



The Viennese Viola: Emma Wernig

Emma Wernig *viola*
Albert Cano Smit *piano*

Austrian rarities
for viola and piano





The Viennese Viola highlights lesser-known works for viola and piano all written by Austrian composers in the 19th and early 20th century. The viola's voice is at its most beautiful bringing hidden gems to life through a uniquely Austrian lens. Growing up in an Austrian/German family in the United States, I always sought to feel a deeper connection to my roots. Exploring these works has allowed me to better connect to my heritage and my instrument and feel closer to my cultural and musical identity. Albert has joined me on this journey of discovery and offered musical inspiration, collaboration, and friendship in making this personal and deeply special disc.

Emma Wernig

VIOLA SONATA IN A MAJOR, Op.101 (1941) HANS GAL (1890–1987)

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|---|------------|----------------------------|-------|
| 1 | <i>i</i> | Adagio | 05'40 |
| 2 | <i>ii</i> | Quasi menuetto, tranquillo | 05'14 |
| 3 | <i>iii</i> | Allegro risoluto e vivace | 06'12 |

SECHS PHANTASIESTÜCKE Op.117 (pub. 1927) ROBERT FUCHS (1847–1927)

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|---|------------|-----------------------------------|-------|
| 4 | <i>i</i> | Ländler Tempo | 03'28 |
| 5 | <i>ii</i> | Ruhig und ausdrucksvoll | 03'26 |
| 6 | <i>iii</i> | Leicht bewegt | 03'05 |
| 7 | <i>iv</i> | Andante sostenuto con espressione | 02'59 |
| 8 | <i>v</i> | Mäßig Bewegt | 02'50 |
| 9 | <i>vi</i> | Allegretto con delicatezza | 03'35 |

VIOLA SONATA IN D MINOR, Op.86 (1899) ROBERT FUCHS

- | | | | |
|----|------------|--------------------------------|-------|
| 10 | <i>i</i> | Allegro moderato ma passionato | 07'33 |
| 11 | <i>ii</i> | Andante grazioso | 05'19 |
| 12 | <i>iii</i> | Allegro vivace | 05'07 |

VIER LIEDER FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797–1828)

arr. for Viola and Piano by Emma Wernig and Albert Cano Smit

- | | | | |
|----|--|-----------------------------------|-------|
| 13 | | Am See | 01'19 |
| 14 | | Frühlingstraum | 01'59 |
| 15 | | An die Musik | 02'47 |
| 16 | | Litanei auf das Fest Aller Seelen | 02'30 |

Total playing time: **63'03**

Produced & engineered by Patrick Allen

Edited by Patrick Allen

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Executive Producer for Champs Hill Records: Alexander Van Ingen

Label Manager for Champs Hill Records: Camilla Carden

Cover image and other images of Emma Wernig: Christopher Rogers-Beadle

Images of Albert Cano Smit: Chris Lee

Conservatism and radical change became more interdependent partners than polar opposites in late nineteenth-century Vienna. The city, capital of a sprawling European empire, formed its own anti-liberal brand of politics, popular with a large and disaffected middle-class electorate. The shift from liberalism to conservative populism was confirmed in 1895 by the triumph of Karl Lueger's overtly antisemitic Christian Social Party at the City Council elections. As Vienna's mayor, Lueger cemented his popularity with a transformative programme of municipal works, introducing clean drinking water to formerly neglected districts and bringing gas and electricity supplies into public ownership.

The old city's medieval walls had been destroyed following the Revolution of 1848 to make way for Europe's grandest ring road. The Ringstrasse, more theatre set than transport hub, was flanked by great palaces and public buildings, the Imperial and Royal Court Opera House not least among them. Lueger and his Christian Socials carried the renovation process far beyond the Ring, connecting the suburbs to build a garden city network; they also redirected profits from municipal utilities and services to create many new jobs, education programmes and cultural institutions. 'At last [Vienna] had a source of discretionary revenue over which the state had no control,' observed the historian John W. Boyer in his study of the Christian Social movement's formative years.

