



CHAMPS HILL  
RECORDS

## A FRENCH CONNECTION: CHAUSSON, DEBUSSY, FRANCK

Daniel Rowland *violin*  
Natacha Kudritskaya *piano*



**Chausson**  
Concerto for violin, piano and string quartet

**Debussy**  
Preludes

**Franck**  
Violin Sonata

Natacha and I are overjoyed to present this new recording of two wonderful, luscious, gorgeously romantic pieces, one a perennial favourite, the other still all too rarely heard. Both works have a special place in my heart, and have been special to me since childhood. In fact I can very well remember the time I first heard them. The Chausson record came by mail order to the family home in Weerselo in the Dutch countryside. The 'music den' was in the basement and that's where I excitedly lowered the needle onto the vinyl disc (with my soon-to-be teacher Igor Oistrakh on violin). After the dramatic opening statement in the piano and quartet there's a heartfelt lyrical passage that builds up to the tremendous, surging, solo violin entrance. So thrilled was I that I jumped and hit my head on the ceiling! The whole piece in this unique combination of instruments is by turns tender, sweet, sorrowful, passionate, joyously exuberant and, indeed, extremely exciting! Recording it at Champs Hill with dear friends Natacha, Francesco, Asia, Joel and Maja was a wonderful experience.

My first encounter with the Franck sonata was not long after that, during a student concert at a summer masterclass in the Ardennes. Another student played this astonishingly passionate and moving piece and I remember asking her, 'what was that amazing sonata?' Somewhat surprised, she replied, 'That was the Franck,

of course, don't you know it?' From that day I did, and every performance is an emotional journey. Franck fell deeply in love, later in life and this affair led not only to a huge row with Saint-Saens (who liked the same lady), but also seems to have unlocked a new depth of feeling in his music, leading to the startlingly emotional piano quintet, and this sublime sonata. It was a wedding gift for the supreme virtuoso Ysaÿe and for Natacha and me the whole piece feels like a life story, or indeed a love story. From the tender and shy beginning, through the passion and turbulence in the second movement, and the infinitely sad ending of the third, to the glorious, ultimately triumphant finale, there really isn't another piece quite like it.

We are also delighted to bring the world-premiere recording of these beautiful arrangements of three Debussy preludes by our friend, Craig White. Thank you Craig, for these lovely, inspirational additions to the violin-piano repertoire!

And very big thanks to the uniquely supportive and generous Mary and David Bowerman, for whose kindness and warmth I am endlessly grateful. I know that David loved the Franck as much as I do, and Natacha and I would like to dedicate this recording to David, with much affection, in loving memory.



Daniel Rowland

## TRACK LISTING

Ernest Chausson (1855–1899)

### CONCERTO FOR VIOLIN, PIANO & STRING QUARTET IN D MAJOR Op.21

- |   |                                 |       |
|---|---------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | <i>i</i> Decide – Calme – Anime | 14'26 |
| 2 | <i>ii</i> Sicilienne            | 4'27  |
| 3 | <i>iii</i> Grave                | 10'22 |
| 4 | <i>iv</i> Très animé            | 11'02 |

*Daniel Rowland; Natacha Kudritskaya; Francesco Sica; Asia Jiménez Antón de Vez; Joel Waterman; Maja Bogdanović*

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

### PRELUDES *arr. Craig White (b.1984)*

- |   |   |      |
|---|---|------|
| 5 | Canope: Très calme et doucement triste (Book II, No.1)    | 3'45 |
| 6 | Bruyères: Calme (Book II, No.5)                           | 2'59 |
| 7 | La Puerta del Vino: Mouvement de Habanera (Book II, No.3) | 3'32 |

*Daniel Rowland & Natacha Kudritskaya*

César Franck (1822–1890)

### VIOLIN SONATA IN A MAJOR

- |    |  |      |
|----|--|------|
| 8  | <i>i</i> Allegro ben moderato                | 6'16 |
| 9  | <i>ii</i> Allegro                            | 8'04 |
| 10 | <i>iii</i> Recitativo fantasia. Ben moderato | 7'46 |
| 11 | <i>iv</i> Allegro poco mosso                 | 6'19 |

*Daniel Rowland & Natacha Kudritskaya*

**Total: 78'58**

Produced and Edited by Matthew Bennett

Engineered and Mastered by Dave Rowell

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Rear cover: Matthew Bennett

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Between 1871 and the beginning of the First World War, Paris became the nexus point for a dazzling array of artistic endeavour, from fashion and cuisine to painting and music. This golden age of peace and prosperity inspired music of exquisite charm, melodic flair, and insatiable *joie de vivre*, which later became known as the Belle Époque. French composers during this period tended to fall into one of two distinct camps – those determined to establish an independent French school, free of Italian and (most especially) German influence; and those who, having fallen under the spell of Wagner's epic melodramas, radiated a heady, sensual allure, scented strongly by intense chromatic harmonies.

