



 CHAMPS HILL  
RECORDS

STRAUSS CHAMBER WORKS

# METAMORPHOSEN



OCULI ENSEMBLE

## FOREWORD

The Oculi Ensemble are thrilled to bring you this disc that starts with the emotional profundity of Strauss's iconic *Metamorphosen* and maturity of *Capriccio* alongside some of Richard Strauss's lesser-known chamber works. We were particularly honoured that the Strauss family permitted us to record the early String Quartet Fragment so tantalisingly left unfinished and of course we would like to thank them for their help.

This disc has been a real labour of love. From the Oculi Ensemble's inception the group wanted to explore the breadth of instrumental combinations of Strauss's chamber works: the A Major String Quartet showing deft early skill and imagination in thematic development; the Piano Quartet movements each, although brief, showing such varied language and use of the instrumentation.

We all spent a hugely enjoyable time recording at Champs Hill and we enjoyed the journey that each day took us on, emotionally and musically. We hope that this disc enables you to join us in the Oculi Ensemble's appreciation of the glorious chamber works of Richard Strauss.

Warm thanks to everyone at Champs Hill Records for all their hard work and support, and especially to Matthew Bennett and Dave Rowell.

[www.oculiensemble.co.uk](http://www.oculiensemble.co.uk)



Charlotte Scott

## TRACK LISTING

01	<b>PRELUDE TO CAPRICCIO</b> Op.85	10'51
02	<b>QUARTETTSATZ IN E-FLAT MAJOR</b> TRV 85	1'35
	<b>STRING QUARTET IN A MAJOR</b>	
03	<i>i</i> Allegro	8'54
04	<i>ii</i> Allegro molto	4'58
05	<i>iii</i> Andante cantabile, molto espressivo	7'58
06	<i>iv</i> Finale	8'10
07	<b>STÄNDCHEN</b>	4'18
08	<b>FESTMARSCH FOR PIANO QUARTET</b> AV178	5'22
	<b>TWO PIECES FOR PIANO QUARTET</b> AV182	
09	<i>i</i> Arabische Tanz	1'38
10	<i>ii</i> Liebesliedchen	5'42
11	<b>METAMORPHOSEN</b> arr. Leopold	25'40

Total Time: 85'14

Produced and edited by Matthew Bennett

Engineered and mastered by Dave Rowell

Recorded on 4th–7th February 2019 in the Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex, UK

Executive Producer for Champs Hill Records: Alexander Van Ingen

Label Manager for Champs Hill Records: Rebecca Dixon

Munich, capital of the short-lived Kingdom of Bavaria, was developing fast at the time of Richard Strauss's birth in 1864. The future composer's home city, Germany's second largest after Hamburg, had prospered since arrival of the railway little more than a quarter century earlier, its ancient medieval centre now open to the grand Neoclassical buildings of the Ludwigstrasse and its related 'royal' avenues. Young Richard, the first of two children born to the court horn player Franz Strauss and Josephine Pschorr Strauss, daughter of an affluent local brewer, was raised to value education and its role in the cultivation of excellence. His own father had overcome the stigma of illegitimacy to ascend the ranks of Bavarian musicians to become professor at Munich's Royal School of Music and, in 1873, chamber musician to Ludwig II, the famously profligate Swan King.

Formative studies at the Ludwigs-Gymnasium helped establish Richard's lifelong attachment to *Bildung*, the systematic process of humanist education rooted in the great classical and historical achievements of European culture. The works of Shakespeare, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and, above all, Goethe, gave shape to Strauss's worldview; his early musical studies, meanwhile, were guided by the ultra-conservative tastes of his father, who limited his son's studies to 'nothing but classical music' until he was sixteen. 'I owe it to this discipline,' he recalled in old age, 'that my love and adoration for the classical masters of music has remained untainted to this day.'

Beyond its court and public institutions Munich's musical life drew considerable energy from the growing presence of middle-class culture. The domestic salon and more modest drawing rooms of Bavaria's bourgeoisie became havens for chamber music. Strauss, a self-confessed 'bad pupil' who disliked practising piano and violin, had a gift for sight-reading at the keyboard and was a sensitive accompanist of lieder. 'I also became a respectable chamber musician,' he noted in his brief essay, 'Recollections of My Youth and Years of Apprenticeship'. Strauss's love for the 'classical masters' and closeness to the conservatism of his father and Munich's musical cognoscenti did not

prevent him from adopting influences from the iconoclastic works of Liszt, Berlioz and Wagner. Yet before the teenager felt free to experiment, he proved his mastery of counterpoint and fugue in a series of works directly inspired by the classical Viennese composers and such early Romantics as Mendelssohn and Schumann.

