

Champs Hill Records is proud to be associated with the Cecil Aronowitz International Viola Competition, giving the winners an opportunity to make a recording. Timothy Ridout won the CAIVC in 2014, held in honour of the renowned violist, Cecil Aronowitz.



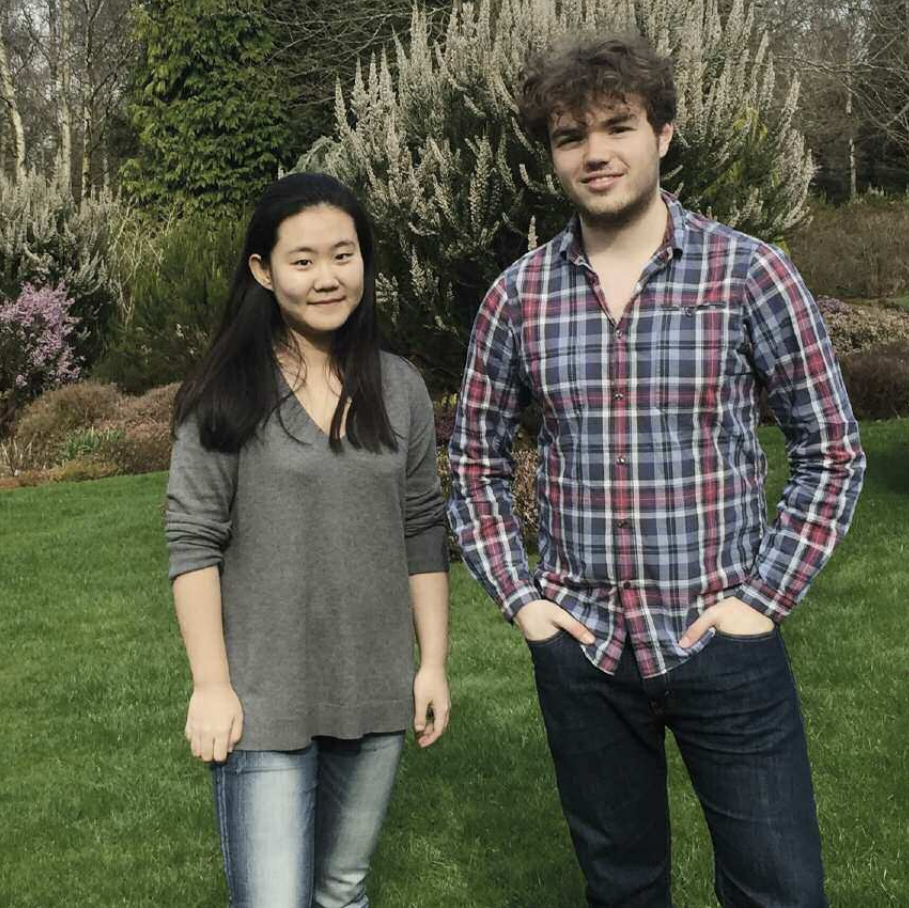
CHAMPS HILL
RECORDS

TIMOTHY RIDOUT: VIEUXTEMPS



HENRI VIEUXTEMPS
Complete Works for Viola

TIMOTHY RIDOUT *viola*
KE MA *piano*



I FOREWORD

Henri Vieuxtemps was one of the greatest violin virtuosos of the 19th Century, and as a boy was compared to Paganini, though his compositions often neglected. I believe this is largely due to the fact that he is thought of as a composer solely for the violin, writing music filled with pyrotechnics. However this isn't true. Vieuxtemps also loved the viola, and it is in his viola works that his lyrical, operatic style is most apparent. Together with my duo partner Ke Ma we have recorded the complete works for viola and piano by Vieuxtemps, which include two sonatas and some small gems and virtuoso pieces, as well as an *Etude*. I have also included the *Capriccio* for solo viola, which is like a soliloquy of his most intimate thoughts.

It was shortly after my success at the Cecil Aronowitz International Viola Competition that I first met David Bowerman and he invited me to record a disc at Champs Hill. I'm hugely grateful to David and Mary Bowerman, Matthew Bennett, Dave Rowell, Alexander Van Ingen and the whole team at Champs Hill for this opportunity to make my debut CD.