Robert Fuchs, one of two musical brothers raised in rural Styria, gained from late imperial Vienna's burgeoning prosperity. He moved to the city in 1865 during the so-called *Grunderzeit* or 'founder's time', a period of industrialisation and economic growth slowed but not stopped by the first great stock market crash of 1873 and the long depression that followed. Young Robert earned enough to

survive by giving music lessons and working as a répétiteur before securing a reliable income as organist of the Piaristenkirche. He enrolled at the conservatory to study composition with Otto Dessoff, conductor of the Vienna Philharmonic's subscription concerts, and achieved his breakthrough as a composer in 1874 with the first of five serenades for strings or small orchestra (for which he acquired the nickname *Serenaden-Fuchs* or the 'Serenade Fox'). The following year he was appointed conductor of the orchestral society of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* and joined the Vienna Conservatory staff as a harmony teacher, where he remained until 1911. Fuchs's harmony and music theory students included Wolf, Mahler, Schreker, Franz Schmidt, Sibelius and Zemlinsky.

By the time his elder brother arrived in Vienna in 1880 to conduct at the Court Opera, Fuchs had consolidated his reputation with two more serenades, the first of three piano sonatas, a piano concerto and a collection of waltzes for piano duet. He had also met and received encouragement from Brahms, a man rarely impressed by the work of younger contemporaries, who in turn introduced Fuchs to his publisher Simrock. The latter issued Fuchs's *Symphony No.1* in C Op.37 and a series of piano pieces, the *Jugend-Album* for piano and *Wiener Walzer* for piano duet among them, while his stock was further enhanced in 1886 when the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* awarded him its coveted Beethoven prize in composition. According to the recollections of composer and critic Richard Heuberger (1850–1914), Brahms considered Fuchs to be a splendid musician: 'Everything is so fine, so skilful, so charmingly invented, that one always has pleasure in it,' he declared. It is likely that Brahms also took pleasure in his friend's appointment as organist of the Hofkapelle, a post Fuchs held from 1894 to 1905.

As the Brahms scholar Robert Pascall noted on the fiftieth anniversary of Fuchs's death, the composer's lyricism stood among his strongest gifts. Schubert's influence on his melodic writing proved to be one of lasting significance, as Fuchs confided in a letter to his friend and biographer Anton Mayr: 'Already when I was quite young and organist with the Piarists', the 'deep simplicity' of Schubert's Mass in G 'penetrated my heart and I was always thrilled when it was performed. The glorious Agnus *especially* has bewitched me ever since.'

Although Fuchs composed two operas, his first a romantic comedy for the Hofoper, three symphonies with opus numbers, two without, and the charming *Andante Grazioso* and *Capriccio* for string orchestra, he was best known for his mature chamber music. The six *Phantasiestücke* for viola and piano Op.117, first published in the year of the composer's death, belong to the genre of so-called fantasy or 'fancy' pieces established in the late 1830s by Schumann and cultivated by Fuchs in his *phantasien* for solo instrument or duo. Shades of Brahms surface immediately in the work's initial composition, a lilting ländler with a rhapsodic section deftly constructed from the thematic material of its song-like opening. The second piece, marked 'calm and expressive', grows from a four-bar melody that might easily have been penned by Schubert. It proceeds in characteristic Fuchs fashion to pivot between different key centres and leads to an impassioned central dialogue between viola and piano.

In the third piece Fuchs spins the two-note figure stated and repeated at its start into a dramatic song without words, ballad-like in its intensity and cumulative power. It is followed by a Brahmsian miniature, again formed from simple material yet developed with subtle harmonic shifts, interplay of rhythms

and textural contrasts; the latter propel the viola towards the outer reaches of its range, high and low. While the six *Phantasiestücke* could easily have been written forty years earlier, their venerable composer's inspiration is strikingly fresh, especially so in the flowing lines of the set's fifth piece, which evokes the swagger of Brahms's *Liebeslieder* Waltzes before developing a yearning viola melody saturated with double-stops and wide expressive leaps. The rondo-like finale recalls the Vienna of Haydn and Mozart, albeit gently subverted by anachronistic harmonies.

