



CHAMPS HILL  
RECORDS

LUDWIG THUILLE  
COMPLETE KEYBOARD WORKS

Alasdair Beatson *piano*  
*with*  
David Dunnett *organ*

## LUDWIG THUILLE (1861–1907)

### 3 KLAVIERSTÜCKE OP.33

- |   |             |       |
|---|-------------|-------|
| 1 | Vorfrühling | 04'17 |
| 2 | Reigen      | 02'23 |
| 3 | Capriccio   | 02'05 |

### 3 KLAVIERSTÜCKE OP.3

- |   |           |       |
|---|-----------|-------|
| 4 | Ständchen | 05'26 |
| 5 | Humoreske | 04'33 |
| 6 | Capriccio | 06'16 |

### 3 KLAVIERSTÜCKE OP.34

- |   |             |       |
|---|-------------|-------|
| 7 | Gavotte     | 03'44 |
| 8 | Auf dem See | 04'17 |
| 9 | Walzer      | 04'12 |

### 2 KLAVIERSTÜCKE OP.37

- |    |           |       |
|----|-----------|-------|
| 10 | Threnodie | 08'29 |
| 11 | Burla     | 04'20 |

### ORGAN SONATA OP.2 IN A MINOR

- |    |            |       |
|----|------------|-------|
| 12 | Praeludium | 06'14 |
| 13 | Andante    | 04'24 |
| 14 | Fugue      | 07'44 |

**Total time: 68'27**

#### *Tracks 1–11*

Produced and Engineered by Richard Sutcliffe  
Edited and Mastered by Richard Sutcliffe  
Recorded on 12th & 13th January 2012 at the Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex, UK

#### *Tracks 12–14*

Produced by Matthew Bennett  
Engineered by Dave Rowell  
Edited by Matthew Bennett  
Recorded on 22nd February 2013 using the organ of Norwich Cathedral

Photographs of Alasdair Beatson by Giorgia Bertazzi

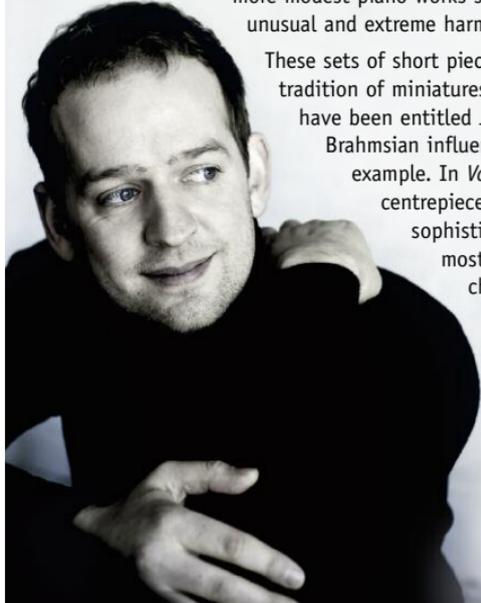
Executive Producer for Champs Hill Records: Alexander Van Ingen  
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## I FOREWORD - ALASDAIR BEATSON

The obscurity of Ludwig Thuille's music is perhaps most pronounced in his output for solo piano, a repertoire almost totally unknown to listeners and unexplored by pianists. I find much satisfaction in the process of discovering such neglected works, free from associations with past interpretations and appraisals. Of course it is a particular joy when the music reveals itself to be unique and of value.

Thuille did not write any large-scale works for piano; instead, there are four sets of short character pieces, of which the opus 3 and opus 37 almost bookend his catalogue. If he chose other genres to explore longer dramatic structures (for example in the Piano Quintets, duo sonatas or the comparatively celebrated Sextet for Piano and Winds), the more modest piano works show a great refinement of language, along with an unusual and extreme harmonic agility.

