

CHANDOS

ENESCU

String Octet
Piano Quintet in D major



KALEIDOSCOPE CHAMBER COLLECTIVE



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George Enescu, c. 1900

George Enescu (1881 – 1955)

Octet, Op. 7 (1899 – 1900) 36:56

in C major • in C-Dur • en ut majeur

for Four Violins, Two Violas, and Two Cellos

À André Gedalge

- | | | |
|---|---|-------|
| 1 | Très modéré – Même temps – Plus animé – Encore plus animé –
Premier Mouvement – Même temps – | 12:00 |
| 2 | Très fougueux – Moins vite – Premier Mouvement – Moins vite –
Plus vite – Très vite – Extrêmement vite – | 7:30 |
| 3 | Lentement – Plus animé – Un peu moins vite –
Premier Mouvement – Très animé – Moins vite – Animé –
Moins vite – | 9:06 |
| 4 | Mouvement de Valse bien rythmée – Un peu lent –
Mouvement de Valse – Plus vite – Même temps | 8:18 |

	Quintet (1896)*	25:52
	in D major • in D-Dur • en ré majeur	
	for Piano, Two Violins, Viola, and Cello	
	À mon cher Maître Marsick	
5	I Allegro moderato	8:05
6	II Scherzo vivace – Trio –	
	Tempo I – Da Capo il Scherzo senza replica e poi Coda –	
	Coda	5:28
7	III Andante	7:07
8	IV Allegro con spirito – Poco più mosso – Presto	5:11
	TT 62:48	

Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective

Elena Urioste violin

Savitri Grier violin*

Melissa White violin*

Nathan Amaral violin

Rosalind Ventris viola*

Edgar Francis viola

Laura van der Heijden cello*

Tony Rymer cello

Tom Poster piano*



The musicians during the recording of Enescu's Quintet for Piano and Strings

Enescu:

Piano Quintet in D major / String Octet in C major, Op. 7

Piano Quintet in D major

Born in the north of Romania, George Enescu (1881 – 1955) began to show musical abilities as a small boy, playing the violin and, by the age of five, composing. He was admitted to the Vienna Conservatory when he was seven, and a few years later, so the story goes, he was invited to the home of his teacher Joseph Hellmesberger to meet Brahms. However that may be, it is very clear from the Piano Quintet in D major, composed after he moved on to the Paris Conservatoire, that Brahms was his idol. The piece is cautiously dated to 1896, the year in which Enescu turned fifteen. He dedicated it to his violin professor at the Conservatoire, Martin-Pierre Marsick, and took part in a performance in Paris in 1897. Then the manuscript was lost for a century.

The first movement, partly because of its Brahmsian voice, speaks with a maturity belying the composer's age. When the first subject has been properly introduced, a little repeating figure comes forward in the transition to the second subject, which seems to grow out of the first. That figure turns out to be the pre-echo of a march that completes the exposition. Maybe the development is a bit

bumpier, but it ends with the first subject nicely emerging from memories, which return to take over the music at the close of the recapitulation and bring the movement to a quiet finish.

March rhythm is back for the Scherzo that follows and that encloses an inward and delicate Trio section, until the movement ends with a little conflation of the two.

The most personal movement, stylistically and perhaps expressively, is the *Andante*, a song in which Enescu gives himself, as first violin, plenty of opportunity to sing.

He switches quickly to a different role for the Romany-style rondo that gives the work a rousing conclusion, its second episode a *fugato* surely designed to prove that the young composer had not been spending all his time playing at cafés.

String Octet in C major, Op. 7

Enescu was still a teenager when he composed the Octet for double string quartet – and only eighteen when he completed it, in May 1900 – but suddenly he was in no one's shadow. Again, his dedication went to one of his teachers at the Conservatoire, where he had completed his studies the year before:

André Gedalge, who had persuaded Enoch, one of the leading music publishers in Paris, to take Enescu on a couple of years before. Gedalge, who had also taught Ravel, later said that of all his many pupils Enescu 'was the only one who really had ideas and spirit'.

Normally a fluent composer, Enescu took a year and a half over the Octet, as he reported in the book of memoirs which he entrusted to Bernard Gavoty towards the end of his life:

I wore myself out trying to make work a piece of music divided into four segments of such length that each of them was likely at any moment to break. An engineer launching his first suspension bridge over a river, could not feel more anxiety than I felt when I set out to darken my paper.

The Octet was set for its première under Édouard Colonne, who had introduced Enescu's Op. 1, the *Poème roumain*, in 1898. However, after five rehearsals Colonne withdrew the new work from his programme, and though Enescu was disappointed, he maintained an association with Colonne's orchestra into the 1950s. He himself conducted the first performance of the Octet at an all-Enescu evening a week before Christmas 1909, when the players were the quartets led by Albert Gélos and Marcel Chailley, the latter a classmate of the composer's at the Conservatoire.