Fuchs had four violin sonatas and two sonatas for cello to his name by the time he composed his Sonata for viola and piano. As a boy he studied violin with his brother-in-law and clearly acquired more than a rudimentary knowledge of viola, which served him well in the dozen duets he wrote for violin and viola and his magnificent Viola Sonata. The latter, first published in Vienna in 1909, emulates Schubert in its occasional outbreaks of high spirits within an opening movement broadly sombre in nature. Fuchs here displays his mastery of sonata form, hallmarked by the lyrical flow of its themes and the seamless modulations of its development section. All in all, the first movement explores contrasting states of dramatic expression and focused introspection and the tension that holds both in balance.

Perhaps the central movement's tentative opening, with call-and-response figures for viola and piano, recalls the unsettled mood of its predecessor; Fuchs, however, soon sets both instruments free as partners in a graceful triple-time dance. The movement's trio section introduces a clear change of texture, fashioned at first from semiquaver arpeggio figures in the piano's right hand

against a background of pizzicato quavers from the viola, then developed with imitative repetitions and a final reversal of roles in which the viola restates the piano's earlier run of semiquavers and the piano picks out the harmonies. A return to the movement's opening section ends with a punchy chordal cadence, the energy of which is carried into the Sonata's finale. The quality of craft and invention remains high throughout the closing *Allegro vivace*, directed here to the gleeful elaboration of two simple themes and their presentation in many keys and guises, but not too many. Fuchs ends with a flourish, heralded by a return of the movement's opening idea and brought to a decisive conclusion by an upward rush of rapid-fire arpeggios.

Born during a family holiday in Brunn am Gebirge, a village around fourteen miles south-west of Vienna, Hans Gál was one of four siblings and the only son of a homeopathic doctor. The boy was encouraged to study music by his aunt, Jenny Fleischer, a former singer and star of the Weimar court opera. Young Hans was among many talented musicians of Jewish descent who rose to prominence in Vienna. As Steven Beller notes in his landmark study *Vienna and the Jews, 1867–1938*, they 'played a pivotal role in the life of modern music in Vienna around 1900'. The story is remarkable not least because Jews had only been granted fully equal rights in the Austrian half of the dual Austro-Hungarian monarchy in 1867 and remained subject thereafter to institutional antisemitism and common prejudices (what Beller calls 'an endemic hostility').

Gál studied composition with Eusebius Mandyczewski, a protégé and close friend of Brahms, and music history with Guido Adler, pioneer of the academic

discipline of musicology. His doctoral dissertation, completed at Vienna University under Adler's supervision in 1913 and published by him soon after, cast light on the 'stylistic characteristics of the young Beethoven, and their relationship to the style of his mature compositions'. Gál's own distinctive style received attention two years later when he became the first recipient of the newly created Austrian State Prize for Composition. Although the First World War interrupted the young composer's career, he still found time to draft a comic opera while on military service behind the frontline in Italy.

Following his return to impoverished Vienna, Gál joined the university faculty in 1919 as a lecturer in music theory; he also collaborated with Mandyczewski as co-editor of ten volumes in the complete edition of Brahms's works. His second opera, *Die heilige Ente* ('The Holy Duck'), proved a triumph at its first production in Düsseldorf in 1923 and was soon staged to critical acclaim in twenty theatres elsewhere. Gál's status as one of Austria's leading composers was reinforced in 1928 when he won the Columbia Schubert centenary prize for his *Sinfonietta*, later retitled to become his First Symphony, and again the following year when, with the support of Richard Strauss and Wilhelm Furtwängler, he was appointed director of the Mainz Conservatory.

Soon after Hitler's accession to power in January 1933, the Nazi regime introduced its infamous Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service which resulted in Gál's immediate dismissal from his position in Mainz; the performance and publication of his works, along with those by all other composers officially branded as 'degenerate', were also proscribed. Gál, his wife

and young family returned to Vienna where political unrest was rife and a civil war between fascist and socialist forces imminent. Following Austria's annexation by Nazi Germany in March 1938, the Gáls found refuge in London and planned to make a new life in the United States.

