



ORCHID CLASSICS

**GRIEG** VIOLIN SONATA NO.2  
**CHAUSSON** POÈME  
**FRANCK** VIOLIN SONATA IN A

**CALLUM SMART** VIOLIN  
**GORDON BACK** PIANO





**EDVARD GRIEG** (1843-1907)

**Sonata for violin and piano No.2 in G major, Op.13**

- |   |  |      |
|---|--|------|
| 1 | I Lento doloroso - Poco allegro - Allegro vivace | 8:52 |
| 2 | II Allegretto tranquillo                         | 5:59 |
| 3 | III Allegro animato                              | 5:50 |

**ERNEST CHAUSSON** (1855-1899)

**Poème, Op.25**

- |   |   |       |
|---|---|-------|
| 4 | Lento e misterioso - Animato - Molto animato - Poco lento - Poco meno lento - Allegro - Tempo I | 14:09 |
|---|---|-------|

**CÉSAR FRANCK** (1822-1890)

**Sonata in A major**

- |   |  |      |
|---|--|------|
| 5 | I Allegretto ben moderato  | 5:53 |
| 6 | II Allegro   | 8:08 |
| 7 | III Recitativo-Fantasia.<br>Ben moderato - Molto lento - Molto lento e mesto | 6:52 |
| 8 | IV Allegretto poco mosso - Poco animato                                      | 6:10 |

<b>Total time</b>	<b>61:54</b>
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**CALLUM SMART** violin

**GORDON BACK** piano

*When the idea of recording my debut CD first arose I was extremely excited at the prospect of exploring a process which was completely new to me, and having the opportunity to choose and present some of my favourite pieces of music.*

*Chausson's Poème has for many years now been a piece to which I have felt very emotionally attached and have always dreamt of playing and recording. Its wild, imaginative story line, combined with its challenging technical and musical difficulties, ensures plenty of food for thought!*

*The Grieg Sonata is one that I first learnt for the Menuhin Competition in 2010. After my performance of this piece, I was awarded the prize of a UK tour to be accompanied by Gordon Back, the Artistic Director of the competition; this was the first time we appeared together and the beginning of a regular partnership. From that moment onwards this work has been thoroughly engrained into our recital repertoire. Its use of Norwegian folk melodies, which charm us with their innocence and beauty, together with the sense of unity with nature that Grieg captures in all of his music, is, I think, particularly attractive.*

*The Franck Sonata is a work that every violinist should play at some stage - so I thought why not now! I immensely enjoyed recording this and it gave me a chance to explore all the colours and different sound worlds of the violin. This sonata is one of the most fulfilling works to play and takes both violin and piano on a fantastic journey, physically and mentally, and I am delighted that I have been given the opportunity to record my version of this great work.*

Callum Smart

Written in the wake of his honeymoon in 1867, Edvard Grieg's Violin Sonata No.2 was composed only two years after the Sonata No.1, yet much had changed in that time. Grieg's style had taken on more of a distinctly Norwegian character, and the influence of Robert Schumann, so audible in the earlier work, receded, allowing Grieg's own voice to emerge with greater clarity. The work is a fine example of Grieg's handling of long-breathed ideas on a substantial scale, as opposed to the shorter, four-square phrasing of some later works.

In 1869, Grieg and Nina visited Italy, where Grieg met fellow composer and piano virtuoso Franz Liszt. Grieg arrived with a package under his arm containing the score to the Op.13 Violin Sonata, which Liszt seized and took a great interest in; what followed demonstrates the mutual admiration of these composers, and Grieg's humble attitude to his sonata:

[Liszt] now commenced to turn over the pages, that is to say, he skimmed over the first movement of the sonata... he soon showed by significant nods or a "bravo", or a "*sehr schön*" when he came across one of the best passages. He had now become interested, but my courage dropped below zero when he asked me to play the sonata. It had never occurred to me to attempt the whole score on the piano...

... So I started on this splendid American grand piano, a Chickering. Right at the beginning, where the violin starts in with a rather baroque but national passage, he exclaimed: "*Ei wie keck! Nun hören Sie mal, das gefällt mir. Noch einmal bitte!*" ["How bold that is! Look here, I like that. Once more, please!"] And where the violin again comes in *adagio*, he played the violin part on the upper octaves of the piano with an expression so beautiful, so marvellously true and singing, that it made me smile inwardly. These were the first tones I heard Liszt play; and now we passed rapidly into the *Allegro*, he taking the violin part, and I the piano. My spirits rose gradually, because his approval, which he manifested in a truly lavish way, did me good.

Liszt then took to the piano himself and went on to sight-read, perfectly, the rest of the sonata – both violin and piano parts – to Grieg's delight. It is telling that Grieg uses the words "baroque" and "national" to describe the first movement, highlighting the music's decorative moments, as well as its Norwegian flavour.

The work opens with a rather mournful, folk-like slow introduction, giving way to a lyrical violin melody accompanied by the piano's repeated chords, the rhythm of which adds a sense of momentum to the otherwise gentle theme. The piano then introduces a livelier melody, with a vibrant violin outburst soon contrasted with softer, more mysterious passages. These quicksilver shifts in tone continue, with minor-key sections injecting both wistfulness and drama, contrasted with vigorous material in which the violin's singing tone is showcased in some resplendent melodic writing.