The classical tradition supplied formal models for Strauss's early works. The String Quartet in A major was completed in 1880, the year in which he also wrote his Symphony No.1 in D minor. The quartet, first performed at Munich's Museumsaal on 14 March 1881 by an ensemble led by the composer's cousin and violin teacher, Benno Walter, opens with a lively theme reminiscent in style of Haydn. The first movement's development section takes an initial scenic detour from the exposition's thematic material before settling for routine repetitions and variations of its principal themes, a strategy that lessens the impact of the recapitulation. Strauss thereafter launches and sustains a spirited *scherzo*, graced by echoes of Mozart and a Ländler-like drone bass; the movement's trio section is marked by a flowing fiddle melody, elegant companion to the bustling *scherzo*.

Norman Del Mar, in his critical commentary on the composer's life and works, dismisses the following *Andante cantabile* for 'the lame symmetry of its themes' before asserting that it 'certainly at no time touches even the fringe of one's heart. But then how should it? What did the pampered schoolboy know about life?' The movement's Mendelssohnian introduction and opening cello theme suggest that he knew something, even if it was yet insufficient to escape the limits of his formal training. Mozart's influence surfaces again in the finale, clearly stamped in the opening theme and preserved in spirit throughout the movement. The work's premiere received a favourable review in the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, where it was welcomed as 'proof of decided talent; it is characterised by natural sentiment and skill in handling form.... Each movement was generously applauded and the young composer took two bows at the end at the insistence of an enthusiastic audience.' The sixteen-year-old's String Quartet was

accepted by the small firm of Joseph Aibl and published as his Opus 2, part of an agreement that would last for twenty years and see thirty works through the press.

During his childhood and early adolescence Strauss wrote songs and chamber pieces for members of his music-loving family, dedicating many of them to his aunt, Johanna Pschorr, and writing others for her sons. In July 1879 he began work on a string quartet movement, the *Quartettsatz* in E-flat major, but abandoned the project in its forty-second bar, apparently distracted by the handful of other pieces he was composing at the time and what he described as the 'greatest enjoyment' of playing Mozart's piano concertos from his father's copy of their first complete edition.

The background to *Ständchen* ("Serenade") remains unclear, although the piece was probably written in Munich in the early 1880s; it certainly stands as a fine example of its young composer's lyrical invention, an exquisite song-without-words for violin, viola, cello and piano punctuated by emotional turbulence in its central section and distinguished throughout by idiomatic scoring.

The *Festmarsch* in D major, also for piano quartet, completed in November 1886 as a silver wedding gift for Johanna and Georg Pschorr, combines the celebratory with the serious, the latter heightened in the pensive trio section and recalled in the composition's short, restrained *coda*.

The Two Pieces for Piano Quartet represent symbols of Strauss's deep affection for Georg Pschorr, not least for his abiding encouragement and occasional financial support: Georg covered the printing costs of his nephew's official Opus 1 and, in the winter of 1892, paid for him to visit Greece, Sicily and Egypt to speed his recovery from serious illness. Strauss wrote the Two Pieces in Weimar as a Christmas present for his uncle, during breaks between conducting duties for what proved to be the world premiere of Engelbert Humperdinck's opera *Hänsel und Gretel*. He based the fiery *Arabische Tanz*, completed on 7 December, on original Arab melodies; the 'Little Love Song', meanwhile, would have

evoked fond memories of the many musical soirees held at the Pschorr house. On Christmas Eve, the day after finishing the second of the set, Strauss wrote to his father: 'I sent off the pieces for Uncle Georg yesterday, I really had to cheese-pare the time for them, for I've not a free moment in the last fortnight.'

Lessons from the past and their supposedly civilising values were tested to destruction by the First World War and the blood-lust of the Nazis. Even so they brought solace to Strauss in old age. His last completed opera, *Capriccio* (1940–41), reflects on the nature of opera itself and its eternal debate about the primacy of words over music or music over words. The work, subtitled 'A Conversation Piece for Music', opens with a Prelude for string sextet, ostensibly written by the composer Flamand to mark the Countess Madeleine's birthday and advance his pursuit of the beautiful widow over that of his rival in love, the poet Olivier. The sextet's yearning expression, touched by nostalgia for a land of lost content, reveals the power of instrumental music to transcend words.

During the last six years of his life Strauss, yesterday's man in so many ways, completed a series of remarkable masterworks, rightly judged as the fruits of a creative Indian summer and a final avowal of his faith in the expressive language of late Romantic music. Although *Metamorphosen* for twenty-three solo strings was written to satisfy a commission from Paul Sacher, founder and director of the Schola Cantorum in Basel, its emotional content was conditioned by a dawning realisation of the futility of war and its terrible consequences.

