



Joseph RYELANDT

CHAMBER MUSIC FOR PIANO AND STRINGS VOLUME ONE: THE WAR YEARS, 1914–18

CANON EN TRIO FOR PIANO, VIOLIN AND CELLO, OP. 70

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by Jan Dewilde and Koen Buyens

I believe I have created enough of a volume of works in all genres to be able to tell myself that I have not been a meaningless or superfluous servant of the arts. I did what I could. It is for the future to decide whether a part of my work will survive me to serve the greater glory of God.¹

Thus, on 24 September 1944, Joseph Ryelandt began his autobiographical *Notices sur mes œuvres* ('Notes on my Works'). He was 74 at the time and had been composing already for half a century – but since 1936 his creative well had seemingly run dry and the circumstances of war were hardly a source of renewed inspiration. He used the impasse to cast a glance back upon his voluminous output, which he hoped would remain of interest even over the course of the next half-century or so. Although Ryelandt's music has indeed disappeared from the repertoire since his death, this series of recordings hopes to provide evidence that his views were not entirely misplaced.

Ryelandt was born in Bruges on 7 April 1870 into a well-to-do bourgeois family. His father, Louis-Bernard, was a lawyer who combined his private practice with a political commitment to the Catholic Party. In that capacity he held a seat on the town council of Bruges and the provincial council of West Flanders. Of more political weight, however, was his grandfather on the mother's side, Jean Casier, a wealthy Ghent-based textile entrepreneur. Elected to the Belgian senate in the year of Ryelandt's birth, Casier loyally subscribed to the programme of the papist and virulently anti-liberal 'ultramontanists', at the time the main force within the Catholic Party.

Both the Francophone and fervently Catholic character of the milieu in which he grew up would be decisive for Ryelandt's personal development and artistic orientation. As a young man he contributed to *Durendal*, a monthly devoted to art and literature. Founded in 1894, it was the Catholic answer to the influential *La Jeune Belgique*, which stood close to French symbolism and embraced

¹ Joseph Ryelandt, 'Notices sur mes œuvres (avec des notes complémentaires faites entre 1952–1960)'; typescript, Library of the Municipal Conservatoire of Bruges, 1940, p. 1.

an 'art for art's sake' aestheticism. The young Catholics of *Durendal* welcomed symbolism as well but rejected emphatically the idea of art for its own sake, which they thought smelled too much of decadence and impiety. According to them, real art should be idealistic, directed toward God. The *Durendal* circle also aspired to renewal in political Catholicism. Henry Carton de Wiart, one of its founders and a cousin of Ryelandt's wife, Marguerite Carton de Wiart, was a pioneer of Christian democracy in Belgium. In 1920–21 he shortly served as prime minister, leading a post-war cabinet of national unity.

The Great War had severely complicated the linguistic condition of the country. When Belgium gained independence in 1830, the French language had served as a strong unifying force among the entire Belgian elite. That was also the case in Flanders, where a deep linguistic gap separated aristocracy and bourgeoisie from the vast majority of the population, which expressed itself in a wide range of local Flemish dialects. A Flemish movement had already come to the fore in the late 1830s. Its protagonists belonged to the middle classes, whose members found themselves socially and professionally disadvantaged in the homogeneously francophone Belgian state.

This early Flemish movement was a literary one and its objectives did not reach beyond cultural emancipation. Moreover, its representatives remained loyal to the Belgian state. Things changed dramatically in the Great War, when the German occupation gave birth to a more radical, separatist current in the Flemish movement, striving for the partition of the country and Flemish independence. However small the current still was, the climate had changed and Joseph Ryelandt would experience the effect personally. When in 1924 he succeeded Karel Mestdag² as director of the Bruges Conservatory, his appointment was fiercely contested within Flemish circles.

Bruges, Ryelandt's hometown, had a special appeal in times of modernisation, secularisation and social upheaval. Few places were more likely to engender nostalgic feelings for the lost mediaeval past, with its presumed virtues of social and religious harmony. Ryelandt was 22 years old when the novel *Bruges-la-Morte* ('Bruges the Dead City') appeared, the masterpiece of Georges Rodenbach (1855–98), a Belgian symbolist writer and poet of German-French descent.³ Driven by a fin-de-siècle obsession with death and decay, Rodenbach presented the dying city of Bruges as the intriguing leading character of the novel. The hypersensitive author cannot have imagined that he would contribute to the exceptional future of Bruges as a destination for mass-tourism after World War II.

² Mestdag (1850–1924) wrote some 150 songs, exclusively on Flemish texts; his other compositions include a number of cantatas and orchestral works.

³ *Bruges-la-Morte* was adapted by Erich Wolfgang Korngold and his father, Julius (writing jointly under the pseudonym of Paul Schott), to provide the libretto of Korngold's opera *Die tote Stadt* (1916–19).