The slow movement begins in the manner of a lullaby, but the violin ushers in more impassioned material, soaring above the piano's dramatic flourishes. Despite the slower tempo, this is not a conventionally dreamy slow movement; as with the first movement, Grieg playfully shifts between moods, ending on a note of melancholy. Grieg saves the most quintessentially Norwegian material for the dancing finale, which is characterised by the sparkling, folk-like violin part, and colourful, lilting music for the piano.

When the celebrated Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe asked Ernest Chausson to write him a violin concerto, Chausson hesitated. The composer was prone to self-doubt and anxiety, as he once described:

... relative solitude, along with the reading of a few morbid books, caused me to acquire another fault: I was sad without quite knowing why, but firmly convinced I had the best reason in the world for it.

Furthermore, the scale of a concerto proved daunting, as Chausson explained to Ysaÿe:

I hardly know where to begin with a concerto, which is a huge

undertaking, the devil's own task. But I can cope with a shorter work. It will be in very free form with several passages in which the violin plays alone.

The "shorter work" is this eloquent *Poème* of 1896, a fantasy in which the fluid form is broadly divided into episodes, each linked thematically. This approach suited the freedom and flexibility Chausson had been developing in his musical style, a sensibility which might have been inhibited by the formal constraints of a concerto. Chausson's friend, fellow-composer Isaac Albéniz, secretly paid for the score to be published, with the intention of bolstering his friend's waning self-belief.

Chausson produced three versions of the *Poème*: for violin and orchestra, violin and piano, and for violin, piano and string quartet; in each the violin part is almost identical. In this version for violin and piano, the piano's brooding, enigmatic opening bars establish the work's impressionistic harmony and dark-hued colours, rather similar to the piano music of Debussy. A rippling texture creates a sense of forward motion, before the violin enters with an expansive, poignant melody. The extended passage for solo violin which follows includes intricate double-stopping, creating a sense of counterpoint within the violin part alone. The return of the piano marks the start of a more animated section of the work, the violin singing a wide-ranging, discursive, often passionate melody. Chausson sustains this continuous outpouring of music with remarkably little repetition. As the passion subsides, the violin plays an extended high trill, ending the piece with spine-tingling delicacy.

César Franck's heritage is difficult to pin down: he was born in Liège, now in Belgium but once part of the Netherlands, and spent much of his life in France. Yet his music is in many respects more characteristic of Germanic styles, with the figure of Wagner exerting considerable power over Franck and his contemporaries.

Franck's domineering father initially wanted his son to be a virtuoso pianist; yet, despite his great talent, the young man did not have the extrovert

temperament suited to such a career. Like Chausson, he lacked confidence, as Liszt observed:

He will find the road steeper and more rocky than others may, for, as I have told you, he made the fundamental error of being christened César-Auguste, and, in addition, I fancy he is lacking in that convenient social sense that opens all doors before him. For these very reasons, I venture to suggest to you that men of spirit and good will should rally on his side.

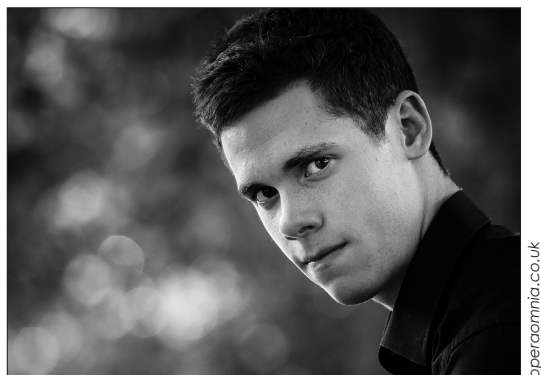
Nevertheless, Franck was to find his niche; as an illustrious organist-composer in Paris, he wrote organ works hailed by Liszt as deserving a "place alongside the masterpieces of Johann Sebastian Bach". As a teacher his influence was also profound, especially upon his group of student-disciples, which included Chausson, as well as Henri Duparc, Gabriel Fauré, Camille Saint-Saëns and Vincent D'Indy. Franck taught his pupils that classical structures such as the canon and fugue could, in spite of their rigours, provide frameworks through which emotional expression might flourish – and his own Sonata in A is a supreme example of such an approach.

Franck had initially promised Wagner's wife (and Liszt's daughter), Cosima, a violin sonata in 1859. However, as with Chausson's *Poème*, it was a request from Ysaÿe – in this case, to celebrate the occasion of his wedding in 1886 – that prompted the composition of this piece. The sonata was premiered in an art gallery in Brussels – which was so poorly lit that Ysaÿe had to play much of the work from memory. Several thematic threads run through the entire work, thoroughly unifying the sonata through what Franck called 'cyclic' development, from the lyrical opening movement to the famous canonic finale. Vincent D'Indy declared the work to be "the first and purest model of the cyclical use of themes in sonata form." Franck was more understated, admitting, with characteristic modesty: "I, too, have written some beautiful things."

