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BARRY SHIFFMAN, artistic director

THURSDAY, JUNE 20 | 8 PM

Homage to Eugene Ysaÿe

Philippe Graffin, *violin*
Marisa Gupta, *piano* | Piers Lane, *piano*
Festival Quartet: Benjamin Bowman, *violin*
Danny Koo, *violin* | Barry Shiffman, *viola*
Tom Wiebe, *cello*

PRE-CONCERT TALK, 7 PM | PHILIPPE GRAFFIN
AND BARRY SHIFFMAN

ANDANTE RUBATO ALLA ZINGARESCA,
(FROM RURALIA HUNGARICA), OP. 32C (1923-4)
Ernő Dohnányi (1877-1960)

VIOLIN SONATA NO. 3, IN A MINOR, OP. 25 (1926)
George Enescu (1881-1955)
Moderato malinconico
Andante sostenuto e misterioso
Allegro con brio, ma non troppo mosso

SONATE POSTHUME FOR SOLO VIOLIN, OP. 27, NO. 7
(NO. 6bis) (1924)
Eugène Ysaÿe (1858-1931), completed by Philippe Graffin
Allegro molto moderato ma con brio
Canzona: Lento e mesto
Finale: Giocoso

U.S. Première

:: INTERMISSION ::

CONCERT IN D MAJOR, FOR VIOLIN, PIANO AND
STRING QUARTET, OP. 21 (1889-91)
Ernest Chausson (1855-1899)
Décidé
Sicilienne
Grave
Finale

GLOVSKY
Consultant-at-Law
Festival Partner



ANDANTE RUBATO ALLA ZINGARESCA, (FROM RURALIA HUNGARICA), OP. 32c

Ernő Dohnányi (b. Pozsony [now Bratislava], July 27, 1877; d. New York, February 9, 1960)

Composed 1923-4; 6 minutes

Though born only three or four years before Bartók and Kodály, Dohnányi had early success and it made him the senior member of the trio. Together, these three composers laid the groundwork for Hungarian musical life in the last century. Dohnányi, an internationally renowned virtuoso pianist, eventually held positions as director of the Budapest Academy of Music, head of the music department of Hungarian Radio and chief conductor of the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra. By 18, his first published work, a passionate, skillfully crafted piano quintet, brought him to the attention of Brahms who famously said he himself could not have written better. A quarter of a century later, Dohnányi wrote a four-volume collection titled *Ruralia hungarica*, based on authentic folksongs collected by his two colleagues in Transylvania (formerly a part of Hungary, by 1920 part of Romania). The third volume is for violin and piano and is crowned by the *Andante rubato alla Zingaresca*, with its impassioned, heart-on-sleeve freedom and spontaneity, cimbalom recreations from the piano and pervading “Hungarian gypsy” atmosphere throughout.

VIOLIN SONATA NO. 3, IN A MINOR, OP. 25

George Enescu (b. Livezi Vîrnăv [now George Enescu], nr. Dorohoi, Romania, August 19, 1881; d. Paris, France, May 3/4, 1955)

Composed 1926; 26 minutes

Dismissed in his lifetime as a folklorist composer by some, Romanian-born George Enescu confused others unable to comprehend his cultural and aesthetic mix of East and West, romanticism, impressionism and modernism—characteristics that these days would be viewed as an asset to a composer. To add to the confusion, Enescu divided his time between his adopted city of Paris (where he also adapted the spelling of his name to Georges Enesco) and his native Romania (Bessarabia), where he founded many important institutions and enjoyed royal patronage.

Enescu wrote his Third Violin Sonata between August and November 1926 in his country villa in the Carpathian mountains. It is the first of a series of chamber works upon which his reputation as a composer is now largely based. Subtitled “In the Romanian folk character,” this substantial three-movement sonata pays homage to Romanian folk-music, rather than specifically quoting folk tunes. The melancholy opening movement, for example, presents rhapsodic reflections on original themes, shaped and colored by the inflections of folk-music, itself greatly influenced by roma (gypsy) music. Enescu said that, for him, using these folk-inspired themes kindled nostalgic memories of childhood. The details of their modal inflections, slides between notes, intensity of vibrato, micro intervals and suddenly shifting dynamics and so on are notated in the score with unusual precision. Descriptions like *lamentoso*, *patetico*, *nostalgico* and *con gran espressione* abound. Musicians would describe Enescu’s sound as a violinist as warm and intimate and rooted in the singing line of the human voice. This carries over into his violin writing in the sonata to a point where, despite the minutiae of the score, the result is not unlike that of some exotic, Eastern European improvisation, free from rhythmic constraints, merging melody and ornamentation into one.