Rodenbach's portrayal of Bruges diverges from the findings of the hard-headed economic historians. From the middle of the nineteenth century on economic activity in the city intensified, mainly in textiles, metals, beer and print. But these new industries remained small-scale and, like the expansion of the seaport of Zeebrugge in the twentieth century, these developments left the ancient city of Bruges, with its mediaeval street pattern, largely untouched. As such, Bruges turned into a major pole of attraction for the Gothic-revival movement. Ryelandt's birth in 1870 more or less coincided with an upsurge of construction activity, stimulated by the Catholic city government, that enriched (or, according to its critics, impoverished) the city with numerous monumental buildings (like the Provincial Court on the market place) and dozens of private houses in the Neo-Gothic and 'Neo-Bruges' style. As a result, Bruges today looks more mediaeval than it really is.

Part of the historical fervour was the 'statue mania' typical of late nineteenth-century society. Most striking in Bruges was the monument devoted to Jan Breydel and Pieter de Coninck, the popular heroes of Hendrik Conscience's *The Lion of Flanders* (1836). Conscience, the leading figure of the early Flemish movement,⁴ had presented in his novel a highly romanticised interpretation of the Battle of the Golden Spurs (1302), in which Flemish footsoldiers had gained a crushing victory over the mounted knights of the French king Philip the Fair. Of course, it was not only a matter of buildings and statues. In various processions and parades (the best-known being the Procession of the Holy Blood) the glorious past of Bruges was – and still is – kept alive.

The focus of civilian musical life in Bruges was centred particularly on the City Theatre inaugurated in 1869 where, besides vaudeville and burlesque shows, French operas were performed; among the popular composers were Adam, Auber, Gounod and Thomas. Italian operas, not least those by Donizetti, Rossini and Verdi, were also much in demand, although they were sung in French. Around 1885, the City Theatre further presented chamber-music concerts organised by the Cercle Beethoven of the violinist and conductor Jules Goetinck (1859–1925). In addition, Bruges could boast of a number of choral societies and brass bands. In 1869, for the first time, a fully fledged director in the person of the composer Hendrik Waelput⁵ was put in charge of the Municipal Music Conservatoire. Like him, his successors Leo Van Gheluwe⁶ and Karel Mestdagh were outstanding composers.

⁴ Conscience generally came to be known as 'the man who taught his people to read'.

⁵ The major compositions of the short-lived Hendrik Waelput (1845–85) are three operas, three cantatas (one of which, *De pacificatie van Gent*, of 1876, was especially well regarded) and five symphonies.

⁶ Van Gheluwe (1837–1914) had been active as an inspector of musical education before taking up his post in Bruges. His main works are a series of cantatas, although he also wrote other choral works, a number of orchestral suites and overtures, and songs.

So the Bruges in which Joseph Ryelandt grew up was not exactly a musical desert. In the course of his high-school years he received piano instruction, mostly from the Ghent pianist Franz De Vos when he spent time with his family at their country residence in Steevliet (near Melle).

After receiving a Bachelor's degree in law and literature in Namur in 1890, Ryelandt expressed a desire to devote his life to music. His mother, though, a widow since 1877, preferred that her son should become a lawyer. Ryelandt then decided to turn music into his 'violon d'Ingres,' a hobby, and started law studies at the University of Louvain. But what was in his blood could not be denied and after a few months he decided to give himself heart and soul to music and, without any background education in music theory, he started composing.

In 1891, one of his piano sonatas convinced Edgar Tincl, director of the Lemmens Institute in the city of Malines, to accept him as a private student.⁷ Ryelandt studied for four years with Tinel, 'devoting himself body and soul to music (and to me)'; as Tinel wrote to Elisabeth Alberdingk Thijm, with whom Ryelandt would study piano.⁸ His studies were intense and Tinel's influence was strong, but Ryelandt would carve out his own way nonetheless. Although Tinel kept his distance from Wagner, Ryelandt, by contrast, would prove receptive to the Wagnerian idiom in his early oratorios and stage-works. In addition, during his early years as a composer, Ryelandt learned much from his studies of César Franck's oratorios. These two influences are readily perceptible in the impressive vocal works that he composed at the beginning of his career: the opera *Cecilia* (1902) and the oratorios *Purgatorium* (1904), *De komst des Heren* (1906), *Maria* (1909), *Agnus Dei* (1913) and *Christus Rex* (1921). A very devout man, Ryelandt was to write many other religious works, among them seven religious cantatas and various liturgical compositions – although these religious scores were written only after he was able to call upon the excellent talents of the Chorale Caecilia in Antwerp (1916) and the Sint-Rombouts Choir in Malines (1917) and so could count on excellent professional performances. In 1897 he wrote a four-part mass, but the result did not meet his exacting standards and he destroyed it. It would take more than twenty years for him to pick up the threads. His *Mass for 4 Mixed Voices*, Op. 72 (1918), would be followed by three further achievements in the genre, complemented yet further with a Requiem and two Te Deums.

For voice he composed some seventy *lieder* based on Dutch, French, Latin and Spanish texts. For his Dutch songs, Ryelandt selected almost exclusively poems by Guido Gezelle,⁹ whom he had known

⁷ Tinel (1854–1912) was the composer of a large body of choral music, both secular cantatas and liturgical works, not least two settings of the Te Deum (1883 and 1905).

⁸ Letter published in P. Tinel, 'Edgard Tinel over Ryelandt', *West-Vlaanderen*, 1 (1952), p. 64.