As in the earlier piano quintet, there are four movements, though the prefatory note which Enescu added for a new edition in 1950 signals a very different way of thinking:

This Octet, *cyclic* in form, presents the following characteristics: it is divided into four distinct movements in the classic manner, each movement linked to the other to form a *single symphonic* movement, where the periods, on an enlarged scale, follow one another according to the rules of construction for the first movement of a symphony. Regarding its performance, it is to be noted that too much emphasis should not be given to certain contrapuntal artifices in order to permit the presentation of essential thematic and melodic elemental values.

This work can be played with a full string orchestra on condition that certain cantabile parts be entrusted to soloists.

I leave it to the judicious choice of the conductor to decide which passages are to be played solo.

Any conductor would want to orchestrate the opening passage fully – its recurrences, too – and here Enescu limits his offered freedom by marking these sequences *tutti*. The sound here, especially when this kind of music comes on at the start, is extraordinary. Seven of the eight instruments are strenuously

bound in a unison line that swerves into modal colourings of the solid C major while forging its own way rhythmically, through dynamic repeating patterns broken by short runs, all pretty much oblivious of the 3/2 metre notated. Below this, holding its lowest note as a throbbing *tremolo*, the second cello affirms C as the bass. Enescu, surely deliberately, throws us into a landscape remote from classical chamber music – the landscape of shepherds' songs from the Carpathians, where one or more singers will gutturally fix on the *ison*, or drone, while others thrust forward the melody.

Enescu's melody abruptly fans into a C major chord across four octaves, *fortissimo*, at which point, though the *ison* remains a while, we are taken from the pastures of Central Europe to the comfortable interior suggested by what is almost at first a string quartet texture. First violin and first viola are in canon at the octave, framing a counter-subject from the second violin while the bottom three lines are all busy with developing the *ison*. Further intimations of the opening music appear, on the way to a full but brief return, altered also by busy humming in the middle register.

The return to chamber-music normality, in B minor, takes the form of a viola song, followed, after a short, exquisite *pizzicato*

interlude and a taste of shepherd's pipe from the first violin, by another song, for the first and second violins. After a pause, the viola and the top two violins continue in turn with different material, the movement being altogether abundant in its themes. The next section, highly contrapuntal, gathers towards a climax and descent. The pipe tune and the *pizzicato* moment come back, followed at a distance by a faint memory of the initial theme, its force spent. Over an open fifth on B, a violin solo eventually supplies the major third.

Enescu asks for just a short pause before the second movement, which is marked *Très fougueux* (Very fiery) – *fougueux* and also in portions fugal. A quick intercutting of sections brings back some music from the first movement. As in that movement, the joins sometimes suggest a casting around in search of where to go next. Once found, the direction is always taken up with vim. Like the corresponding movement in the piano quintet (a rare point of resemblance), this is an unconventional scherzo, now not only in metre but also in character, shape, and material. The final canon retrieves the first from the opening movement and sinks down, not quite into silence but rather into a link to what comes next.

This is the slow movement, E major settled and ready for it after all the zigzag excursions

there were earlier in the second movement. The opening is introductory, scored for all but the first violin playing with mutes. As the music goes back to its starting point, the first violin, unmuted, enters with the main theme, distinguished by a dotted-rhythm fall. A second phase has the tone darkened by doubling from the second viola an octave below. Soon afterwards the music becomes richly polyphonic, the main theme returning on the third violin in expectation of a sudden agitation for the central climax. Then the first violin regains the theme in a reprise leading up to another peak, after which the principal line is in the second viola and first cello. The music turns a surprising corner into a fast section, which dwindles into recollections of the pipe tune and, coming as if from afar, the theme that got the whole work started. A struggle ensues, to restore this or deny it access.

The outcome, with no break, is the waltz finale. This takes a little while to build up steam but then goes hurtling headlong, hurling ideas from the preceding movements about. Its big waltz theme, in the middle of the texture, steers through the movement's second half but leaves space for a coda in which the opening theme returns one last time.

Enescu's choice of the term 'cyclic' to describe the form is bound to suggest Franck, but though there was a connection

with that master in some of Enescu's early works, it is not so here. Some scholars have suggested a parallel with Schoenberg's melding of four movements into one, though here the link, surely coincidental, is more with the glistening string counterpoint of *Verklärte Nacht*, which Schoenberg would write just four months after Enescu finished his score. Perhaps we should regard this spacious and thrilling work as the grand finale to the nineteenth-century effort to combine and relate movements, as found in works by Beethoven, Berlioz, Schumann, and Liszt: a golden, glorious sunset.

