



CHAMPS HILL RECORDS

FAURÉ, POULENC & FRANCK VIOLIN SONATAS

GIOVANNI GUZZO & ANNE LOVETT





## I FOREWORD

We are incredibly thrilled and excited to introduce this new recording of three “Titan” works of the Violin and Piano repertoire; it is an honour to be recording such seminal works for which we share a common passion. To talk about these pieces is to talk about works that transformed music altogether when they were conceived, and that managed to push the limits of what could be achieved through chamber music writing.

The disc opens with the Fauré Violin and Piano Sonata in A Major which preceded the Franck sonata by a few years. It is the work which confirmed Fauré as one of the greatest French composers. We have kept as close as possible to what was intended by the composer, both in terms of expression and of tempo. Poulenc’s great Violin and Piano Sonata follows, and although Poulenc suffered from a slight stigma as a ‘salon music composer’, this sonata demonstrates everything but. Influenced in part by Stravinsky, and inspired by the slaying of the great poet Federico García Lorca during the civil war in his country, this Sonata has a far more modern feel than other of his works. Finally, the Franck Violin and Piano Sonata, the inspiration for this disc, and one of the greatest works of the chamber music repertoire.

These pieces have become a huge part of both of us through the many years we have spent performing them together; and this continuous exploration and discovery has unveiled many ‘worlds’ through which this music talks to us, and leads us to portray our own ‘landscape’ and vision in this recording. We hope you enjoy listening to it as much as we enjoy performing those pieces.

TRACK LISTING

GABRIEL FAURÉ (1845–1924)

**SONATA IN A MAJOR**

- |   |                                |       |
|---|--------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | <i>i</i> Allegro molto         | 07'35 |
| 2 | <i>ii</i> Andante              | 06'28 |
| 3 | <i>iii</i> Allegro vivo        | 03'58 |
| 4 | <i>iv</i> Allegro quasi presto | 05'26 |

FRANCIS POULENC (1899–1963)

**VIOLIN SONATA**

- |   |   |       |
|---|---|-------|
| 5 | <i>i</i> Allegro con fuoco                                    | 06'28 |
| 6 | <i>ii</i> Intermezzo: Très lent et calme                      | 06'44 |
| 7 | <i>iii</i> Presto tragico - Strictelement la double plus lent | 05'26 |

CÉSAR FRANCK (1822–1890)

**VIOLIN SONATA**

- |    |  |       |
|----|--|-------|
| 8  | <i>i</i> Allegretto ben moderato             | 06'00 |
| 9  | <i>ii</i> Allegro                            | 07'52 |
| 10 | <i>iii</i> Ben moderato: Recitativo-Fantasia | 07'21 |
| 11 | <i>iv</i> Allegretto poco mosso              | 05'52 |

Total playing time: **69'13**

Produced & Engineered by Raphaël Mouterde  
 Edited & Mastered by Raphaël Mouterde

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 Cover painting by Helen Lindon, 'Painted Journeys 002/3', oils & oil glazes on canvas  
 Tray picture a photograph of Helen Lindon 'Painted Journeys 002/7', oils & oil glazes on canvas, at  
 The Metropole Gallery, 2007

Executive Producer for Champs Hill Records: Alexander Van Ingen  
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FAURÉ, POULENC & FRANCK VIOLIN SONATAS

Each of the sonatas on this recording arose naturally out of notions of national identity and pride. They also reflect the careful cultivation of a distinctive repertoire of French chamber music during a period marked by breakneck change and catastrophic conflicts. César Franck and Gabriel Fauré, both talented and influential teachers, played significant roles in nudging French chamber music out of the comfort of domestic parlours and privileged aristocratic salons into the mainstream of the international concert repertoire. The Belgian Franck and his Francophone followers absorbed important lessons from German music; Fauré and many fellow Gallic composers, meanwhile, sought to emulate in their work the refined tonal beauty, clarity and sophistication of contemporary French verse. The art of composition in France gained in depth and seriousness during the early decades of the Third Republic, in part in response to heavy French losses in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71, in part to advance the nation's position in the escalating *fin-de-siècle* culture wars. While Poulenc openly mocked such high-minded *gravité* in the works of his precocious youth, in later years he confronted serious questions about life's transience and paradoxes, not least those raised by the national humiliation that followed Nazi Germany's conquest and partition of France in 1940.