While the structure of the opening movement falls loosely within traditional sonata form, juxtaposing and developing contrasting themes, the central slow movement moves through a huge arc. It begins and ends in a nocturnal landscape, heavy with buzzing insects, ghostly sounds and a distant cimbalom, while the middle section rises to an agitated intensity. Alfred Cortot, the great French pianist who performed this work with Enescu, described the movement as “an evocation of the mysterious feeling of summer nights in Romania: below, the silent, endless, deserted plain; above, constellations leading off into infinity...” The finale brings us back to earth, to a festive folk dance that builds and builds, with dramatic declamation and mounting passion.

SONATE POSTHUME FOR SOLO VIOLIN, OP. 27, NO. 7 (No. 6bis) (US Première)

Eugène Ysaÿe (b. Liège, Belgium, July 16, 1858; d. Brussels, May 12, 1931), completed Philippe Graffin

Composed 1924, completed 2017-18; 10 minutes



A pupil of both Vieuxtemps and Wieniawski, Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe was renowned for the brilliance of his technique. Unlike many late 19th century violinists, he played in the modern way, with consistent vibrato and a much wider tone color than his predecessors. At his peak—the period roughly spanning his first American tour in 1894 to the outbreak of World War One—Ysaÿe had few equals and was venerated by a generation of violinists, including Kreisler, Thibaud, Flesch, Enescu and Szigeti. He was highly respected by French composers of the day and many solo and chamber music works were dedicated to him. In 1886, he received the Franck Violin Sonata as a wedding present. Ysaÿe’s string quartet gave the first performance of the Debussy Quartet and, in turn, Debussy praised Ysaÿe’s playing for its “freedom of expression” and “pure beauty of tone.” When ill health from diabetes and an unsteady bow arm curtailed his solo career, Ysaÿe continued to compose and spent four years as conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony. “When late in life he took on the challenge of writing for solo violin, he reinvented the instrument,” Philippe Graffin says. “Ysaÿe was part of the great tradition of virtuoso violinists who wrote for their instruments, but he was a true composer. His is not the music of a virtuoso violinist; it is the music of a great musician writing for the violin.”

A “LOST” SONATA

“The genius of Bach frightens anyone who would like to compose in the medium of his solo partitas and sonatas,” Ysaÿe declared almost a century ago. Nevertheless, although he composed eight violin concertos, his best-known composition remains the Six Solo Violin Sonatas, Op. 27, from 1924. They were inspired by a performance of a solo Bach sonata by the young Hungarian Joseph Szigeti. The two musicians, Szigeti at the beginning of his career, Ysaÿe almost at the end of his, discussed the small amount of substantial music in the solo violin repertoire. Ysaÿe wished to rise to the challenge of adding to it. He retreated to his seaside villa at fashionable Knokke-le-Zoute and, within 24 hours, came up with an outline of seven new sonatas, “conceived through and for the violin.” He spent the next few weeks preparing six of the works for publication, each dedicated to a leading violinist of the younger generation.

The seventh sonata, inscribed “6eme Sonate (a Quiroga),” was entirely overlooked and went unmentioned until Philippe Graffin came across it in Ysaÿe’s sketchbook in the summer of 2017. “I realized to my astonishment that it was an independent piece,” he says. “There was a substantial first movement, a middle movement with the title *Canzona* and a third movement that cuts off after 12 staves. It contains one of the greatest movements of the entire sonata cycle: the beautiful and enigmatic *Canzona*, with its amazingly inventive accompaniment.” Graffin set to work editing a performing edition and completing the finale, giving the première in May 2018 at the Brussels Conservatoire—where Ysaÿe’s aforementioned sketchbook is now housed. It is fitting that Graffin is a professor at the Conservatoire, where Ysaÿe, himself, both studied and taught.



Philippe Graffin playing the Ysaÿe sonata he discovered in 2017 (Photo courtesy Marje van den Berg)



Page 58 of Ysaÿe's sketchbook, showing beginning of the sonata Philippe Graffin discovered