On the night of 13–14 February 1945, what felt like an unbroken wave of Allied bombers reduced Strauss's beloved Dresden to ruins and killed over 50,000 of its inhabitants. On 2 March Strauss wrote to the Viennese art historian Joseph Gregor: 'I too am in a mood of despair! The Goethehaus, the world's greatest sanctuary, destroyed! My beautiful Dresden – Weimar – Munich, all gone!' The 81-year-old composer responded to the weight of destruction in his impassioned *Metamorphosen*,

a work of aching sadness and bitter despair for the tragic course of twentieth-century history. On the final page of the manuscript, Strauss simply added the words 'In memoriam!' beneath a quote voiced by low strings of the opening of the funeral march from Beethoven's 'Eroica' Symphony.

Strauss had begun work on the score for Sacher in August 1944, incorporating into his sketches material from an abandoned setting of Goethe's poem *Niemand wird sich selber kennen* and developing its rich web of polyphony during the early autumn. The composer's biographer Michael Kennedy suggested that the Goethe connection marks *Metamorphosen* as 'not just the elegy for the destruction of German culture that has been supposed, but a deeply personal apologia for having had anything to do with the Nazi regime at any time.... *Metamorphosen* is the music of the confessional.' Certainly its composition appears to have involved catharsis for a man who had served as inaugural president of Josef Goebbels' *Reichsmusikkammer* until his dismissal from the post in 1935. Strauss struggled to complete his new 'Adagio', but returned to his sketchbooks in January 1945 and again in the weeks after the Dresden raid. It has been observed that Goethe also provided the inspiration for the work's title, not least since Strauss had sought comfort in the poet's late works and his ideas about the constantly changing nature of an individual's body, mind and soul.

After a plaintive introductory theme given to the cellos and double bass, it seems that Strauss by chance introduced a melody for two violas heavily reminiscent of the opening theme from the funeral march of Beethoven's 'Eroica' Symphony. This 'Eroica' reference is recalled elsewhere in the work's opening section, and is deliberately stated in its despairing closing bars. Strauss later noted that the Beethoven quote 'escaped from his pen'. The work's freewheeling central section, prefaced by a surging climax, provides an initial moment of reflection after the emotional turmoil of its opening material. Here, the composer invokes the spirit of a lost culture in music of almost

unbearable anguish; Strauss indicates a gradual acceleration in tempo throughout and builds the tension towards the eventual reprise of the work's introductory *Adagio*. Soon after completing *Metamorphosen* Strauss summarised the feelings surrounding the work's creation in his diary: 'On 1 May ended the most terrible period of mankind: twelve years during which the fruits of Germany's 2000-year-long cultural development were condemned to extinction and irreplaceable buildings and works of art were destroyed by a criminal rabble of soldiers. A curse on technology!' Strauss finished the work's draft in short-score form for seven solo strings on 31 March 1945. The manuscript, written for two violins, two violas, two cellos and one double bass, served as the basis for the composer's final version for twenty-three strings. It was rediscovered in Switzerland in 1990 and edited for performance four years later by the cellist Rudolf Leopold, a native of Vienna born in 1954, a decade after the US Air Force made the first of many bombing raids on the Austrian city. Leopold's arrangement draws from the septet version, including its closing modulation, and the more familiar version for twenty-three strings to enhance the intimacy of the work's instrumental polylogue without diluting its nobility of expression.

Andrew Stewart



## I BIOGRAPHIES

### **Oculi Ensemble**

The Oculi Ensemble is a flexible string ensemble derived from internationally acclaimed string quartet players from the Badke, Doric, Piatti, Navarra, Albion and Idomeneo. They are passionate about performing and discovering the breadth of string repertoire composed for various combinations from two to seven players.

Members of the Oculi Ensemble hold numerous international prizes as individuals and chamber musicians and have recorded for various labels which include Hyperion, Chandos, Linn, Signum and Naxos. The Oculi Ensemble has enjoyed performing in various concert halls around the world including Het Concertgebouw and LSO St Luke's. Future projects include collaborations with the BBC Singers where they will explore the breadth of chamber music written for a flexible ensemble.

The Oculi Ensemble performs on a stunning range of instruments including those from Stradivari, Guarneri and Grancino.