The conservative-minded music publishers of Paris unanimously rejected Gabriel Fauré's Violin Sonata in A major, no doubt unsettled by its then radical combination of classical and romantic elements and bold shifts between chromatic and modal harmonies. Camille Clerc, a wealthy industrialist and supporter of Fauré's cause, lobbied the venerable Leipzig firm of Breitkopf und Härtel to accept the young composer's recently completed sonata. On 5 November 1876, he wrote to Fauré with good news: "To sum up," Clerc concluded, "these people offer to publish the work at their expense on condition that they retain the copyright. I believe that from your point of view this result is a flattering one by their proposition, and it is

obvious that your work has been appreciated by them.” The company’s good opinion of the sonata was shared by the enthusiastic audience at its premiere, given on 27 January 1877 at the Salle Pleyel in Paris under the banner of the recently established Société Nationale de Musique. It was performed by the popular young violinist Marie Tayau in partnership with Fauré at the piano.

Camille Saint-Saëns, Fauré’s former teacher and close friend, praised the sonata for its “formal novelty, quest, refinement and modulation, curious sonorities, use of the most unexpected rhythms and ... touches of boldness.” Those qualities register in the work’s first movement and are powerfully reinforced in the *Allegro vivo*, charged with rhythmic energy and strikingly free in its patterning of phrase lengths and placement of metrical stresses. The expansive D minor slow movement, underpinned by a finely crafted and subtle accompaniment, alternates in mood between impassioned lyricism and serene melodic stillness. Fauré’s deliberate departure throughout the work from the conventions of sonata form harmony, which troubled contemporary guardians of textbook rules, complements the enigmatic nature of its pithy themes and their inventive development.

Unlike Fauré, who crafted eloquent and idiomatic music for violin, Francis Poulenc struggled to write for the solo instrument. He composed and destroyed two violin sonatas, one of which he performed with the violinist Hélène Jourdan-Morhange during the 1917–18 season, before creating his only surviving essay in the genre. “To tell the truth,” he recalled, “I don’t like the violin in the singular. In the plural, it’s quite different.” Poulenc finally overcame his resistance to the instrument in the summer of 1942 during a visit to his country retreat, a large yet rather austere villa at Noizay in the Loire valley. He drafted the Sonata for violin and piano after studying Brahms’s violin sonatas; the model of Debussy’s violin sonata, aphoristic in style, also informed Poulenc’s approach to the combination of violin and piano.

“The monster is now ready,” he wrote to the anthropologist and ethnomusicologist André Schaeffner. “[The violin sonata] is not too bad, I believe, and in any case very different from the endless violin-melodic line sonatas written in France in the nineteenth century. How beautiful Brahms’s sonatas are! I did not know them very well. One cannot achieve a proper balance between two such instruments as the piano and the violin unless one treats them absolutely equally. The prima donna violin above an arpeggio piano accompaniment makes me vomit. Debussy, somewhat breathless in his [violin] sonata, has nevertheless succeeded in turning it into a masterpiece by sheer instrumental tact.” Poulenc’s work was completed at Noizay on Easter Sunday 1943. The composer partnered Ginette Neveu in the sonata’s public premiere, given at the Salle Gaveau in June 1943.

Poulenc tends to treat the piano as first among equals in his Violin Sonata; at least, the piano part often carries the main melodic interest while the violin interjects contrasts of colour and texture, notably so in the work’s rhapsodic *Intermezzo*. Melancholy and high spirits, dark and light moods pass over the sonata’s surface like clouds overhead. The composition’s unsettling ambivalence soon surfaces in the first movement, present in the juxtaposition of a theme based on Tatyana’s letter scene from Tchaikovsky’s *Eugene Onegin* and a lighter, lyrical violin tune that could easily have been written for the Paris cabaret scene. Two states, equal in weight and opposite in character, govern the sonata’s finale: the movement’s boisterous opening has something of the circus about it; its second half, announced by a moment’s silence and two ominous piano chords, mines the depths of introspection. Poulenc appears to invite listeners here to contemplate the particular tragedy of his work’s dedicatee, the visionary poet Federico García Lorca, executed by nationalists soon after the outbreak of the Spanish civil war, while also reflecting on universal human suffering, a shared daily experience for millions living in Hitler’s Europe.