⁹ Guido Gezelle (1830–99) was a Flemish priest-poet, linguist, and editor. He is known for his sensitive poems about nature and his imaginative – indeed, virtuosic – manipulation of language.

personally and about whom he would later publish a very interesting and highly readable essay.¹⁰ It is remarkable that in spite of (or perhaps because of) his sensitivity to, and feeling for, the French language, Ryelandt achieves in these Dutch songs a particularly clear and comprehensible textual declamation.

Although the likelihood of performance was slight, Ryelandt also devoted himself determinedly to writing orchestral music, composing four overtures (later suppressing the first of them), the symphonic poem *Ghetsemani* and six symphonies (the first, written when he was 27 years old, he later destroyed). His Fourth Symphony is religiously inspired, representing the struggle for true faith. It is built upon the Credo motive and features a choral finale. Ryelandt completed the work in 1913 but had to wait until 1960 – 47 years – before the Omroeporkest under Daniel Sternefeld performed it on the occasion of the composer's 90th birthday. Likewise, his piano works received deplorably little attention during his lifetime. Of his eleven piano sonatas only a few were published and most of them remained unperformed.¹¹

Ryelandt also wrote chamber music, a genre very dear to him, throughout his long career. His voluminous, varied and beautiful chamber output is comprised of, *inter alia*, seven violin sonatas, a viola sonata, three cello sonatas, two piano trios, four string quartets, two piano quintets, as well as various duo pieces for violin, cello, oboe, clarinet, and horn with piano accompaniment.

In his instrumental works, Ryelandt demonstrated an obvious preference for absolute music and adopted the classical genres and forms, and usually did not give them suggestive and descriptive titles. Like Gabriël Fauré, he pursued a form of 'pure music' and did not assign to music any concrete meaning, as he made clear in his article 'Comprendre la musique?' ('Understanding Music?'):

The fundamental point is this: music cannot directly give voice to ideas in the philosophical sense of the word. What is meant by a musical idea is a melodic or harmonic fragment that coalesces into a complete inner self-concept. Music is a language *sui generis* that awakens within us a subconscious feeling that is part of our soul: it begins where ordinary language ends. What it expresses are the emotional currents and moods of the soul or, in other words, its passions. Hence, understanding music means experiencing within our emotional being these passionate stirrings under the impulse of its movements in sound.¹²

For that reason, he believed that for the 'understanding' of music a special receptive state of consciousness

¹⁰ Guido Gezelle, *Étude littéraire*, Fonteyn, Louvain, 1920.

¹¹ Apart from these works there is also a Sonata in E minor (1890), with which Ryelandt presented himself to Tinel in 1891 but to which he never gave an opus number (cf. Ryelandt, 'Notices', *loc. cit.*, p. 33). The pianist on this recording, Bart Meuris, has recently added Ryelandt's *Nocturnes*, *Préludes* and *Pensées musicales* to his repertoire.

¹² 'Comprendre la musique?', *Bulletin de la Classe des Beaux-Arts*, Académie royale de Belgique, Brussels, Vol. 25 (1943), p. 109.

was necessary: 'it is evident that sensitivity (to be understood in its broadest sense) is indeed the primary element in musical comprehension.'¹³ Only when the composer made use of a text, or offered a programmatic indication, should a listener go searching for a literary explanation of the work.

Ryelandt's chamber music embraces half-a-century (1895–1944) and so makes a perfect introduction to his entire *œuvre*. His chamber works furthermore offers a glimpse into his stylistic evolution, starting from the German Romantic tradition via César Franck's influence to an idiom coloured by French Impressionism. Although Vincent d'Indy, after a performance of the Fourth Piano Sonata (1911), which is dedicated to him, noted the presence of 'disparate styles',¹⁴ this stylistic evolution would become stabilised during the First World War and, especially, during the 1920s. Although Ryelandt listened to new music with interest until well into old age, he remained true to his tonal language. He deliberately let the new stylistic trends pass him by, an attitude which he proclaimed and maintained firmly, and with much conviction, in various interviews, articles and essays – among them, for example, 'L'originalité et la personnalité dans l'art',¹⁵ where his approach to modernism is close to that adopted by such composers as Fauré and Dukas. For them, concepts like 'sincerity', 'authenticity' and 'personality' were essential ideals to be pursued; harmony between the composer's inner being and his music was the ultimate aim. Ryelandt fully shared these ideas. For him, as for them, originality had nothing to do with innovation: 'True originality, or more accurately, *personality*, is something that's in your blood and can be expressed through harmonies passed on as well as by an accumulation of dissonances'.¹⁶ To Ryelandt, originality lay hidden within the quality of his music and flowed out of what Dukas described as 'an intimate necessity'.¹⁷ Innovation *per se* could therefore never be taken as a criterion for quality. Ryelandt expressed it thus:

Time accumulates works of art. It has little thought for trends and retains only that which is touched by the divine spark. Whether the artist makes use of the most modern processes or his skills are traditional ones matters little. Bach did not accept the new style of his day and yet his art remains ageless. The processes become worn down but what remains is that which imbues the *œuvre* with its life force. The

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 110–11.

¹⁴ Letter from d'Indy to Ryelandt, quoted in Heidi Froyen, 'Ryelandt en zijn pianomuziek' (MA dissertation, KU Leuven, 2008), pp. 81–87.

