goto, Miriam Fried and Donald Weilerstein.

Sophie has performed at the MBNA Chester Music Festival, The Manchester Midday Concert Society, The Aurora Festival, Sweden, Musique Cordiale Festival, France, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival and the International Musicians Seminar, Prussia Cove. As a chamber musician Sophie has collaborated with notable musicians including Martin Roscoe, Nobuko Imai, Hannah Roberts, Craig Ogden and James Gilchrist.

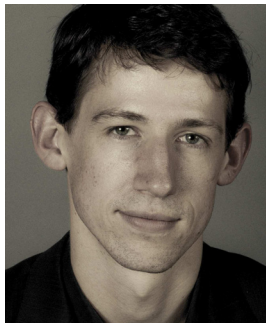
Sophie was kindly supported by several award foundations including the Philharmonia Orchestra Martin Music Scholarship, The Solti Foundation, The Hattori Foundation, The Manchester Graucob Award, the Leverhulme Scholarship, The High Sheriff of Cheshire Prize for Music, The Stephen Bell Charitable Trust, The Lauriston School Trust, The Stanley Picker Trust and Help Musicians UK.

Sophie currently plays on a Joseph Gagliano violin dated 1795 made available through the generous support of the Stradivari Trust.

www.sophierosa.com

BENJAMIN POWELL *piano*

Praised by Philip Mead, founder of the British Contemporary Piano Competition as “a consummate musician with a transcendent pianistic technique in the service of a refined musicality”, Benjamin Powell has gained a reputation for intelligent and expressive performances with a strong commitment to contemporary music. Since winning the British Contemporary Piano Competition in 2010 Benjamin has performed across the UK and Europe, in venues including the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Bridgewater Hall, Wigmore Hall, Snape Maltings, IRCAM, and Harpa (Reykjavik). He has recently been appointed pianist for the Manchester based Psapha ensemble.



He has taken part in a performance of the complete solo piano music of Helmut Lachenmann at the Aldeburgh Festival and a performance of Marco Stroppa's *Traiettoria* in IRCAM, Paris. Benjamin's recording of selections from Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* was used in the recent National Theatre production of *The Hard Problem*, Sir Tom Stoppard's latest play.

Benjamin is much in demand as a chamber musician and has collaborated with many distinguished musicians including Stefano Canuti, Leland Chen, Levon Chilingirian, Miklós Perényi, Thomas Riebl, Sophie Rosa and Eva Thorarinsdottir. He studied at the Royal Northern College of Music with Carole Presland and later (thanks to scholarships from the MBF, DAAD, and Lynn Foundation) with Pierre-Laurent Aimard and Alexander Melnikov at the Hochschule für Musik, Cologne and RNCM respectively. Since 2007 Benjamin has been a staff pianist at the RNCM where he now also teaches piano.

www.benjaminpowellpiano.co.uk

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BBC Music Magazine ★★★★★

