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# STRAUSS & FAURÉ

## SONATAS FOR VIOLIN & PIANO

### RICHARD STRAUSS

(1864-1949)

**Sonata in E flat major Op. 18** (31:54)

- 1 I – Allegro ma non troppo (12:22)
- 2 II – Improvisation: Andante cantabile (10:07)
- 3 III – Finale: Andante (9:13)

### GABRIEL FAURÉ

(1845-1924)

**Sonata in A major Op. 13** (27:54)

- 4 I – Allegro molto (10:12)
- 5 II – Andante (7:41)
- 6 III – Allegro vivo (31:50)
- 7 IV – Allegro quasi presto (6:51)

**LYDIA MORDKOVITCH** *violin*

**GERHARD OPPITZ** *piano*

TT = 60:01

DDD

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DIGITAL

# STRAUSS

VIOLIN & PIANO SONATA  
in E flat major Op. 18

# FAURÉ

VIOLIN & PIANO SONATA in A major Op. 13

**LYDIA MORDKOVITCH** VIOLIN



**GERHARD OPPITZ** PIANO

**Richard Strauss (1864–1949)**

**Sonata in E flat major, Op. 18**

1	I Allegro ma non troppo	32:02
2	II Improvisation. Andante cantabile	12:24
3	III Finale. Andante	10:09
		9:20

**Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)**

**Sonata No. 1 in A major, Op. 13**

4	I Allegro molto	28:00
5	II Andante	10:14
6	III Allegro vivo	7:44
7	IV Allegro quasi presto	3:53
		5:56

**Lydia Mordkovitch** violin

**Gerhard Oppitz** piano

**Richard Strauss**

Recent history has too often given a misleading view of art and artists only later to be revised by a more dispassionate and accurate viewpoint. Whilst an artist is in living memory much is written and said that is not germane to a true understanding of his achievement. An appropriate instance of the pot calling the kettle black was Stravinsky's assertion that Strauss '...is not a composer, he is a connoisseur'. Composers in particular are prone to adulation for a handful of works whilst many fine pieces are all but ignored. Early works often suffer in this way, sometimes for no good reason.

Richard Strauss's early works, even though written in the period known as his 'radiant dawn', are no exception to this. That they give little evidence of outstanding originality does not gainsay, in many instances, their truly expressive charm. His models from whom he learned his craft were those in the Classical-Romantic tradition, among them Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that tapping so rich a vein of musical experience should have inhibited the young composer in terms of originality of expression. He was, of course, feeling his way, unhappy within the confines of Classical sonata form, a situation he was later to resolve in the more flexible structure of the symphonic poem.

The **Violin Sonata in E flat major** is quite simply a masterwork, the last of Strauss's classically-designed compositions and deserving of far greater recognition than it has hitherto been accorded. Many of its themes have much in common with the breadth and vivacity of those to be found in *Don Juan*, the symphonic poem on which the composer had already begun work. The connection is not only thematic, both works share a level of inspiration which represents for Strauss a new level of artistic achievement.

The broadly-proportioned opening movement achieves an impressive climax of near operatic dimensions. The central *Andante cantabile (Improvisation)* was the last of the three movements to be composed. Its gracefully elegant outer sections frame a stormy middle episode in which the piano part closely resembles the accompaniment to Schubert's *Erkönig*. So close is the resemblance that it precludes any thought that it could be coincidental. References to the style of Chopin's Nocturnes may be observed in the return to the main subject of the movement and even the coda contains memories of the *Adagio* from Beethoven's *Pathétique* Sonata. Such quotations, (together with the 'Tristan' allusion in the Finale), of other composer's ideas was for Strauss a legitimate and fruitful source of inspiration – an idea now fashionable, nearly one hundred years on, in the work of some contemporary composers.

The Finale interestingly begins with a solemn introduction, to be followed with passages of great brilliance, interposed with scherzo-like ideas and soaring melodies of a type that would not be out of place in a concerto.

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#### Gabriel Fauré

To say that Fauré was a composer of reticence, reflecting French civilisation at its most fastidious, is to be both truthful and, in a sense, misleading. In our times such a conclusion may be judged as bordering on the negative, but Fauré's strikingly individual music could never be so described. There are too many positive virtues in his art, in particular his use of melody, harmony and texture.

The melodic inspiration which gave rise to such as the hauntingly beautiful song, 'Après un rêve' was, surprisingly, dependent on the harmonic scheme that underpinned the vocal line – a manner of composition allied to the Classical tradition, wherein thematic material arises from harmonic structure.

Fauré's harmony is memorable for its subtle use, not of newly devised chords, but of chords susceptible to normal harmonic analysis. What is so personal in his music is the use of progressive modulation, which lies beyond the guidelines of text-book procedures, but which illuminate his music with a strange and beguiling light. The texture of Fauré's piano writing is also individual in its use of broken-chord figures which achieve the status of a fluid counterpoint, self-supporting, on which the music buoyantly floats.

The *Sonata No. 1 in A major* for Violin and Piano was the first of two such works that Fauré produced, part of a body of chamber music less well-known than it deserves to be, which engaged the master's imagination throughout his long life. The sonata dates from 1876, two years after the first exhibition of the Impressionist painters in Paris. Although Fauré eschewed the dramatic and the grandiose in his music, the vehemence and conviction of the opening *Allegro molto* is a denial of criticisms that his work lacked substance and depth. Particularly noteworthy in this movement are the remote harmonic horizons glimpsed in the development section. There follows an *Andante* of considerable

maturity in which the concentrated and anguished nature of the music gives way to a moving expression of repose and serenity.

The third movement is a scherzo of freshness and humour, using tonal ambiguities that would have undoubtedly raised a few eyebrows at the time of the sonata's first appearance. The trio section forms a graceful

and quiet interlude and is considered by some critics to be reminiscent of Schumann. The vigorously rhythmic finale provides both an apposite contrast to the preceding *Andante* and a fitting end to a work of undoubted stature.

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**Recording producers** Brian Couzens (Prokofiev, Strauss, Fauré, Schumann), Tim Handley (Brahms, Schubert)

**Sound engineer** Ralph Couzens

**Assistant engineers** Bill Todd (Prokofiev, Strauss, Fauré, Schumann), Philip Couzens (Brahms, Schubert)

**Editors** Tim Oldham (Schubert, Schumann, Fauré), Roy Emerson (Prokofiev, Strauss)

**Recording venues** St Luke's Church, Chelsea, London: 1 October (Schumann), 9 & 10 October (Prokofiev) and 11 & 12 October 1984 (Strauss, Fauré); All Saints' Church, Tooting, London: 17–20 June (Brahms) and 19 June 1986 (Schubert)

**Front cover** Detail from *Jane Avril Dancing* by Toulouse Lautrec (1864–1901)

**Design** Michael White-Robinson

**Booklet typeset by** Michael White-Robinson

**Copyright** Anglo Soviet Music Press Ltd (Prokofiev Sonata No. 1), Boosey and Hawkes Ltd (Prokofiev Sonata No. 2), Universal Edition Ltd (Strauss Sonata)

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Chandos Records Ltd, Colchester, Essex CO2 8HQ, England

Printed in the EU

STRAUSS & FAURÉ: VIOLIN SONATAS Mordkovich & Oppitz · Chandos CHAN 8417

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