¹⁵ 'L'originalité et la personnalité', *L'art et la vie*, No. 9 (1934), pp. 274–79.

¹⁶ 'La crise musicale', *Musica Sacra*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1952), pp. 51–52.

¹⁷ 'La musique et l'originalité', *La Revue hebdomadaire*, No. 4 (1895), p. 623.

superiority of a work of art depends not infrequently on untraceable factors. These are the fruits of one's inspiration and often form the germs of immortality.¹⁸

During a television interview on the programme *Ten huize van...* (1959) he expressed himself in the same vein: 'You know how it is: after twenty years you become outdated, after 100 years you're popular again. Fame is a flower that blooms only on gravestones!'¹⁹

Ryelandt vigorously defended composing as a vocation, a calling that was sustained by intuition, a divine spark of inspiration:

There exists no great art in the absence of the skills one acquires through hard work. Likewise, there cannot be great art without that mysterious gift of inspiration which is the soul of the artist's creation, fertilising and imbuing it with its spiritual attributes.²⁰

This insight gave him a degree of humility as a composer, although that does not mean he was not fully convinced of the quality of his creations. In his *Notices sur mes œuvres* he states:

If it is God's will that my works be propagated some day in the future, then it will happen. If not, what does it matter? The task of the artist is to create, that's all. Success is a luxury and a pleasure, not indispensable. Moreover, I had the opportunity to hear my five oratorios performed, and several times as well. César Franck never heard his *Béatitudes*.²¹

In an age obsessed by *le dernier cri*, it is hardly surprising that Ryelandt's music slipped unappreciated into the background. A performance of the oratorio *Maria* conducted by Vic Nees²² in 1975, ten years after Ryelandt's death, brought signs of a modest revival and a small portion of his output has been recorded.²³

The present CD, part of a larger project designed to resurrect Ryelandt's music, comprises the chamber music he composed during the First World War. He describes those war years as follows in his *Notices*:

¹⁸ 'L'inspiration dans l'art', *Bulletin de la Classe des Beaux-Arts*, Académie royale de Belgique, Brussels, Vol. 28 (1946), p. 67.

¹⁹ 'La Gloire', *Bulletin de la Classe des Beaux-Arts*, Académie royale de Belgique, Brussels, Vol. 24 (1942), p. 156.

²⁰ 'L'inspiration dans l'art', *loc. cit.*, pp. 66–67.

²¹ 'Notices', *loc. cit.*, p. 17.

²² Vic Nees (1936–2013) was a Flemish choral composer, conductor and writer who embraced the cause of forgotten Flemish composers.

²³ Ryelandt's *Missa 6 Vocibus*, Op. 111, was recorded on LP (BIS LP-191) by the Malmö Kammarkör conducted by Dan-Olof Stenlund in 1981 and re-released on CD (BIS-CD-181) in 1993 – a rare appearance of his music on a foreign label.

During the first months of the German occupation, I found myself incapable of creating anything: my mind was occupied with other matters! But the situation stabilised, and gradually I went back to work. Nonetheless – aside from the overture *Patria* – I only composed chamber music during the war [...].

Under the German occupation he wrote a trio, three piano sonatas, two violin sonatas, one cello sonata and a number of shorter works.

The *Canon in Trio*, Op. 70 [1], a little gem for piano trio composed in 1918, shows to advantage Ryelandt's fondness for counterpoint. A captivating melody, deeply rooted in tradition, is presented in strict canon at the octave by both stringed instruments. Ryelandt cleverly uses ninth chords to develop the canon; the harmonic colours are reminiscent of Maurice Ravel. The piano mainly has a supportive role. Every Sunday afternoon the Ryelandt family would make music; this slow movement is the only surviving part of an easy trio he wrote for three of his eight children – Agnes (violin), Daniel (cello) and Monique (piano) – and is duly dedicated to 'mon cher trio: Agnes, Monique et Daniel'.

Ryelandt's *Fourth Violin Sonata*, Op. 63 (1916), starts with a supple *Allegro moderato* in sonata form [2], flows softly, *attacca*, into an *Adagio* [3], where the violin performs a broad *cantabile* melody in G major which develops into a beautiful contrapuntal dialogue with the piano. The final movement, a playful, melancholic *Allegro non troppo* in E minor [4], has a Mendelssohnian theme that is developed in rich and varied harmony. Ryelandt dedicated this sonata to the Bruges violinist, conductor and composer Jules Goetinck. Ryelandt himself performed the work with the violinist Emile Chaumont in the concert hall of the Union Coloniale in Brussels.

The *Second Cello Sonata*, Op. 66 (1917), opens quietly 'in medias res', with a pastoral melody in 6/8 [5]. Ryelandt spices this opening sonata-form *Allegretto* with suggestive harmonies, chromatic inflections, modal turns and supple modulations. The second movement, *Andante sostenuto* [6], opens with a monophonic Gregorian-like melody which is interrupted by another theme: four chromatic descending notes which, in different spheres, occur in all parts. An impetuous *Allegro agitato*, derived from the opening theme of the first movement, interrupts the modest character and returns through a plaintive *Adagio* (chromatic descending high cello tones) to the opening theme of the second movement, now in a grand setting and spreading in high cello tones. The light-footed concluding rondo, marked *Allegro moderato* [7], opens with repetitive bell motifs. Again, motifs from the previous movements appear, navigating effortlessly between distant keys. The Second Cello Sonata was dedicated to the Bruges cellist Adolphe de Vlaemynck, at the time teacher at the Bruges Conservatoire and in 1945 Ryelandt's successor as director.