Ernest Chausson belonged firmly to the latter group, although he was a comparatively late starter – having quit the legal profession, he was 24 before embarking on his advanced music studies under Jules Massenet and César Franck (whose violin sonata closes this disc). The fact that he left behind so tantalisingly few major works was the tragic consequence of a fatal accident, when he lost control of his bicycle on a steep hill and smashed into a wall with such force that he was killed outright.

Chausson was occasionally afflicted by periods of depression, which tended to stifle his creative urge and in part explains why it took him two years (on and off) to complete his concerto-sextet, scored for the unique combination of piano, violin and string quartet. Dedicated to the great Belgian violinist and composer Eugène Ysaÿe, the concerto (as the title implies) focuses on the piano and solo violin as the music's principle protagonists – this is especially apparent in the ripely expressive opening movement. Yet there is little sign of virtuosity for its own sake, nor of the 'accompanying' string quartet being relegated merely to the background. Following the dance-like strains of a *Sicilienne*, which composer Vincent d'Indy memorably described as 'the gardens where bloom the charming

fancies of Gabriel Fauré', the *Grave* slow movement arrestingly offsets a sense of brooding melancholy against lighter moments of poignant reflection. The *rondo*-style *finale* brings the work full circle with subtle thematic references to previous movements gradually building up a head of steam for the final emphatic peroration.

Debussy was music's gentle revolutionary. He approached everything by stealth, cocooning his audiences in a sensual web of textures and sonorities that appeared to suspend time and place. 'Everything with me is instinctive and unreasonable,' he once said. 'I have no experience at all – only instinct.' When challenged by one of his professors at the Paris Conservatory as to what rule he followed when failing to resolve harmonic dissonances, he replied disarmingly, 'Mon plaisir!' For Debussy, music was not something cast in a fixed form, obeying centuries-old concepts of structural counterpoint, but living, organic tissue, growing naturally out of an infinitely malleable variety of rhythms, harmonies and colours.

Although Debussy did not particularly like the comparison, his later music was perceived as sharing certain characteristics with the Impressionist painters Monet (especially), Sisley, Renoir, Cézanne, Manet and Pissarro. Such comparisons are by their very nature tenuous, yet there are indeed striking correspondences between the Impressionists' tendency towards softening structural outlines and absorbed fascination with the play of light and colour, and the intoxicating musical brushwork of Debussy's *Préludes*.

In a letter to his publisher Durand, Debussy wrote in 1907: 'I am increasingly convinced that music is not, in essence, a thing which can be cast into a traditional and fixed form. It is made up of colours and rhythms.' This is the key that unlocks the door to his two books of *Préludes* (originally for solo piano), in which all expressive inessentials have been pared away and discarded. Each book is a veritable catalogue of novel effects and ingenious textural interplay. One

interesting touch is Debussy's insistence that the individual titles be given at the end of each piece, so that the performer might be able to form his own impressions before discovering the true source of Debussy's inspiration.

The title *Canope* refers to the Canopic jars into which ancient Egyptians used to place the digestive organs of the deceased to accompany them on their journey to the afterlife. Amongst Debussy's most prized possessions was a pair of Canopic jars which he displayed proudly on his mantelpiece at home. The first prelude of Book 2 to be completed, *Bruyères*, transports us to the moors of the Scottish Highlands, where one can only stare in wonder at the breathtaking scenery and inhale the gentle perfume of the heather in bloom. *La Puerta del Vino* ('Wine Gate') takes its name from a 13th-century gateway in the Alhambra Palace in Granada, as depicted on a postcard sent to him by his friend and fellow composer, Manuel de Falla.

If Debussy created soundworlds with their own unique harmonic and instrumental flavouring, César Franck's instinct for colour was honed initially in the organ loft and later (like Chausson) as the result of falling under the spell of the New German School, spearheaded by Liszt and Wagner. Whereas Debussy and Chausson tended in general towards descriptive titles, Franck believed fervently in the supremacy of the chorale, symphony and sonata.

A late developer, Franck was in his sixties before discovering his true creative voice. Until then, composing played second fiddle to his principal vocation as one of Europe's leading organists and experts in organ construction. Starting out as a piano prodigy, he shunned the bright lights of a potential virtuoso career for the more parochial life of a church musician, becoming organist at St Clotilde, Paris, in 1858.