These sets of short pieces for the most part belong to the 19th-century tradition of miniatures for piano, and I imagine each piece could well have been entitled *Intermezzo* or *Rhapsody*. At times I certainly feel a Brahmsian influence – in the *Burla*'s grand, sombre trio section, for example. In *Vorfrühling*, *Auf dem See* and the exquisite 'Musette' centrepiece of the *Gavotte*, Thuille's highly expressive, sophisticated and colourful harmonic language is at its most compelling. There is an endearing, retrogressive charm to some, such as the *Walzer*, perhaps an homage to Tchaikovsky. Most importantly, this carefully crafted music is never stifling, as Thuille can also give in to flashes of virtuosity, whimsical diversion, and, as in the *Threnodie*, a music of passion and impetuosity.



Alasdair Beatson

For most of the twentieth century Ludwig Thuille, born on 30 November 1861 in Bozen (then in the Austro-Hungarian South Tyrol, now Bolzano in Italy), kept a toehold in the performing repertoire through his delightful Sextet in B flat major for piano and wind quintet, Op. 6 (1891) – and no wonder: the music pullulates with ‘ear-worms’, tunes that you can’t get out of your head. Although the Sextet remains Thuille’s most popular work (there are currently five recordings of it in the catalogues – one, indeed, on Champs Hill Records, in a two-CD set of his chamber music), in recent years the recording industry has been slowly catching up with the rest of his output, adding chiefly piano and chamber music to his representation. The largest-scale works yet to reach compact disc are his Symphony in F major (1886) and Piano Concerto in D major (1881–82); his six operas, three to libretti by the Jugendstil writer Otto Julius Bierbaum (1865–1910), remain unknown, although some enjoyed success in their day. Based in Munich from 1879, Thuille became known as one of Germany’s most gifted teachers of composition – but even with a century of hindsight, one can only speculate as to the standing Thuille the composer might have achieved: when he died, on 5 February 1907, he was only 45 years old.

Thuille’s early life was spent in or near mountains – and it used to be claimed that his ‘French’ surname came from the Savoie in the French Alps, although it is a fairly common one in the South Tyrol (probably formed as a diminutive of Matthäus). He grew up in the Dolomites, receiving his first lessons in music from his father, who was an amateur musician and owned a music shop. On the death of his parents in 1872, when he was eleven, his father’s first marriage provided a safety-net as he was taken in by his step-uncle in Kremsmünster in Upper Austria, just south of Linz. There, as a chorister in the Benedictine Abbey, the second largest monastic establishment in Austria, he broadened both his general and his musical education, studying violin, piano and organ. The Westphalen-born composer Matthäus Nagiller (1815–74) had had a position in Bozen in the early 1860s while Thuille was an infant, and now his well-to-do widow, Pauline, perhaps remembering her husband’s

own humble beginnings, stepped in to assure the next stage of his development, taking him into her Innsbruck home, adopting him, and funding his studies – theory, piano and organ – with the composer and conductor Josef Pembaur (1848–1923), a former student of Bruckner. Thuille so impressed Pembaur that he recommended him to another distinguished composer-teacher, Josef Rheinberger (1839–1901), whose classes at what was to become the Munich Hochschule für Musik were among the most highly regarded in Germany.

At this point family chronologies become gratifyingly intertwined: it was Nagiller who in 1851 had insisted to Rheinberger’s father that the eleven-year-old Joseph should go to Munich to study, and it was in Munich that Thuille later taught Josef Pembaur’s son, also called Josef. Not only that: the Karl Bärmann (or Carl Baermann 1839–1913) from whose piano class Thuille graduated in 1882 was the grandson of Heinrich Baermann, the clarinetist for whom Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer and Weber all wrote music.

Thuille soon began to make his mark in Munich, spending a year as a private music-tutor before joining Rheinberger on the staff of the Königliche Hochschule in 1883, by which time he was already attracting attention as a composer and performer. His initial conservatism, buttressed by the solid academic training he had received from Rheinberger, was loosened by a friendship with the Estonian-born violinist and composer Alexander Ritter (1833–96), a student of Raff and, from 1854, husband of the actress Franziska Wagner, a niece of Richard Wagner – starting off another musical family connection: in 1902 their daughter Herta married the composer-conductor Siegmund von Hausegger (1872–1948), a Wagner epigone. In the 1850s Ritter had played as second Konzertmeister in Weimar for Franz Liszt (next family link: Liszt, of course, was Wagner’s father-in-law) and thereafter made a living of sorts as a Konzertmeister in various orchestras; it was in that capacity in 1882 that he went to Meiningen and there met the young Richard Strauss, whose youthful conservatism was swept aside by Ritter’s enthusiasm for Liszt and Wagner. Four years later Strauss got the job as third

conductor of the Court Opera in Munich, and persuaded Ritter to move there himself. (Strauss brings in yet another family link: his father, Franz, had made the orphaned Thuille a welcome family guest, and so young Richard became a close friend; their thirty-year correspondence was published in 1969.)