In a series of interviews with the musicologist Claude Rostand, Poulenc explained that he found inspiration for the work in García Lorca's famous metaphor, "The guitar makes dreams weep". The line appears at the head of the Violin Sonata's *Intermezzo*, described by its composer in self-deprecating terms as "a sort of vaguely Spanish Andante-cantilena". Poulenc drafted the work's slow movement first. "Then I imagined as a finale a *Presto tragico* whose lively rhythmic élan would suddenly be broken by a slow, tragic coda. A fiery first movement was to set the tone." He proved to be its harshest critic, revising the score six years later after declaring the original to be "an utter failure". Poulenc's dismissive comment certainly did little to promote the considerable cause of a score tinged with bitter-sweet melodies and bound together with great ingenuity and imagination.

The American composer and author Ned Rorem, who first met Poulenc "as a fan" in 1950, penned a vivid portrait of the man's defining ambivalence. "In short," noted Rorem, "his aspect and personality, taste and music each contained contrasts that were not alternating but simultaneous. In a single spoken paragraph he would express terror about a work in progress, hence his need for a pilgrimage to the Black Virgin's Shrine at Rocamadour; his next breath extolled the joys of cruising the Deauville boardwalk [in search of casual homosexual sex]. This was no *non sequitur* but the statement of a whole man always interlocking soul and flesh, sacred and profane; the double awareness of artists and of their emulators, the saints." For all the sharp-edged, contradictory contrasts present in Poulenc's Violin Sonata, the composer blurs the boundaries between sacred and profane in his work to show their interconnection.

César Franck's Violin Sonata entered the mainstream of the violin repertoire soon after its acclaimed premiere at the Brussels Arts Club on 16 December 1886. The work's overnight popularity with performers and audiences was strongly influenced

by the tempestuous character of its second movement and the dreamlike fantasy of its *Recitativo-Fantasia*. Those same attributes surely clashed with the conservative tastes and forceful opinions of the composer's wife and former pupil, Félicité Desmousseaux, the daughter of well-known actors at the *Comédie-Française* in Paris. Although Madame Franck's views on the Violin Sonata were never made public, we do know that she wanted her husband to avoid the expression of strong emotions in his music. According to his biographer, Léon Vallas, "Dissensions arose round about 1880, to become accentuated and even angry at times, for the wife adhered obstinately to [Franck's] early modes of expression, and was unable to keep pace with her husband's evolution.... If his music tickled her fancy she could not resist coming into the room to listen to it at a closer hearing; but if the Master poured out sounds that seemed to her too complex or bold she would throw open the dividing door and call to him: 'César, I do not at all approve of that piece you are playing!'"

Franck created his Violin Sonata as a wedding present for the violin virtuoso Eugène Ysayé, who performed it in private soon after his marriage in the small town of Arlon in the Belgian province of Luxembourg on 26 September 1886 and later gave its public premiere in Brussels. The sonata's unrestrained lyricism, carefully wrought structure of "cyclic" themes and elegant harmonies attracted critical praise, not least from the composer Vincent d'Indy, whose detailed analysis identified three melodic fragments upon which Franck constructed "this true musical monument". According to d'Indy, the simplest of these fragments, or cells, is present in the work's opening bars, loosely outlined by the piano and then announced hesitantly on the violin; he also analysed the thematic and rhythmic patterns that give unity to the sonata as a whole. However ingenious its formal plan, Franck's work is distinguished above all by its prevailing feeling of spontaneity and by the richness of its melodic invention and harmonic colour.

After the sonata's Paris premiere in 1887, one anonymous reviewer noted that the piece was "modern in its formal design, and yet it retains the attractive qualities of the best of the classical sonatas," a wise response to the work's complex character. After a subdued prelude, Franck introduces the fleet-footed substance of his charming first movement, far removed in style from the weight and heft of the conventional sonata opening. Violent energy and restless passion arise in the dramatic *Allegro*, which gives way to the work's rhapsodic *Recitativo-Fantasia*, deeply reflective in its fragmentary recollection of themes from the first two movements. The finale, which opens and closes with a simple canon between piano and violin, draws together themes heard earlier in the work.