Photograph: Matthew Johnson

**Charlotte Scott** *violin*

Charlotte has enjoyed a varied career as a chamber musician, soloist and concertmaster. Charlotte was the 1st violinist and founding members of the Piatti Quartet from 2006 to 2013. She also enjoyed an international concert schedule with the Piatti Quartet, venues included Wigmore Hall, Purcell Room and Vienna Konzerthaus. Their discography includes recordings for Linn Records, Classical Label and Champs Hill. From 2013 to 2017 she was the 1st violinist of the Badke Quartet performing in venues including Wigmore Hall, Concertgebouw and Esterhazy Palace. Charlotte also recorded numerous discs with the Badke Quartet.

As a soloist she has performed with some of the leading UK orchestras and with her duo partner James Baillieu, she has performed in venues such as the Wigmore Hall, Purcell Room, Fairfield Halls and in various festivals throughout Europe and the UK.

Charlotte is a regular guest Concertmaster for various orchestras including the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Royal National Scottish Orchestra and BBC Philharmonic. Charlotte plays on a violin by Antonio Stradivarius 1685.



Photograph: Tas Kyprianou

**Emma Parker** *violin*

Emma Parker was a founder member of the Badke Quartet in 2002. Over 14 years the quartet performed in the major concert halls of Europe, including Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), Musikverein (Vienna) and Wigmore Hall, with multiple broadcasts on BBC Radio 3. The quartet also won first prize and audience prize at the Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition. In 2016 Emma



Photograph: Matthew Johnson

**Jon Thorne** *viola*

Jon Thorne studied at the London College of Music with Maureen Smith and Penny Filer, then at the Royal College of Music with Simon Rowland-Jones and later with Mark Knight. Upon leaving the RCM, Jon joined the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. Jon left the BSO to form the Bronte String Quartet, performing at venues such as Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall and

Purcell Room, and many festivals throughout the UK and abroad. The Bronte Quartet were winners of the Royal Overseas League and Cremona competitions. Jon joined the Badke Quartet in 2009 and played with them at venues throughout the UK and abroad including Wigmore Hall, Kings Place, Aix, Montreux, Ljubljana and Mecklenburg festivals, Esterhazy Palace, Concertgebouw. He is also a regular guest principal with the London Philharmonic, English Chamber, Bournemouth Symphony orchestras and the London Mozart Players. Jon is currently Professor of Viola and Chamber Music at the Royal Academy of Music, London.



**Simon Tandree** *viola*

As an internationally recognised chamber musician and Principal Violist Simon Tandree has performed in the world's leading concert halls including the Wigmore Hall, Concertgebouw, Berlin Konzerthaus, Vienna Konzerthaus and Library of Congress in Washington.

As a member of the world-renowned Doric String Quartet Simon won numerous prizes including 1st prize Osaka International Chamber Music Competition, 2nd prize Borciani Competition in Italy, and two *Gramophone* nominations for CDs recorded with Chandos.

As well as being in demand as Principal Viola, he appears regularly with orchestras such as Britten Sinfonia, Aurora, ENO, Manchester Camerata, Porto Sinfonica and Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Simon is passionate about teaching and has given masterclasses in institutions and courses in Spain, India, Indonesia and Mozambique where he has been part of the Xiquitsi project helping to bring classical music to young children.

**Nathaniel Boyd** *cello*

As an internationally recognised chamber musician and soloist, Nathaniel appears regularly at the world's leading concert halls. Described as 'exceptionally gifted' by *Musical Opinion* magazine, he is a laureate of numerous prizes for his work with the Navarra Quartet, including the MIDEM Outstanding Young Artist Award, Cannes (2008) and a Borletti Buitoni Fellowship (2007) as well as being selected for representation by YCAT and as a soloist, by the Tillett Trust (2009). His recordings of Vasks and Haydn



Photograph: Susste Ahlburg

quartets both received 5-star reviews from *BBC Music Magazine*.

Nathaniel appears as guest Principal Cellist with UK orchestras including the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Royal Northern Sinfonia, Manchester Camerata, RSNO and Aurora Orchestra.

Nathaniel is a member of the Albion Quartet. Formed in 2016 the quartet have forged a busy international schedule with concerts at the Wigmore Hall, Concertgebouw and at the Aldeburgh Festival.

**Pau Codina** *cello*

Born in 1988 in Barcelona, Pau Codina is a graduate of the Yehudi Menuhin School, the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and Chapelle Musicale Reine Elisabeth.

He has performed extensively throughout Europe and in many prestigious venues both as a soloist and chamber musician. He has appeared as a soloist with orchestras such as the Andorra Chamber Orchestra, the Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra of Budapest, the Chamber Orchestra of Wallonie, the RTVE Orchestra in Madrid and the Barcelona Symphony Orchestra.