When, four years later, Franck produced a set of six organ pieces that won Liszt's enthusiastic approval, he felt tempted to make the break as a full-time composer. Yet, by now, the 40-year-old musician was so deeply entrenched in French cultural life as both organist and pedagogue that such a dramatic change seemed unimaginable. When in 1872 he was appointed professor of organ at the Paris Conservatory, it appeared he might become embroiled in the world of academia. However, after helping (the previous year) to set up the Société Nationale de Musique, created specifically to promote outstanding French instrumental and orchestral music, Franck became convinced that this was where his future lay.

Adapting Liszt's innovative cyclic techniques, whereby musical ideas recur in the same work in a variety of contexts, Franck forged a new creative style which during the 1880s erupted in a series of unequivocal masterworks, including the D minor Symphony; Symphonic Variations for piano and orchestra; Prélude, Choral et Fugue and Prélude, Aria et Final for solo piano; an epic String Quartet; and the A major Violin Sonata.

The sonata was inspired originally by the marriage of fellow-Belgian and celebrated virtuoso violinist Eugène Ysaÿe to Louise Bordeau. Cast in four movements, it is a work of spectacular contrasts, opening with a sublimely contented *Allegro ben moderato*, before riding out a stormy *Allegro* and emotionally intense *Recitativo* (both musical metaphors for life's slings and arrows), resolving all strife in an exultant *Allegro* finale of heartfelt radiance. It was composed 'con amore', according to Ysaÿe, who gave the sonata's premiere to his assembled wedding guests, despite a lighting failure which meant he was forced to perform most of it in the near-darkness from memory.

*Julian Haylock*

**Daniel Rowland** *violin*

Dutch/English violinist Daniel Rowland's playing has been acclaimed as 'wonderful, ravishing in its finesse' by *The Guardian* and as 'both naked and highly virtuosic' by *NRC Handelsblad*, while *The Herald* praised his 'astonishing sound and uniquely single-minded intensity'.



Photograph by Marco Borggreve

Daniel has established himself on the international scene as a highly versatile, communicative, charismatic and adventurous performer, with a broad repertoire from Vivaldi to Van der Aa. In recent seasons Daniel has performed with concertos ranging from Beethoven to Brahms, Elgar, Berg, Korngold, Weinberg and Prokofiev, with conductors such as Heinz Holliger, Jaap van Zweden, François-Xavier Roth, Lawrence Foster, Antony Hermus and Rossen Milanov. He is a passionate advocate of contemporary concertos such as Vasks, Lindberg, Glass, Saariaho, Nisinman and Van der

Aa. Recently he premiered Isidora Žebeljan's Violin Concerto 'Three Curious Loves' and this autumn sees the premiere of Roxanna Panufnik's 'Songs of Love and Friendship' with the Dutch Radio Choir at the Concertgebouw. September 2020 sees the release of 'Distant Light', with violin concertos by Pēteris Vasks (Challenge Records).

A passionate chamber musician, Daniel has performed with artists as diverse as Ivry Gitlis, Heinz Holliger, Martha Argerich, Michael Collins, Lars Vogt, Giovanni Sollima, Marcelo Nisinman, Willard White and Elvis Costello. Daniel is one half of acclaimed duo partnerships with pianist Natacha Kudritskaya with whom he earlier recorded for Champs Hill Records a disc dedicated to the Enescu Sonatas ('a perfect partnership' – *BBC Music Magazine*), and with cellist Maja Bogdanovic, whose recent duo CD 'Pas de deux' (Challenge Records) was described as 'a magical meeting between violin and cello' by Dutch daily *NRC Handelsblad*. In 2005 Daniel founded the Stift International Music Festival in the bucolic region of Twente in the eastern Netherlands, where he grew up, with the 15th century Stiftkerk as the main venue. The festival has garnered acclaim as one of great intimacy, adventure and atmosphere. Daniel was for twelve years the leader of the Brodsky Quartet, performing all over the world, and making numerous recordings, including the celebrated Shostakowitch Cycle.

Daniel was born in London, and started his violin lessons in Enschede after his parents moved to Twente in the eastern Netherlands. He studied with Jan Repko, Davina van Wely, Herman Krebbers, Viktor Liberman, Igor Oistrakh and Ivry Gitlis. His violin is by Lorenzo Storioni (Cremona 1796), and his bow is a Maline, kindly loaned by the Dutch Instrument Foundation. He teaches at the Royal College of Music in London. He lives in Amsterdam with his partner, cellist Maja Bogdanović.

### **Natacha Kudritskaya** *piano*

Young Natacha first stepped into the classical music world as a student of the Lysenko Music School in Kiev, where she completed her training at the age of seventeen. After these formative years, she was part of three tours across the USA between 1996 and 2002 with the Kiev Symphony Orchestra; her very first experience as a concert musician.