The *Romance for violin and piano*, Op. 59 (1915) [8], contains sonata-form elements in which the themes stand in a third relation to one another. The opening has a broad, through-composed theme which

moves between C major and E minor. The second theme (four descending tones from B), in E major, evolves in an imitative dialogue between violin and piano, leading to a *Più mosso* tempo. Rapid piano figuration supports an impetuous violin melody which takes lyric flight and returns to the opening theme, now with a different accompaniment. The second theme, this time in C major, leads through unexpected harmonies to a coda, a reminder of the first theme. Ryelandt also made an orchestral version of this work, which he dedicated to his daughter Agnes.

In his grandiose **Violin Sonata No. 5, Op. 71** (1918), Ryelandt uses the cyclical principle of the much-admired César Franck. The notes of the first dramatic bars, marked *Lento* [9], clearly return in the theme of the *Allegro con fuoco* last movement [11], transformed into a fast, fiery and restless theme. The main theme of the first-movement *Allegro vivace* is based on a repeated leap of a fourth and forms in its turn the basis for the opening theme of the second movement. The quiet motif from the second theme of the first movement (four repeated notes which descend a second) also appears in the *Andante sostenuto* second movement [10] and closes the third movement in a Brahmsian apotheosis. The work is at times reminiscent of Beethoven's 'Pathétique' Sonata (No. 8, Op. 13), which is also in C minor. Among the similarities is the dramatic style of the *Allegro vivace* in the first movement, with its driving force from the bass – Ryelandt manages to express his admiration for the great masters and yet remain true to himself.

He drew the last bar of this score on 18 June 1918, adding, as he frequently did, 'DG' ('Deo Gratias': Thanks be to God), just as such Baroque composers as Handel and Bach, whom he much admired, signed their scores with 'SDG' ('Soli Deo Gloria': Glory to God alone). Ryelandt dedicated the Sonata to Mathieu Crickboom,²⁴ a disciple of Eugène Ysaÿe, but he was disillusioned when Crickboom remained indifferent to it. Later he reworked the piece.

Ryelandt's **Nocturne in D major, Op. 64** (1916), for cello (or violin) and piano [12], marked *Lentement*, features a homophonic accompaniment. A careful, expressive cantilena is developed on top of a tonic pedal and then displays slivers of this theme in other keys, as if they were vague memories. The middle section, characterised by an arpeggio accompaniment, sees the return of the cantilena, first on top of a dominant pedal, then on top of a tonic pedal. Rich, harmonious colours lead to a slowly dispersing finale so characteristic of Ryelandt. This *Nocturne* is dedicated to 'Monsieur le docteur Fr. Van Den Abeele'.

Jan Dewilde acquired his degree in musicology at the University of Leuven. He has been scientific collaborator of the Archives and Museum of Flemish cultural life, where he realised exhibitions around music, the Flemish movement and the conductor-composer Lodewijk De Vocht. At BRT television he worked as a researcher

²⁴ Crickboom (1871–1947) is best remembered as the dedicatee of the fifth of Ysaÿe's Sonatas for Solo Violin, Op. 27.

and producer for music programmes. From 1998 he worked as scientific co-ordinator of the Centre for the Study of Flemish music and as scientific assistant at the Centre for Text Edition and Resources Study of the Royal Academy of Dutch Language and Literature and for the Orpheus Institute. He specialises in Flemish music from the nineteenth century and is working on a doctorate on the Prix de Rome and on an extensive biography of Peter Benoit. Since 2004 he has been Librarian of the Royal Conservatoire of Antwerp.

Koen Buyens studied the violin at the Royal Conservatoire in Brussels with Georges Octors. He then obtained degrees in law, philosophy and history at the Universities of Louvain, Brussels and Harvard. In 2004 he received his PhD in history at the Free University of Brussels with a dissertation on music life in Brussels in 1750–1850. He teaches philosophy and history of culture at the Royal Conservatoire in Brussels.

The **De la Haye Ensemble** performs unfamiliar chamber music from the twentieth and 21st century alongside the accepted masterpieces in the historical chamber-music repertoire. The Ensemble is committed to the performance of important Belgian works, part of its repertoire being new music by contemporary composers. The Ensemble gave the first performance, for example, of Pieter Schuermans' *Bowron Lake*, which is dedicated to them.

The name of the ensemble refers to the symbolist painter Raymond de la Haye (1882–1914) whose work relates to the visual arts as well as to the literature and music of his time, and whose young life was abruptly ended by World War I. An important collection of his paintings, drawings and etchings is preserved and permanently exhibited in the Municipal Museum in Lier, Belgium.

Their website can be found at www.delahaye-ensemble.be.