Timothy Ridout

TRACK LISTING

HENRI VIEUXTEMPS (1820–1881)

VIOLA SONATA IN B FLAT MAJOR Op.60 (UNFINISHED)

- | | | |
|---|-------------------|-------|
| 1 | <i>i</i> Allegro | 11'05 |
| 2 | <i>ii</i> Scherzo | 13'21 |

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| 3 | LA NUIT
(Transcribed for viola and piano by Vieuxtemps from the 2nd movement of
Le Désert by Félicien David) | 4'19 |
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| 4 | ETUDE
(For viola and piano) | 4'02 |
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VIOLA SONATA IN B FLAT MAJOR Op.36

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| 5 | <i>i</i> Maestoso – Allegro | 12'15 |
| 6 | <i>ii</i> Barcarolla: Andante con moto | 7'05 |
| 7 | <i>iii</i> Finale scherzando: Allegretto | 4'32 |

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|---|--|------|
| 8 | CAPRICCIO IN C MINOR Op.Post.
(Solo viola) | 2'51 |
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- | | | |
|---|---------------------|------|
| 9 | ÉLÉGIE Op.30 | 7'19 |
|---|---------------------|------|

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 10 | SOUVENIR D'AMÉRIQUE: VARIATIONS BURLESQUES
(YANKEE DOODLE VARIATIONS) Op.17
(Transcribed for viola by Frank Foerster) | 5'19 |
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Total playing time: 72'13

Produced and edited by Matthew Bennett
Engineered and mastered by Dave Rowell
Recorded on 5th–7th April 2016 in the Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex, UK
Cover & booklet photographs of Timothy Ridout by Kaupo Kikkas
Booklet photograph of Ke Ma by Anthony Tam
Executive Producer for Champs Hill Records: Alexander Van Ingen
Label Manager for Champs Hill Records: Joanna Wilson

PROGRAMME NOTE

Although the viola can boast a distinguished line of composer supporters – including Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Paganini, Berlioz, Vieuxtemps, Hindemith and Britten – it is only during the last half-century that it has really come into its own as a solo instrument. The viola possesses a unique voice that extends subtly from a gloriously dark, 'woody' lower register to a plangent intensity in its upper range. It is an instrument that only gives of itself to a select few. It does not respond kindly to force, but prefers to be gently coaxed into action. Attempts to submit the viola to the *spiccato* acrobatics, high bow pressure and *vibrato* intensity of the violin, or the stratospheric fingerboard intensity of the cello are almost invariably doomed to failure. The viola has an imperious nobility all its own, quite different to the chameleon-like, neurotic changeability of its immediate string cousins.

One of the few 19th-century violin virtuosos worthy to be mentioned in the same breath as Paganini, Wieniawski, Ernst and Sarasate, Henri Vieuxtemps was a prodigy phenomenon. Aged just 11, he created a sensation at his 1831 Paris debut and was hailed by one critic as 'the next Paganini'. Three years later he gave a performance of the Beethoven concerto that renowned composer and distinguished critic Robert Schumann described as having held the audience 'in a kind of magic circle'. He was adored not only in Western Europe, but also in the United States, where he undertook three major tours, and most especially in Russia, where he spent five years as soloist to the Tsar and made an incalculable impact on violin playing and teaching.

The 19th-century witnessed the emergence of innumerable self-penned, note-spinning ditties designed to showcase the particular strengths of the player involved. Vieuxtemps, however, was in a different league. There is no denying the virtuosic content of his seven completed violin concertos, yet it is invariably and seamlessly integrated into a web of compelling musical intrigue. Berlioz, one of the sternest composer-critics of his age, felt that had Vieuxtemps not been a great virtuoso he would have been acclaimed as a great composer, and went as far as to describe his first violin concerto as 'a magnificent symphony for violin and orchestra'.

Vieuxtemps' legendary prowess as a violinist has tended to obscure the fact that (like Paganini) he was also a devoted master of the viola – he invariably chose it in preference to the violin when playing in a string quartet. He viewed the instrument not merely as an alto violin, but as the possessor of its own unique musical personality. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Viola Sonata in B flat major Op.36, which forms the centrepiece of this recital (tracks 5–7). Composed and published (in Leipzig) in 1863, as with so much of the composer's music, the work slipped out of the repertoire following his death, although it has recently undergone something of a revival.

The opening movement embraces a lively *scherzando* with music of a more expressive hue, designed to showcase the viola's haunting lower register. Vieuxtemps repeats the structural trick with the following G minor *barcarolle*, which betrays his recent exposure to Russian music (one can almost sense Tchaikovsky waiting in the wings) and is delightfully contrasted with a central major key *Allegretto tranquillo*. Even in the high-spirited finale Vieuxtemps keeps his fabled virtuosity in check, with only the occasional exuberant flourish, such as the coda's rapid string-crossing.

It is fascinating to compare the calm introspection of much of the Op.36 Sonata with the exuberant forward momentum of Vieuxtemps' unfinished Sonata in two movements (also in B flat), which opens the programme. Published in 1884 (three years after Vieuxtemps' death), it is unclear whether the composer ever intended them as the first instalments of a larger work. So strikingly memorable is its spontaneous flow of enchanting ideas, skilfully interwoven and captivatingly paced, it is fully worthy of the music's unmistakable imprimatur (especially in the opening movement) – Felix Mendelssohn.

Second only to the Op.36 Sonata in terms of its posthumous reputation, the F minor *Élégie* Op.30 (1854) encapsulates Vieuxtemps' penchant for long-breathed *cantabile* melody, segueing almost imperceptibly from its soulful main theme into a radiant A

flat major central section. When the opening music returns, it is with greater intensity, the final bars ending the work in inconsolable rage and despair.