She soon after entered the Tchaïkovski National Music Academy of Ukraine in Kiev where she followed the teachings of Irina Barinova and Igor Riabov and applied for the competitive CNSM in Paris at the age of nineteen. She studied simultaneously in both these institutions and graduated with the highest distinctions and honours of the jury.

Four personalities have left their imprint on Natacha's pianistic technique. First, Alain Planès, 'my first professor, simply the representation of elegance, possessed a sheer sophisticated style'. Then came Jacques Rouvier, 'very attached to the text, a rigorous and meticulous personality'. Her encounter with Ferenc Rados in Budapest, later on, was crucial: 'he taught me how to read in between the notes' and, finally, Henri Barda 'felt like a hurricane devastating my whole work and training, for there to reign only the power of music'.

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Rameau's work marked a turning point in her approach of pianistic technique and she dedicated two albums to this composer: first in 2009, in association with Luciano Berio, and then in 2012, with the label 1001 Notes.

The year 2009 was marked by competitions, before a time spent refining her technique, her first recitals and an encounter with chamber music to which she has regularly returned. It was also the year she was invited to perform in the most prominent festivals and concert halls across France and Europe.

Since 2015 Natacha Kudritskaya has been part of the Universal Music catalogue.

### **Francesco Sica** *violin*

Violinist Francesco Sica studied violin at the Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Frankfurt with Priya Mitchell and Sophia Jaffé and continued his chamber music studies in Essen and at Escuela Superior de Música Reina Sofia in Madrid. His musical development was enriched by masterclasses with Ivry Gitlis, Günter Pichler, Shmuel Ashkenasi, Ferenc Rados, Menahem Pressler, Eberhard Feltz. Francesco has won prizes at several national and international competitions including the prestigious Biennale di Violino Vittorio Veneto, and performs regularly as a soloist. A passionate chamber musician, he performs at festivals such as the Lucerne, Stift, Rheingau, Heidelberger, Davos and Kitakyushu in Japan and is a member of the Monte Piano Trio and of the Geméaux Quartet. Born near Catania on Sicily, Francesco lives in Frankfurt.





**Asia Jiménez Antón de Vez** *violin*

Asia Jiménez Antón de Vez furthers her studies with Andrés Keller at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. The personality and drive of her playing has been praised by great artists with whom she has had the pleasure of working with in the last few years such as Ivry Gitlis, Menahem Pressler, Eberhard Feltz and Arnold Steinhardt. Asia is kindly supported by the Albert Cooper Trust. She has given recitals across Europe and Asia performing in halls such as La Fenice Theatre in Venice, Palau de la Música in Barcelona, the Wigmore Hall and the National Theatre in Shanghai. Asia plays a Gennaro Gagliano violin generously loaned by a private benefactor.

**Joel Waterman** *viola*

Joel Waterman is one of the most in-demand and admired Dutch musicians of his generation. Born into a family of musicians, he studied with his father (assistant leader of the Concertgebouworkest) and Coosje Wijzenbeek and later with Marjolein Dispa, graduating with the highest honours from the Amsterdam Conservatory. Joel is an avid chamber musician, frequently collaborating with artists such as Janine Jansen, Rosanne Philippens, Simone Lamsma, Liza Ferschtman and Daniel Rowland. He was a



Photograph by PicturePeople Fotostudio

member of the Utrecht String Quartet and has performed with the Brodsky Quartet and London Conchord Ensemble, as well as appearing as guest principal with the leading Dutch orchestras. Joel is also a gifted composer, and in his free time a passionate cook.



Photograph by Nikola Skenderija

**Maja Bogdanović** *cello*

Following her stunning recital debut at Carnegie's Weill Hall, *The Strad* hailed Maja Bogdanović for 'an outstanding performance of exceptional tonal beauty and great maturity of interpretation.' Since then, she has taken her place among today's foremost cellists. Recent concerto engagements include the Tonhalle Orchester Zürich, Tokyo Philharmonic, Fort Worth Symphony and the Slovenian Radio Orchestra. Maja is an avid chamber musician, often performing at leading festivals such as Kuhmo, Folle Journée, Storioni and Stift, and collaborating with artists such as Yuri Bashmet, Martha Argerich, Julian Rachlin and Barry Douglas. Recent solo recordings include 'Eastern Wind' (Rachmaninov and Glière, Orchid Classics), 'Pas de deux', with violinist Daniel Rowland ('A magical musical meeting', *NRC Handelsblad*) and Penderecki's Concerto under the baton of the composer. Maja graduated with the highest honours from the Paris Conservatoire where she studied with Michel Strauss. Her instrument was custom made for her by French luthier Frank Ravatin. Maja was born in Zemun (Serbia) and lives in Amsterdam with her partner, violinist Daniel Rowland.