Hans Cammaert studied the violin at the Royal Conservatoire in Antwerp under Dejan Mijajev, Francis Reusens and Ursula Gorniák, specialising in different performing styles. He has played in several orchestras, such as I Fiamminghi, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra of Flanders, the Collegium Instrumentale Brugense, the Beethoven Academy and several Baroque ensembles. He is founder and artistic leader of Ensemble A and the light orchestra Elixir d'Anvers and is a member of the Bruges Chamber Orchestra. He was a teacher at the Antwerp Royal Conservatoire for several years and currently teaches at the Music Academies of Lier and Hemiksem.



Daan De Vos, who has been playing the cello since he was five, was taught by Hilde Vertommen, Geert De Bièvre and Edmond Baert. He studied at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels under Marie Hallynck. He received several awards, both as soloist and as member of a chamber ensemble. In 2004 he received a YoTaM scholarship (Young Talented Musician) awarded by the Flemish government. He currently teaches music education in Berlaar and cello in Booischot.



Bart Meuris received his professional piano education from Urbain Boodts and Jacques De Tiège. He also studied music theory with Emmanuel Geeurickx, Jozef Van Looy and Claude Coppens. He is an active chamber-music player and solo pianist. He founded the De la Haye Ensemble and has a special interest in new music and the works of local composers. He has performed music of such Belgian composers as Norbert Rosseau, August L. Baeyens, Martin Valcke and Wim Henderickx. He has created new works, such as Henderickx's *Memento mori* for piano and also piano and chamber music by the South African composer Hannes Taljaard. For the Lanigran label he made a recording of the *Nocturnes* and *Preludes* by Joseph Ryelandt, about whom he has also written. He teaches piano and improvisation at the Luca School of Arts in Louvain and piano and accompaniment at the Music Academy in Lier.



JOSEPH RYELANDT: DE KAMERMUZIEK VOOR PIANO EN STRIJKERS

Deel 1: De oorlogsjaren, 1914–18

van Jan Dewilde en Koen Buyens

Ik denk dat ik op voldoende domeinen werk heb geleverd en dat ik geen nutteloze dienaar van de kunst ben geweest. Ik deed wat ik kon. De toekomst zal uitwijzen of iets van dit alles mij zal overleven tot meerdere glorie van God.¹

Zo begon Joseph Ryelandt op 24 september 1944 zijn autobiografische *Notices sur mes œuvres*. Ryelandt werd in 1870 in Brugge geboren als telg van een Franssprekende bourgeoisfamilie. Hij kreeg gedurende zijn humaniorajaren vooral van de Gentse pianist Franz De Vos muzieklessen. Nadat hij in 1890 een kandidaatsdiploma rechten en literatuur had behaald in Namen, wou hij zich graag aan de muziek wijden. Zonder enige muziektheoretische achtergrond begon hij te componeren. Met een pianosonate kon hij in 1891 Edgar Tinel (1854–1912), directeur van het Lemmensinstituut in Mechelen, overtuigen om hem als privéleerling te aanvaarden. Ryelandt zou vier jaar lang bij Tinel in de leer gaan.

Waar Tinel zich ver van Wagner hield, zou Ryelandt in zijn vroege oratoria en muziektheaterwerk wél gevoelig blijken voor Wagners idioom. Daarnaast leerde Ryelandt in zijn beginjaren ook veel uit het bestuderen van de oratoria van César Franck. Die invloeden, Wagner én Franck, zijn duidelijk hoorbaar in de grootschalige vocale werken die hij aan het begin van zijn carrière componeerde, namelijk de opera *Cecilia* (1902) en de godsdienstig geïnspireerde oratoria *Purgatorium* (1904), *De komst des Heren* (1906), *Maria* (1909), *Agnus Dei* (1913) en *Christus Rex* (1921). De diepgelovige Ryelandt zou daarnaast nog heel wat religieuze werken schrijven, zoals zeven godsdienstige cantates en verschillende liturgische werken, waaronder vier missen, een requiem en twee Te Deums.

In het vocale genre componeerde hij een zeventigtal liederen op Nederlandse, Franse, Latijnse en Spaanse teksten. Voor zijn Nederlandstalige liederen koos Ryelandt bijna exclusief voor teksten

¹ Joseph Ryelandt, 'Notices sur mes œuvres, avec des notes complémentaires faites entre 1952 et 1960' (onuitgegeven typescript, bibliotheek van het Stedelijk Conservatorium van Brugge, 1940), p. 1.

van Guido Gezelle² die hij nog persoonlijk had gekend en over wie hij een zeer lezenswaardig essay³ zou publiceren.

Niettegenstaande de gebrekkige uitvoeringsmogelijkheden – de orkestinfrastructuur was schamel – wijdde Ryelandt zich ook vol overtuiging aan de symfonische muziek. Hij componeerde drie ouvertures, het symfonisch gedicht *Ghetsemani* en zes symfonieën (de eerste, gecomponeerd op zijn 27^{ste}, heeft hij later vernietigd). De vierde symfonie is religieus geïnspireerd. Ze verbeeldt de strijd om het ware geloof en is gebouwd op een credo-motief en heeft een koorfinale. Ryelandt voltooide het werk in 1913 maar moest tot 1960 (!) wachten totdat het Omroeporkest onder de leiding van Daniel Sternefeld het werk ter gelegenheid van zijn negentigste verjaardag creëerde. Ook zijn pianomuziek kreeg tijdens zijn leven bedroevend weinig aandacht. Van zijn elf⁴ overgeleverde pianosonates werden er slechts enkele uitgegeven en de meeste bleven dan ook onuitgevoerd. Zijn *Nocturnes*, *Preludes* en *Pensées musicales* werden onlangs door Bart Meuris, pianist van het *De la Haye-ensemble*, opgenomen.