A chance meeting with fellow composer and musicologist Sir Donald Tovey, Reid Professor of Music at the University of Edinburgh, led to an offer of teaching work in Scotland's capital city. In May 1940 Gál was arrested and interned as an enemy alien, at first in Liverpool, later with many fellow intellectuals on the Isle of Man. Upon his release in September he returned to Edinburgh, another homeless, penniless, unemployed refugee from occupied Europe, where he found work as a caretaker at a girls' school. At the end of the Second World War, he was offered a permanent post in the university's music faculty by Tovey's successor, Sidney Newman. Gál continued to teach there well into old age and became a galvanising force in Edinburgh's musical life. Anyone eager to know more about his biography and works should begin by exploring the comprehensive and often touching contents of the Hans Gál Website (www.hansgal.org).

Gál wrote his Viola Sonata at the end of 1942 for Frieda Peters, a fellow refugee from Nazi Austria. They gave its first performance in Edinburgh in March 1943 as part of a recital of 'Music Banned in Germany', and programmed the work four more times before the war's end, twice in Edinburgh, twice in Glasgow. The composition, like many of wartime pieces, remained unpublished for decades. Here is a work by a man in his fifties, far from home and grieving the loss of his

eighteen-year-old son, Peter, who took his own life in December 1942. The Sonata opens with an *Adagio* built from a tender viola melody, melancholy yet charged more with compassion than despair. The waltzes of Vienna's *heuriger* taverns and dance halls haunt the central movement, at first merry, then clouded by another common Viennese trope, that of gloomy introspection. Gál's finale bids farewell to the world of yesterday to recall all too present fears. The movement sets nerves on edge with its quick march in A minor and more lyrical second theme, leaving them there until the more optimistic and expansive recurrence of the march in the major mode.

Franz Schubert, unlike so many musicians associated with Vienna, was born and raised in the city. Although his genius found expression in solo sonatas, chamber music and symphonies, it left its most profound and original mark in the realm of lieder. Emma Wernig and Albert Cano Smit's arrangements of four of Schubert's six hundred-plus songs conjure distinct worlds of emotion and feeling. *Am See*, a flowing barcarolle, ideally projects the sense of starlight playing on a tranquil lake and its power to heal human souls, while the symbolism of *Frühlingstraum*, part of the late song-cycle *Winterreise*, evokes bittersweet memories of spring recalled from winter's dark and cold. This album concludes with two of the greatest of all songs, not just those of Schubert: *An die Musik*, simple in content and structure yet apparently boundless in spiritual depth, and the 'Litany for the Feast of All Souls', a miracle of melodic invention and honest, heartfelt expression.

I Emma Wernig *viola*

Hailed by *The Strad* magazine as 'A viola star in the making!', Austrian/German violist, Emma Wernig, is an emerging young artist with an authentic musical voice. Born in 1999 in Los Angeles, California, her music-making has taken her across the globe. A prizewinner in many competitions, Emma received the Barbirolli Prize at the 2019 Tertis International Viola Competition and won first place at the 2017 Cecil Aronowitz International Viola Competition. As a result of winning the Colburn Conservatory Concerto Competition in 2018, she performed the Walton Viola Concerto with Colburn Orchestra in 2018 under Catherine Larsen-Maguire.

She has appeared at the Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, France's Festival de Musique de Wissembourg, Krzyzowa Chamber Music in Poland, Verbier Festival Academy, Gstaad Menuhin Festival, and IMS Prussia Cove. She received the support of the Mozart Gesellschaft Dortmund in the 2021/22 season.

Emma's greatest passion lies in chamber music, having collaborated with artists such as Viviane Hagner, Lynn Harrell, Anthony Marwood, Andrew Marriner, Clive Greensmith, Misha Amory, and Ida Kavafian. As a part of the Incendium Quartet she won the 2015 Fischhoff International Chamber Music Competition Junior Division and continued to win numerous other chamber competitions.



Photograph: Christopher Rogers-Beadle

Supporting underrepresented music and composers as well as performing in her community is very important to Emma. As a member of the Sunrise Quartet she won the North American String Quartet Competition's Recovered Voices Prize and was selected as an ensemble-in-residence for the renowned Street Symphony initiative, bringing classical music to South Central Los Angeles.

Emma Wernig earned her Bachelors degree from the Colburn Conservatory where she studied with violist Paul Coletti and her Masters degree with Ettore Causa at the Yale School of Music. Emma currently resides in Berlin, Germany, and studies with Tabea Zimmermann at the Musikhochschule Hanns Eisler Berlin.