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## CALLUM SMART

Callum Smart attracted wide public attention at the age of 13 having won the strings category of the 2010 BBC Young Musicians Competition performing Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales conducted by Vasily Petrenko and broadcast on BBC 2 and Radio 3.



Also in 2010, Callum became the top European prize-winner in the Menuhin Competition in Oslo with his performance of Ravel's *Tzigane*. He has since appeared at a number of European festivals including Les Sommets Musicaux in Gstaad with pianist Gordon Back, Mecklenburg Vorpommern with the Polish Chamber Orchestra, the Malmö International String Festival with Jonas Vitaud, the Menuhin Festival in Gstaad and the Dvořák Festival in Prague. UK recitals include the Cheltenham Festival, the International Lake District Summer Music Festival, Glasgow, Leamington Spa, Leeds, Manchester, Newport, Perth and London's Wigmore Hall.

He made his North American debut with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Grant Llewellyn, and other orchestral engagements have included a performance of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto with the Orchestra of Welsh National Opera and an invitation from Vasily Petrenko to play Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No.2 in Liverpool. He has also made concerto appearances in venues such as Cadogan Hall and Queen Elizabeth Hall, London and given performances of the Glazunov Concerto with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Mozart's Violin Concerto No.5 with the European Union Chamber

Orchestra, and Britten's Violin Concerto with Chethams Symphony Orchestra at Lichfield and Cheltenham Festivals and the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. In 2014 he returns to the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and performs with the Northern Chamber Orchestra, amongst others.

Callum began violin studies at the age of six and at nine became a student of Maciej Rakowski whose tutelage has continued alongside his studies at Chetham's School of Music. Callum plays on a 1698 Antonio Stradivari violin generously loaned by J & A Beare Ltd.

## GORDON BACK

Gordon Back's distinguished career as a pianist has taken him to many continents of the world. His international reputation was established in 1978 when he played with Dong-Suk Kang in Alice Tully Hall, New York, to great critical acclaim. Since then he has travelled extensively throughout Europe, Russia, USA, the Far East and, of course, Great Britain, performing and recording with artists such as Yehudi Menuhin, Nathan Milstein, Maxim Vengerov, Aaron Rosand, Josef Suk, Sarah Chang, Yo Yo Ma, Ko Iwasaki, Leonidas Kavakos and the Cleveland Quartet.



Gordon Back was born in Wales and studied piano and viola at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. He was awarded the Lady Grace James Scholarship, which enabled him to take up his post-graduate studies in Italy, studying with Guido Agosti and Sergio Lorenzi. On returning to England he was one of the youngest ever appointed professors to join the faculty of the Guildhall School of Music (London) in 1974, where he was made head of the Department of Accompaniment in 1980. He received the honour of being made a Fellow of the Guildhall School in 1984.

Gordon Back has been official accompanist to major international violin competitions including the Carl Flesch Competition (London), the International Tchaikovsky Competition (Moscow), the International Violin Competition of Indianapolis (USA) and the Menuhin Competition (UK). His recordings include the Bach-Schumann Sonatas and Partitas for violin and piano with Jean-Jacques Kantorow (which received a French Grand Prix du Disque), the Schubert Arpeggione and Rachmaninov Cello Sonatas with cellist Daniel Lee (for Decca) and a series of CDs with clarinettist Emma Johnson (for ASV). In 2011 he recorded the complete works of Ernst with Josef Spacek.

Gordon Back gives regular master classes as guest professor in music colleges such as the Cleveland Institute of Music, Curtis Institute and the Royal Northern College of Music. In the summer he teaches in Courchevel, France and Valdres Festival, Norway. He is a jury member of the Vendome Prize, Artistic Advisor of the Hattori Foundation and in 2013 Artistic Director of the Gower Festival.

In 2002 he became the Artistic Director of the Menuhin Competition and has since channelled his creative energy into defining it as a unique international event. It was hosted in London 2004, France 2006, Cardiff 2008, Oslo 2010, Beijing 2012 and Austin, Texas in 2014. It now includes a major violin festival featuring all jury members as performers and provides an educational forum to all participants and visiting musicians.

*I would like to thank...*

*...my dedicated and inspiring teacher Maciej Rakowski, who was ever present in the recording process and who gave me all the time, patience and experience I needed to prepare for this project; the Orchid Classics Team at Potton Hall, Jeremy Hayes and Patrick Allen, who not only made my first recording comfortable and easy, but also a lot of fun!; Matthew Trusler and the Orchid Music Charitable Trust for believing in me and giving me this exciting opportunity; Steven Smith and J & A Beare Ltd. for their kind loan of the violin - I shall always treasure the experience of playing it; Claire Wass for all her work promoting the CD, and also Roderick Thomson, Catherine Gardiner and James Brown at Hazard Chase, for all their support and guidance throughout the project.*

*Finally, my gratitude to Gordon Back, who has been a pedagogical figure in my musical development over the past years and whose musical vision and friendship I value more than I can say.*

This recording was made under the auspices of the Orchid Music Charitable Trust

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Orchid Music Charitable Trust

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