By comparison, Vieuxtemps' radiant transcription of the second movement of *Le Désert* (1844) by Félicien David (as *La Nuit*) offers pure balm and contentment. Described by David as an *Ode-Symphonie*, he composed *Le Désert* following a period of travel in Egypt and the Holy Land. Its exotic musical flavourings were to have a profound effect on Verdi, Bizet and Offenbach, yet David lost out on a potential fortune by selling the rights to *Le Désert* for a relatively paltry sum in order to clear his debts.

Just occasionally even Vieuxtemps couldn't resist indulging the viola's virtuoso potential. In the solo C minor *Capriccio*, composed in homage to Paganini, the viola becomes both soloist and accompanist, supporting the main melody simultaneously with supporting chords. The *Etude*, also in C minor, encapsulates the mid-19th century's rediscovery of Bach, with its neo-Baroque, self-perpetuating flow of dramatic semiquavers underpinned by granitic pedal points and anguished diminished seventh harmonies.

To finish, an exuberant set of variations on *Yankee Doodle Dandy* composed in New Orleans as a rip-roaring encore for Vieuxtemps' American audiences during his first tour. It clearly had the desired effect as the composer later reflected: 'I became popular and got my foot in the door, for better or worse, opening the way for others'. This cornucopia of violinistic technical chicanery caused such a sensation that when Vieuxtemps returned to the States it became his musical calling wherever he played. It is heard here in a modern transcription for viola and piano by violist-composer Frank Goerster, principal violist of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra since 1988. It goes way beyond the virtuoso scope of any of Vieuxtemps' original viola music, but played like this it is easy to imagine the highly charismatic Belgian performer-composer giving it a mischievous nod of approval.

Born in London in 1995, Timothy studied at the Royal Academy of Music with Martin Outram, graduating in 2016 with the Queen's Award for Excellence. He went on to the Kronberg Academy in Germany studying with Nabuko Imai, and taking classes with Tabea Zimmermann and Lawrence Power.

In 2016 Timothy was the first ever British winner of the Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition and was selected for representation by Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT). Other awards include 1st Prize at the 2014 Cecil Aronowitz International Viola Competition and 2nd Prize at the 2015 Windsor Festival International String Competition.

Timothy has given recitals at major venues and festivals throughout Europe including Wigmore Hall, Munich Gasteig, Verbier Academy & Festival at Schloss Elmau, the Eggenfelden Klassisch, Koblenz, Cork Chamber Music, Oxford Lieder, North Norfolk, Musikdorf Ernen and Beethoven Bonn festivals.

As a soloist he has performed the Walton Concerto at St. John's Smith Square and Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* with Maxim Vengerov and the Royal Academy of Music Soloists Ensemble. He has appeared with the Baden-Baden Philharmonie, Zagreb Soloists, Rotterdam Philharmonic Strings, Young Musicians Symphony and Birmingham Conservatoire Orchestras. In 2016 he gave the premiere of a new work by Desmond Clarke with the Melos Ensemble at Milton Court in London.

A keen chamber musician, Timothy has taken part in IMS Prussia Cove Open Chamber Music, the Bad Kissinger Sommer Festival (Germany), Schubertiade Festival (Austria), Musique à Marsac (France), Accademia dei Cameristi (Italy), and the Next

Generation Festival in Bad Ragaz (Switzerland). He has appeared as guest with the Nash Ensemble, and was a member of the Celan Quartet between 2011–14.

Other awards include the European String Teachers Association Prize at the International Johannes Brahms Competition in Pörschach, Austria, and a Special Prize at the Max Rostal International Competition in Berlin in 2015. He has taken part in masterclasses with Maxim Rysanov, Hartmut Rohde and Thomas Riebl, and between 2013–2016 worked intensively at the International Musikakademie in Fürstentem, Liechtenstein as a scholarship holder. Timothy is very grateful for support from the Bowerman Charitable Trust.

For this recording Timothy plays on a Viola by Giovanni Grancino (1677) kindly on loan from the Royal Academy of Music.





I KE MA *piano*

Ke's musical vision and mind have broadened rapidly since she was successfully accepted as a Bachelor student at the Royal Academy of Music in the class of Professor Christopher Elton since 2011.

During her studies in London, she has won numerous prestigious international competitions such as the Shenzhen International Piano Concerto Competition (2014), the 18th Concours International de Piano de la ville de Maisons-Laffitte, in France (2016). She was also honoured to receive distinguished prizes from the Worshipful Musicians' Company in London including the Maisie Lewis Young Artist Fund and the Prince's Award. The awards have given her more opportunities to make appearances on the stage to a wider public as a soloist performing at major venues including the Wigmore Hall, Purcell Room and Kings Place.

Ke has collaborated with many symphony orchestras and conductors internationally including Christian Ehwald, Daye Lin, Qiyuan Zhu, Uros Lajovic and Brian Wright.