I Albert Cano Smit *piano*

A musician whose artistry has been praised as having 'true storytelling quality' (*La Scena Musicale*) Spanish/Dutch pianist Albert Cano Smit enjoys a growing international career on the orchestral, recital and chamber music stages. Noted for his captivating, poetic performances and nuanced musicality, the First Prize winner of the 2019 Young Concert Artists International Auditions and the 2017 Walter W. Naumburg Piano Competition, he has performed with such distinguished orchestras as the San Diego Symphony, Montreal Symphony, Manchester Camerata (UK), and Las Vegas Philharmonic. Cano Smit has appeared in venues including San Francisco's Herbst Theatre, San Jose's Steinway Society, Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall where he premiered Stephen Hough's *Partita for Piano*, the Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival, Paris' Fondation Louis Vuitton (the performance was broadcast live globally), France's Festival de Musique de Wissembourg, and Germany's Rheingau Musik Festival. In February 2020, he released the album *Danse Russe* with violinist William Hagen.

Past engagements include a residency at Montana's Tippet Rise Art Center, recitals at Xiamen's Banlam Grand Theater, Salon de Virtuosi, New York's Morgan



Library & Museum, and throughout Spain including the Teatros del Canal in Madrid and l'Auditori in Barcelona. Mr. Cano Smit has toured throughout the US with flutist Anthony Trionfo, and throughout the US and Germany with violinist William Hagen. Engagements of note include four-hand performances with Jean-Yves Thibaudet at Zipper Hall in Los Angeles and at the Wallis Annenberg Center in Beverly Hills, as well as performances with the Ebène, Szymanowski, Gerhard and Cosmos quartets.

Additional honours and awards include a finalist and CMIM grant prize at the 2017 Concours Musical International de Montréal, and five special prizes at the 2019 Young Concert Artists auditions.

Born in Geneva, Switzerland, Mr. Cano Smit studied early on with Graham Caskie and Marta Karbownicka at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester, UK. He received a BA in Piano Performance at the Colburn School with Ory Shihor and is currently enrolled in The Juilliard School's prestigious Artist Diploma program and studies with Robert McDonald. He is an alumnus

of the Verbier Festival Academy and is mentored by YCA alumnus Jean-Yves Thibaudet. He currently resides in New York and Barcelona.



The Cecil Aronowitz International Viola Competition for violists aged 21 and under was founded at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire in 2014 by Dr Louise Lansdown, Head of Strings. The year 2020 sees the third iteration of the competition, with inaugural winner Timothy Ridout having carved out an enviable international career as a solo artist, and the winner from 2017 Emma Wernig following an upward trajectory. We are honoured and

thrilled that the debut CDs of both winning artists have been supported by Champs Hill.

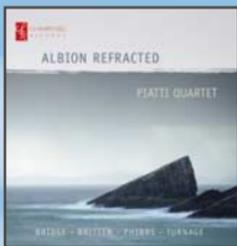
This competition celebrates incredible young viola talent across the world, giving a chance for fresh and new talent to emerge, enabling the start to an international career for violists – a much needed commodity! Cecil Aronowitz, born in South Africa, departed to study at the Royal College of Music and started out life as violinist, but soon realised that his first love was the viola. In 1939 he purchased a French viola for £25 and hence began his epic journey with this instrument, recording as soloist and chamber musician with some of the world's greatest musicians, including now-historical recordings of the Mozart quintets with the Amadeus Quartet, Brahms Songs with Janet Baker and André Previn, and large discography continues.... Cecil was a chamber musician at heart and someone who loved teaching, inspiring and giving of his talents to young musicians. This competition reflects his musical ideals with the inclusion of the Brahms Songs Op.91 in the semi-final round, as well as his friendship with Benjamin Britten. Britten's *Lachrymae* is the final round, a work that Britten made adjustments to later in life after meeting Cecil, and in fact arranging the work for viola and string orchestra with Cecil in mind.

We are thrilled that the Cecil Aronowitz International Viola Competition and Champs Hill have collaborated to enable Emma Wernig's debut CD recording.

Dr Louise Lansdowne
Founder, Cecil Aronowitz International Viola Competition
President, British Viola Society

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The Strad Magazine

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