Ritter's effect on Thuille was similar to the one he had on Strauss: Thuille didn't follow both men down the path to the symphonic poem, but he did start composing operas, and his first, *Theuerdank*, to a libretto by Ritter himself, was composed in 1893–95 and premiered in 1897 – to muted applause. The next opera, the comedy *Lobetanz* (1896), the first of the three to Bierbaum libretti, was more successful, achieving a number of productions, also abroad. But the fairytale *Gugeline* (1898–1900), the last to be produced during Thuille's brief life, was a flop, not least because Bierbaum's libretto for that opera was even worse than his first one.

Where Thuille's standing soon became undisputable was as a teacher, his numerous students attaining such esteem that they became known collectively as 'The Munich School'. They included the conductor Hermann Abendroth (1893–1956) and the composer Walter Braunfels (1882–1954) – the former, initially liberal, making his peace with the Nazi Party in the 1930s, and the latter, half-Jewish, being banned by them. So, too, of course, was Thuille's best-known student, the wholly Jewish, Swiss-born Ernest Bloch (1880–1959). Another Swiss student, Walter Courvoisier (1875–1931), extended the family nexus by becoming Thuille's son-in-law. Some students, having disappeared for decades, have recently become known through recordings, like Joseph Suder (1892–1980) and Richard Wetz (1875–1935) and the Danish-born Paul von Klenau (1883–1946); others remain to be discovered, such as Clemens von Franckenstein (1875–1942) or, to give him his full and splendid moniker, Clemens Erwein Heinrich Karl Bonaventura, Freiherr von und zu Franckenstein. Another nobleman, Hermann Wolfgang, Freiherr von Waltershausen (1882–1954), may have had less public allure but became an important teacher in

his own right: Waltershausen's second opera, *Oberst Chabert* (1912) made a splash through its marriage of Wagner and verismo, but it was as a colleague of (in 1920), and successor to (in 1922), von Hausegger as president of the Munich Akademie der Tonkunst and in other such administrative roles that he made his own impact.

Another aspect of Thuille's activity that assured him a brief spell of immortality was his textbook *Harmonielehre*, written in the last year of his life, 1907, together with another friend of Strauss, the Munich-based conductor and critic Rudolf Louis (1870–1914). The book went through many editions over the course of the ensuing decades – including a revision by the faithful Walter Courvoisier in 1933.

Although it is for his chamber music that Thuille attracted most attention during his own lifetime, the bulk of his output is accounted for by vocal music: twelve collections of songs for men's voices (in 1891 he was named conductor of the Liederhort, one of Munich's best male-voice choirs) and some ninety songs, just over half of them published. There are only four published piano works, all of them collections of independently composed short pieces, one from the beginning of his short career, the other three from the end. (There are also three early works that remain in manuscript: *Trois Nocturnes* [1877], a sonata in E major, and a set of variations dedicated to Pauline Nagiller [1878].)

The Three Piano Pieces, Op. 3, were published by Breitkopf und Härtel in Leipzig in 1883. The first of them, marked 'Zart und innig' ('Tenderly and intimate') is a gentle *Ständchen* ('Serenade'), with a first section where a rising and falling figure in the right hand is supported by off-beat harmonies in the left; the next, only slightly busier, leads to a Brahmsian passage marked 'poco piu animato'. The opening material returns, swelling briefly to fortissimo before the second section returns to round it off. The central Humoreske ('Rasch': 'Quick') is more extended, opening with a folk-like question-and-answer exchange and finding room for a succession of charming episodes which are thereafter skilfully intertwined. The last and longest of the Op. 3 pieces is a *Capriccio* ('Hastig': 'Hurriedly') in simple ternary form, which

deftly manages to have one foot in the world of Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies and the other in that of the salon – although none of Thuille's pieces is written for the Sunday pianist.