Pau is a member of the Oculi Ensemble, the Fortuny Piano Trio and the Esbjerg Ensemble.



Photograph: Noemi Elias

Away from the concert platform, Pau has won several competitions and awards, such as the MBF's Guilhermina Suggia award, the Kronberg Cello Festival Schlosskonzert prize, both third prize as well as the Critique's award in the Primer Palau Competition in Barcelona, and the first prize in the Concurso Permanente competition of Jeunesses Musicales of Spain.



**Stacey Watton** *double bass*

Stacey Watton made his concerto debut on the bass at the age of 13. Stacey won the Eugene Cruft Prize for the Double Bass at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, where he studied as a scholar and later taught. Stacey has a busy career as a concerto soloist, chamber musician and orchestra principal performing on recordings, live television and radio broadcasts, as well as recording the sound tracks to numerous Hollywood films. Stacey has also appeared as a guest principal with orchestras such as the Royal Concertgebouw, Royal and London Philharmonics, the Hallé, BBC Concert Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra and BBC National Orchestra of Wales. Stacey has also successfully embarked

on a career as a conductor.

Photograph: Benjamin Ealovega



**James Baillieu** *piano*

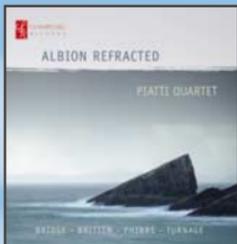
An accomplished chamber musician, soloist and accompanist, James has collaborated with artists and ensembles including Lawrence Power, Heath Quartet, Mark Padmore, Sir Thomas Allen, Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, Lise Davidsen, Jamie Barton and Benjamin Appl. He has appeared at venues including Wigmore Hall, Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Centre, Royal Concertgebouw, Wiener Musikverein, and the Bergen, Spitalfields, Aldeburgh, Cheltenham, Bath, St Magnus, Norfolk & Norwich, Brighton, Verbier and Aix-en-Provence festivals. As a soloist, he has appeared with Ulster Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra and Wiener Kammer-symphonie. In

Photograph: Kaupo Kikkas

2016, James presented his own series at Wigmore Hall which was shortlisted for the Royal Philharmonic Society's Chamber Music and Song Award for an outstanding contribution to the performance of chamber music and song in the UK. James is Professor at the Royal Academy of Music and International Tutor at the Royal Northern College of Music.

ALSO AVAILABLE...

CHRC0145



## ALBION REFRACTED PIATTI QUARTET

*"Turnage produced this tremendously dynamic, moving and colourful score... the Piatti Quartet are on ferociously fine form."* **BBC Music Magazine**

*"A most enterprising and rewarding programme."* **Gramophone**

*"This CD contains daring, challenging, emotionally heavily loaded and occasionally misty and extremely complex music for the enthusiast, played by four top musicians."* **Stretto**

*"I have enjoyed this disc immensely, the playing of the Piatti Quartet being excellent throughout... a most desirable disc...."*  
**MusicWeb International**

CHRC0085



## MENDELSSOHN: COMPLETE WORKS FOR STRING QUARTET

*"... this vastly enjoyable set... an accomplished survey."*  
**Gramophone**

*"I can only applaud the musicianship of these excellently recorded performances."* **BBC Music Magazine**

*"After hearing this magnificent recording, you'll be assured of the future of string quartets...."*

*"... intense musical discourse, lyricism, and swashbuckling virtuosity...."* **The German Record Critics' Award**

CHRC0077



## LUDWIG THUILLE: THE STRING QUARTETS ALLEGRI QUARTET

*"This is charming music, exquisitely played by the Allegri Quartet...."* **Sinfini**

*"... affectionate performances and stylistically apt ones from the Allegri, characteristically well recorded in the Music Room, Champs Hill."* **MusicWeb International**

*"The Allegri's renditions are exemplary... they play with excitement and attention to detail... the results are worth hearing."* **American Record Guide**

*"... memorably captured by the Allegri's gleaming precision and affectionate poise."* **BBC Music Magazine**

*"... the Allegri's perfectly proportioned performance...."*  
**The Guardian**

CHRC0076



## BRAHMS & MOZART CLARINET QUARTET BADKE QUARTET, MAXIMILIANO MARTIN

*"... It's hypnotically concentrated; it's essential listening."*  
**Herald on Sunday**

*"These are glowing, considered performances full of telling insights."* **Amati Magazine**

*"Martin boasts a finely polished British timbre that melts into the strings...."* **American Record Guide**

*"... If there's one thing that distinguishes this recording, it's the incredible acoustics of Champs Hill's Music Room, quite possibly the world's perfect chamber music venue...."* **Fanfare**