*Andrew Stewart*

I GIOVANNI GUZZO

***"Guzzo's technique was immaculate, and his Szymanowski was also stylish and driven. He ripped through the cadenza with terrific verve and left me wanting to hear much more from him".***

ANDREW MORRIS, CLASSICALSOURCE

Born in Venezuela to parents of Italian and Venezuelan heritage, young violinist Giovanni Guzzo is rapidly rising as one of the leading performers of his generation. He continues to captivate audiences around the world with his unique and passionate approach to his performances. Following his solo debut with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, critics described him as a wonderfully "magnetic" and "commanding" performer.

Having started his musical studies with the piano at the age of five, and violin at the age of six under the tutelage of Emil Friedman and Luis Miguel Gonzales in Venezuela, he became the youngest violinist to win 1st prize at the XII National Violin Competition "Juan Bautista Plaza", at only 12 years of age.

Following this success, he relocated to Europe to become a protégé of the renowned French virtuoso violinist Maurice Hasson at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where he was granted a scholarship at the early age of 16 and from where he graduated with the highest honours.

A keen recitalist and chamber musician, Giovanni has worked closely with some of today's leading musicians such as Maxim Vengerov, Martha Argerich, Joshua Bell, Martin Fröst, Daniel Hope, Sir Colin Davis, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Gábor Takács-Nagy, the Maggini and Takacs quartets, Gerhard Schulz, Mats Lidström, to name but a few. His talent has been recognised with numerous awards including Her Majesty the Queen's commendation for Excellence, Gold medal at the Marlow Music Festival 2006, HRH Princess Alice's Prize, the PROMIS award given by the London



photo: Eric Richmond

Symphony Orchestra, finalist at the YCAT (Young Classical Artists Trust) competition and the Manoug Parikian and Myra Hess awards.

Giovanni has performed on several occasions for the Royal Family, most recently performing for Her Majesty the Queen on the famous 'Viotti ex-Bruce' Stradivarius violin (one of the most precious Stradivarius violins in the world). He also appears regularly in live television and radio broadcasts, most recently on BBC's Radio 3 performing the Mendelssohn violin concerto. He was also the youngest musician ever invited to perform a solo recital at the World Economic Forum in Davos (Switzerland), in front of world leaders and some of today's most influential people.

Giovanni Guzzo plays on a 1709 Antonio Stradivarius violin, kindly on extended loan by philanthropist Jonathan Moulds.

[www.giovaniguzzo.com](http://www.giovaniguzzo.com)

***“Polished, nuanced, immaculately controlled.”*** GRAMOPHONE

Pianist and composer Anne Lovett has been described as one of the greatest artists of her generation, with a crystalline and beautiful tonal clarity and huge sonic power (an unusual combination), plus absolute virtuosity and a rare musical intelligence, expressiveness and ability to communicate.

Anne Lovett was born in Normandie, France. She began piano lessons at the age of three and a few years later entered the CNR de Caen with Frédéric Aguessy. She then went on to study at the Conservatoire Supérieur de Paris with Pierre Reach (a pupil of the great Artur Schnabel) and Alberto Neuman (a rare student of Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli). At the age of just eleven, she was invited to perform in concert at the Festival International d'Annecy, and a year later at the Festival International de Montdauphin.

Anne then moved to the UK to further her education at the Royal Academy of Music in London with Hamish Milne. She also undertook a Masters in Composition at King's College, London. During her academic years, Anne took part in many masterclasses, including those run by Pierre-Laurent Aimard, Roger Muraro, Miriam Solovieff, Andrei Diev, John O'Connor and Rolf Hind.

Since graduating, Anne has performed throughout Europe, in countries including Portugal, Norway, Italy, England, and France, as well as in Brazil. She has represented France and the UK in official engagements in both concerts and masterclasses.

She is the recipient of international prizes at the Helen Eames Piano Prize, at the International Chamber Music Competition in Pinerolo, Italy as well as the FNAPEC in Paris.

She has been broadcasted on the radio station France Musique (Radio France group), for the French national TV network, France 3, and the European network, Mezzo, as well as ITV in the UK and ZDF in Germany.

Anne represents KAWAI pianos.

[www.annelovett.net](http://www.annelovett.net)