Thuille's Three Piano Pieces, Op. 33, written in 1904, came out from another Leipzig publisher, C. F. Kahnt, a year later. The first, *Vorfrühling* ('Early Spring'), bears the tempo indication 'Andante amabile'. As in the first of the Op. 3 pieces Thuille is still fond of filling in left-hand offbeats, but the musical language is much more sophisticated, with the innocence of 22 years earlier now replaced by Wagnerian chromaticism. The title of the second, *Reigen* ('Round Dance'), suggests a folk flavour but the buoyant rhythms do not obscure its harmonic subtlety and sometimes surprising rubato. The *Capriccio* of Op. 33 is less ambitious than that of Op. 3: in 3/8 and marked 'Vivacissimo', it sets out over an insistent Chopinesque figure in the left hand; when it gives way to a melodic motif in the bass under ostinati in the treble, it is the first time in Thuille's published piano music that he has allowed the left hand to set the tone.

The next piano opus from Thuille was another set of Three Piano Pieces, this time Op. 34, also from 1904. The outer panels of the opening *Gavotte*, marked 'Vivace', seems to hark back to the innocence of the Op. 3 pieces – but the 'trio' section brings a remarkable shift in atmosphere, sounding almost like Prokofiev (then in his mid-teens). No. 2, *Auf dem See* ('On the Lake'), opens 'Andantino', the music rising and falling to suggest waves – and here too the chromatic harmony muddies the innocence of the surface material: the score bristles with accidentals, with plenty of double sharps among them. Waltz rhythms underlie many of Thuille's piano pieces, but the Walzer that ends Op. 34 is the only one to make it explicit. The distancing effect continues here, with mild dissonance and chromatic harmonies undermining the surface equanimity – and the central section brings another unexpected gesture in the direction of early Prokofiev, complete with the disassociative sardonic humour that, with hindsight, can be seen pointing to the irony that became prevalent in the decades ahead.

Thuille's final piano publication, in 1906, was the *Zwei Klavierstücke*, Op. 37. The opening *Threnodie*, written in September 1905, is inscribed 'In memoriam F.v.R.' – the composer Felix von Rath (1866–1905), who had studied with Thuille. Although the longest piece on this disc, it has one of the simplest structures, a ternary ABA, with the urgent, rushing outer sections enfolding an understated march-like hymn, which is repeated with growing passion until it reaches a central island of calm, where a mood of quiet sorrow reigns. The *Burla*, from February 1906, ostensibly brighter and more buoyant, has a slightly obsessive quality, and here too, in both outer and central sections, the harmony is darker and less predictable than one might have expected – one can imagine Busoni finding the music to his taste.

A composer who was a trained organist – especially one whose principal composition teacher, Rheinberger, wrote no fewer than twenty organ sonatas – might be expected to publish a good deal for the instrument himself. But this early sonata – in three large panels: a *Praeludium*, a central *Andante* and a *Fugue* – appears to be all that Thuille produced for organ. Its a Mendelssohnian probity makes a stark contrast with the increasingly violent organ music that Max Reger was shortly to begin composing, particularly since the conservative circle to which Thuille belonged was to prove so hostile to Reger during his stay in Munich, between 1901 and 1907. But the evidence of Thuille's later piano music is that his reputation as a reactionary – which, after all, is based only on partial knowledge of his output – is that his language was indeed moving apace of the times. The music on this CD allows us to suppose that, given even only another ten years of life, Thuille would be remembered as a very different composer.

Martin Anderson

## ALASDAIR BEATSON *piano*

Pianist Alasdair Beatson is highly regarded as a distinctive and vibrant musician. Recent highlights include appearances as soloist with Britten Sinfonia, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, solo recitals in Glasgow's The Piano Festival and Bath's Mozartfest, and a BBC Radio 3 recital live from Wigmore Hall with Natalie Clein. His CD of Mendelssohn piano music with SOMM Recordings received praise for 'highly sensitive playing of rare insight' (*Classic FM Magazine*) and was awarded the 'Outstanding' accolade of *International Record Review*.