Zijn carrière lang zou Ryelandt ook kamermuziek schrijven, een genre dat hem nauw aan het hart lag. Zijn omvangrijke, gevarieerde en kwaliteitsvolle kamermuziekwerken omvatten onder meer zeven vioolsonates, een altvioolsonate, drie cellosonates, twee pianotrio's, vier strijkkwartetten, twee pianokwintetten en verschillende stukken voor viool, cello, hobo, klarinet en hoorn met pianobegeleiding. In zijn instrumentale muziek toonde Ryelandt een duidelijke voorkeur voor absolute muziek en koos hij voor de klassieke genres en vormen. Ook weerde hij, op enkele werken na, suggestieve en beschrijvende titels. Zoals Gabriël Fauré betrachtte hij een 'musique pure' en kende hij muziek geen concrete betekenis toe, zoals hij in zijn artikel *Comprendre la musique?* uiteenzette:

De grond van de zaak is deze: muziek kan niet rechtstreeks ideeën uitdrukken in de filosofische betekenis van het woord. Wat men hoort als een muzikaal idee is een melodisch of harmonisch fragment dat op zichzelf een geheel vormt. De muziek is een taal *sui generis* die het onderbewuste van onze ziel uitdrukt: ze begint waar de gewone taal ophoudt. Wat ze uitdrukt zijn de bewegingen van de geest, anders gezegd de passies. Daardoor is muziek begrijpen haar gepassioneerde bewegingen voelen roeren in onszelf onder impuls van de klanken en hun muzikale bewegingen.⁵

² Guido Gezelle, (Brugge, 1 mei 1830–Brugge, 27 november 1899). Vlaamse priester-dichter, taalwetenschapper en publicist. Hij is bekend om zijn fijnzinnige gedichten over de natuur en zijn beeldend en virtuoos taalgebruik.

³ Guido Gezelle, *Étude littéraire*, Fonteyn, Louvain, 1920.

⁴ Ryelandt rekent de Sonate in mi klein uit 1890, sine opus, waarmee hij zich bij Tincl in 1891 aanbood, niet tot zijn genummerde werken. 'Notices sur mes œuvres', p. 33.

⁵ 'Comprendre la musique?', Mededelingen van de Klasse der Schone Kunsten, Koninklijke Academie van België, Brussel, bk. 25 (1943), p. 109.

Daarom was er in zijn optiek voor het 'begrijpen' van muziek een bijzondere receptieve bewustzijnsstoestand noodzakelijk, die hij omschreef als 'une sensibilité': 'het is evident dat sensibele (in de meest brede betekenis van het woord) een eerste stap naar een muzikaal begrijpen vormt'.⁶

Ryelandts kamermuziekwerken omspannen een periode van een halve eeuw (1895-1944) en vormen daarom een bijzonder geschikte introductie tot zijn gehele oeuvre. Uit zijn kamermuziekwerken kan je ook de stilistische evolutie aflezen die Ryelandt doormaakte; vanuit de grote Duits-romantische traditie over een beïnvloeding door César Franck tot een Frans-impressionistisch gekleurd idioom.

Hij liet de nieuwe stijlrichtingen zeer bewust aan zich voorbij gaan, een houding die hij trefzeker en met veel overtuiging uitdroeg in verschillende interviews, artikels en essays zoals *L'originalité et la personnalité dans l'art*.⁷ Daarbij sluit hij nauw aan bij de houding die collega's als Gabriël Fauré en Paul Dukas tegenover het modernisme aannamen. Voor deze Franse componisten waren begrippen als 'sincérité', 'authenticité' en 'personnalité' essentieel in het bepalen van hun houding tegenover het modernisme. Originaliteit was voor hen inherent aan de innerlijke noodzaak tot componeren en zo was 'sincérité' een na te streven ideaal.

Ook voor Ryelandt had originaliteit niets te maken met vernieuwing: 'De ware oorspronkelijkheid, of beter gezegd de *persoonlijkheid*, heb je in het bloed en ze kan zich zowel door overgeleverde harmonieën uitspreken als door een opstapeling van dissonanties'.⁸ Originaliteit schuilde voor Ryelandt in de kwaliteit van zijn muziek en vloeide voort uit wat Dukas omschreef als 'une nécessité intime'.⁹ Vernieuwing op zich kon dus nooit een kwaliteitscriterium zijn. Zo schreef Ryelandt:

Of de artiest gebruik maakt van de modernste procedés of dat zijn vaardigheid traditioneel is, heeft weinig belang. Bach nam de nieuwe stijl van zijn tijd niet aan, en toch verouderd zijn kunst niet. De procedés slijten af, maar wat blijft is datgene wat het werk leven inblaast. De superioriteit van een kunstgewrocht hangt dikwijls van onnaspeurlijke factoren af. Deze zijn de vrucht van de inspiratie en vaak de kiemen van onsterfelijkheid.¹⁰

Ryelandt verdedigde dan ook met verve het compositorisch metier, dat ook wel gevoed werd door intuïtie, een goddelijke vonk van inspiratie: 'Er is geen grote kunst zonder de vaardigheid door het werk. Maar

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 110–11.