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A note by the performers

Elena remembers being blown away by Enescu's Octet the first time she heard it; her initial amazement later developed into a roaring obsession as she prepared the first violin part for the Marlboro Music Festival in 2012. Marlboro proved the perfect setting in which to fully immerse herself in the sheer visceral power and energy of the work, and to explore its seemingly infinite layers and details with a group of equally enthusiastic and committed colleagues.

Ever since we founded Kaleidoscope, in 2017, we had fantasised about assembling

a new 'dream team' of our string-playing colleagues – all musicians we love, admire, and respect beyond words – to play the Enescu Octet together. We were elated to discover that every one of the players we approached felt a similar passion for the piece, and getting to explore, perform, and record this long-time musical obsession together felt nothing short of miraculous: a heady, magical trip of extreme musical thrills! Enescu was open about the immense challenges of writing such a complex, audacious work as the Octet ('An engineer launching his first suspension bridge over a river could not feel more anxiety than I felt when I set out to darken my paper'), but ultimately found a way to weave together his musical themes, one that culminates in a truly mind-blowing mosaic ('Everything Everywhere All at Once!') which is almost overwhelming in its brilliance.

And what to pair with such a towering conception from a composer who, astonishingly, seems to have reached musical maturity by the age of nineteen? We decided to go back a few years further and to celebrate a far lesser-known work, composed by the fifteen-year-old Enescu during his studies with Massenet in Paris: the Piano Quintet in D major. Our violist Rosie Ventris played this piece a few years

back at the Highgate International Chamber Music Festival, and we all agreed it would make a wonderful, contrasting companion for the Octet. A hugely appealing piece, full of youthful ardour, with a particularly memorable gypsy-style finale, it is undoubtedly the work of a composer still finding his voice – we suspect that many people hearing this work without knowing its composer would far sooner guess that it was by Brahms than Enescu. Like the Octet, the Quintet was a joy to record, though perhaps the greatest wonder is the growth in Enescu's musical voice during the four years which separate the two works.

Hugest thanks to Jonathan Cooper for his brilliance in capturing the 'live' sound-world this music needs, and to Ralph Couzens and all at Chandos for letting us share this dream project with the world.

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Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective

Hailed by *The Times* for its 'exhilarating performances', the **Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective** was dreamed up in 2017 by Tom Poster and Elena Urioste, who met through the BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists scheme. The Collective operates with a flexible roster which features many of today's most

inspirational musicians, both instrumentalists and singers, and its creative programming is marked by an ardent commitment to celebrating diversity of all forms and a desire to unearth lesser-known gems of the repertoire. In 2020, it was appointed Associate Ensemble at Wigmore Hall, where the group makes multiple appearances each season and, in May 2021, was invited to give the Hall's 120th anniversary concert. It broadcasts regularly on BBC Radio 3 and has recently enjoyed major residencies at the Aldeburgh, Cheltenham, Chipping Campden, Lammermuir, and Ischia festivals, and at the Schwarzman centres at both the University of Oxford and Yale University. Its previous recordings for Chandos Records have been named Editor's Choice in *Gramophone*, shortlisted

for *BBC Music Magazine* and *Gramophone* awards, and appeared in the list of '10 best classical records of 2022' in *The Times*. Passionate about inspiring the next generation of musicians, the Collective has featured in the Learning Festival of Wigmore Hall, directed courses for the Benedetti Foundation, and held a visiting professorship at the Royal Academy of Music. Recent performance highlights include collaborations with Hilary Hahn, débuts at the BBC Proms and at the Concertgebouw, and two extensive tours of the USA. In 2024 the Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective was shortlisted for the Ensemble Award of the Royal Philharmonic Society. For more information, please see www.kaleidoscopecc.com, where you can also find links to the websites of the individual musicians.



The musicians during the recording of Enescu's Octet for Strings



The musicians during the recording of Enescu's Octet for Strings

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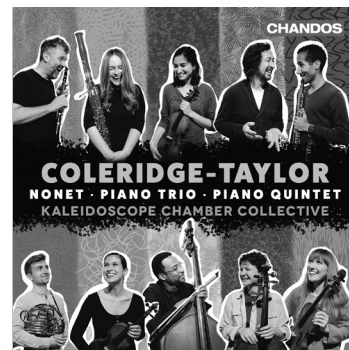


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GEORGE ENESCU (1881–1955)

1-4 **OCTET, OP. 7** (1899–1900) 36:56
in C major • in C-Dur • en ut majeur
for Four Violins, Two Violas, and Two Cellos

5-8 **QUINTET** (1896)* 25:52
in D major • in D-Dur • en ré majeur
for Piano, Two Violins, Viola, and Cello

TT 62:48

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Tony Rymer cello
Tom Poster piano*



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