As one of the most established chamber pianists of his generation, Alasdair collaborates in a wide and varied repertoire with some of today's finest musicians. During 2013 he appears in festivals in Belgium (Resonances), Switzerland (Ernen), Helsinki, Aldeburgh, Plush and Oxford; he plays alongside such musicians as Adrian Brendel, the Doric String Quartet, Guy Johnston, Pekka Kuusisto and Pieter Wispelwey. A regular participant of IMS Prussia Cove, Alasdair was invited to join their touring groups in 2007 and 2011. He is Artistic Director of the chamber music festival *Musique à Marsac*.

Alasdair enjoys a regular association with the Scottish Ensemble. In addition to numerous chamber music projects, he has twice toured with them as concerto soloist – in Shostakovich's *Concerto for Piano, Trumpet and Strings* alongside Alison Balsom, culminating in a sold-out performance at Wigmore Hall, and with violinist and artistic director Jonathan Morton in Mendelssohn's double concerto, broadcast live on BBC Radio 3.

Often attracted to less familiar repertoire, Alasdair's approach to programming has been described as canny and uncompromising (*Classical Source*). His debut solo CD – the opus 1s of Schumann, Brahms, Grieg and Berg – was released on SOMM Recordings in 2009 to critical acclaim. Other uncommon works explored include Debussy's own arrangement for solo piano of his ballet *Jeux*, Fauré's rarely performed *Fantaisie* for piano and orchestra, Hindemith's *Four Temperaments*, the complete solo piano music of Ludwig Thuille, and piano trio arrangements of Schönberg's *Verklärte Nacht* and Janacek's *Kreutzer Sonata*. Keen to collaborate directly with living composers, Alasdair has worked closely with George Benjamin, Harrison Birtwistle, Cheryl Frances-Hoad and Heinz Holliger.

## DAVID DUNNETT *organ*

David Dunnett was educated at King Edward's School, Birmingham, and Clare College, Cambridge, where he assisted Tim Brown and studied the organ with John Pryer, John Bishop and David Sanger.

He continued studying with David Sanger as a postgraduate at the Royal Academy of Music and also spent a year as Organist of Marylebone Parish Church. He worked in the United States as Director of Chapel Music and Staff Accompanist at the College of Wooster, Ohio, before becoming Assistant Director of Music at Uppingham School. He became Sub-Organist at Winchester Cathedral in November 1991 and subsequently performed with Winchester Cathedral Choir in concerts, broadcasts, recordings and tours to Brazil, USA and Australia. He assisted David Hill with the Waynflete Singers, taught at Southampton University and is a previous conductor of the Southampton University Chamber Choir and Winchester Music Club.

He is a busy organ recitalist both here and abroad and also regularly accompanies singers and instrumentalists on the organ, harpsichord and piano. He features on numerous recordings as conductor, soloist and accompanist, and has given recitals in Europe, USA and Russia.

He became Organist and Master of the Music at Norwich Cathedral in January 1996. He is the Choral Conductor of the Norwich Philharmonic Society, a previous part-time lecturer at the UEA and a busy examiner.

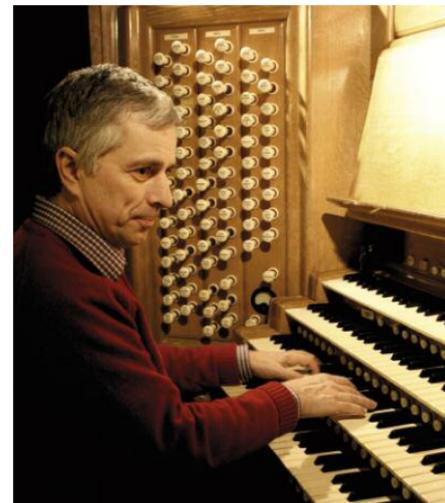


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