⁷ 'Originalité et la personnalité', *L'art et la Vie*, nr. 9, Gent, (1934), pp. 274–79.

⁸ 'La Crise Musicale', *Musica Sacra*, 7:2, Mechelen, (1952) pp. 51–52.

⁹ 'La musique et l'originalité', *Revue hebdomadaire* 4, (28 sept. 1895) p. 623.

¹⁰ 'L'inspiration dans l'art', Mededelingen van de Klasse der Schone Kunsten, Koninklijke Academie van België, Brussel, bk. 28 (1946), p. 67.

er is ook geen grote kunst zonder de geheimzinnige inspiratiegave, die het werk van de artiest bezielt en bevrucht en het zijn geestelijk kenmerk geeft.¹¹

Dit inzicht maakte Ryelandt ook bescheiden als componist, wat overigens niet betekent dat hij niet ten volle overtuigd was van de kwaliteit van zijn werk. In *Notices sur mes œuvres* schrijft hij:

Als God wil dat mijn werk ooit bekend wordt, dan gebeurt dat wel. Zo niet, wat heeft het voor belang? De rol van de kunstenaar is te scheppen, dat is alles. Succes is een luxe, iets prettigs, maar niet onmisbaar. Bovendien, ik heb het geluk gehad mijn vijf oratoria te mogen horen, verschillende keren zelfs. César Franck heeft nooit zijn 'Béatitudes' gehoord.¹²

Deze inzichten van Ryelandt en zijn gelijkgestemde tijdgenoten stonden diametraal tegenover het modernisme dat alleen originaliteit als vernieuwing definieerde. Dat verklaart meteen ook waarom het werk van Ryelandt ondergewaardeerd werd en in de verdrinking geraakte. Ondertussen groeide immers het inzicht dat het behoedzaam omgaan met vernieuwing ook kan wijzen op een kwaliteit, met name op een behoefte aan oprechtheid en integriteit.

Deze cd bundelt kamermuziekwerken die Ryelandt tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog componeerde. Onder de Duitse bezetting schreef hij onder meer een trio, drie pianosonates, twee vioolsonates en een cellosonate en een aantal kortere werken. Zo werden de oorlogsjaren een vruchtbare periode voor Ryelandt als componist van kamermuziek.

Naar Jan Dewilde en Koen Buyens

¹¹ 'L'inspiration dans l'art', pp. 66–67.

¹² 'Notices sur mes œuvres', p. 17.

Het **De la Haye-ensemble** – Hans Cammaert, viool; Daan De Vos, cello; Bart Meuris, piano – gaat in zijn concerten op zoek naar authentieke en verrassende kamermuziek uit de 20ste en 21ste eeuw en confronteert die met meesterwerken uit het historische kamermuziekrepertoire. Het ensemble engageert zich voor boeiende muziek van bij ons en ruimt daarom ook plaats in voor nieuw werk van hedendaagse componisten.

De ensemblenaam verwijst naar de kunstschilder Raymond de la Haye (1882–1914), die vanuit een symbolistische en luministische visie een opmerkelijk oeuvre heeft nagelaten. Zijn werk staat in relatie met zowel de beeldende kunst als de literatuur en de muziek van zijn tijd. WO I maakte abrupt een einde aan dit jonge, bezielde kunstenaarschap. Een belangrijke verzameling van zijn schilderijen, tekeningen en etsen wordt bewaard en permanent tentoongesteld in het Stedelijk Museum te Lier (België).

De la Haye-ensemble

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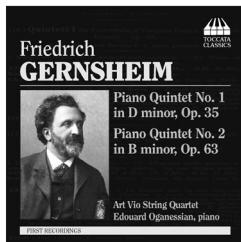
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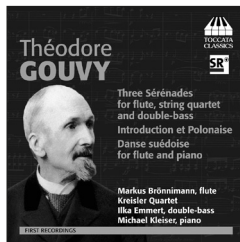
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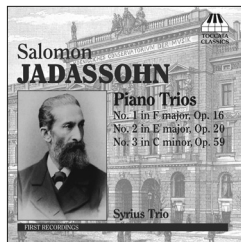
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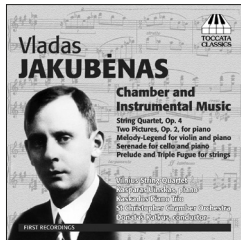
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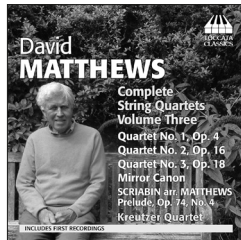
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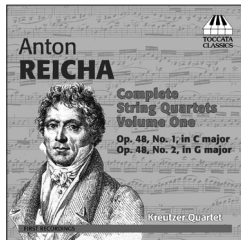
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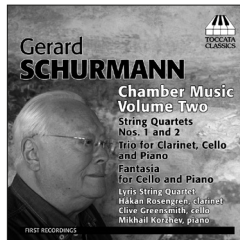
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