Where Ysaÿe's sonata abruptly ends

The opening movement is virtuoso in its impact, but with virtuosity put at the service of the music's melodic and harmonic expressivity and not an end in itself. In pushing violin technique to new heights, Ysaÿe employs double, triple and quadruple stops, with complex trills and bowing, but there's always a graceful lyrical line lurking somewhere in the mix. This is at its most exposed in the carefully crafted central Canzona movement. The single line of an upward climbing then descending theme is soon joined by a second voice, adding, at first, a chromatic and then contrapuntal contribution to the somber, restrained mood. A third fluttering, tremolando voice, adds a feeling of anxiety to a highly expressive movement. A crisp, decisive and somewhat bucolic theme opens the brief finale, marked *giocoso* [playful]. It's followed by three variations, brilliant and florid at first, then alternately scherzo-like and high-flying. A cadenza-like section concludes with a plunging, pizzicato descent borrowed from the Fifth Sonata. A return of the opening theme and a brilliant coda seamlessly round out the piece. "Throughout the process, I used elements mainly from the published Sixth Sonata, which I transcribed," Graffin says. "And I observed how Ysaÿe develops his ideas in that sonata. My view was that the new material should come entirely from Ysaÿe." [Philippe Graffin, quoted in *The Strad*, February 2019]

CONCERT IN D MAJOR, FOR VIOLIN, PIANO AND STRING QUARTET, OP. 21 (1889-91)

Ernest Chausson (b. Paris, France, January 20, 1855; d. Limay, nr. Mantes, France, June 10, 1899)

Composed 1889-91; 41 minutes

"To attain self-belief is a life's work." That's what the French composer Ernest Chausson wrote in his diary towards the end of his own relatively short life—which was curtailed, tragically, by a bicycle accident. Self-belief for Chausson came slowly, helped, in no small measure, by the success of his Concert in D, for violin, piano and string quartet which he wrote between 1889 and 1891 and dedicated to Ysaÿe. Like many late 19th century composers, Chausson found that the music of Wagner had an intoxicating effect on his own music. But when he came to plan a chamber work for a sextet of two violins, viola, cello and piano in 1889, he felt it time to "de-Wagnerize" his music. In common with other French composers contending with a similar challenge, Chausson turned to the past and to the music of the French composers of the 18th century.

Chausson called the work Concert—or "concerto"—for piano, violin and string quartet, in the manner of Rameau and his contemporaries a century and a half earlier. The ambitious score is a fusion of concerto and sextet, where virtuoso double-concerto instruments (piano and violin) vie for solo attention against the backdrop of a contrasting texture of string quartet. Like Franck's later works, Chausson's themes are cyclical. Indeed, Chausson worked on these themes first, blocking them out, shaping and polishing them with the fine attention of a perfectionist, during the month of May 1889.

Three grand, imposing notes [D-A-E], heard low on the piano, almost immediately reveal a more vulnerable side when taken up by the strings. These three notes will generate not only the rhythmic basis for the entire first movement, but also the constantly evolving melody, which blossoms radiantly on violin over a busy piano accompaniment. This theme will link all four movements. Chausson then contrasts this with a calmer, lushly harmonized second theme, still related to the opening material. The entire movement explores the tensions between the two themes, savoring the journey taken between the two extremes of emotion. The *Sicilienne* is the calm after the storm. Its clean lines, transparent textures and crystalline form are French to the core. Its lilting meter, in the picturesque words of composer Vincent D'Indy, "takes us at times to gardens where bloom the charming fancies of Gabriel Fauré." The slow movement that follows is a deeply personal utterance, somber and darkly colored. The finale is altogether more athletic, an intricate web of themes spun together with great confidence and skill.

— Program notes © 2019 Keith Horner. Comments welcomed: khnotes@sympatico.ca

PHILIPPE GRAFFIN, *piano*



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Violinist Philippe Graffin has established an indisputable reputation for his interpretations of the French repertoire. He made his first recording with Yehudi Menuhin conducting the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and his many highly acclaimed recordings

since then bear witness to a questing mind and include many world premières. New releases include the world première of the violin concerto of Finnish composer Tauno Marttinen, with the Turku Philharmonic, and a new recording of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto. Mr. Graffin is a highly sought-after chamber musician and is founder and artistic director of the Consonances, a chamber music festival held in St. Nazaire, France.

MARISA GUPTA, *piano*



Recipient of numerous awards, including top prizes at the Concours Maria Canals [Barcelona] and the Viotti Competition (Italy), Marisa Gupta was an Edison Visiting Fellow at the British Library and was named a finalist by the BBC for its New Generations Thinkers

Scheme. She has given the U.S. and UK premieres of works by Jean-Frédéric Neuberger, European premieres of major works by Aaron Jay Kernis and Ned Rorem, and the world première of *Rhapsodie* by Philippe Hersant. She received the Diplôme de Soliste from the Conservatoire de Musique de Genève in Switzerland, where she studied with Pascal Devoyon.

PIERS LANE, *piano*



© Keith Saunders

London-based Australian pianist Piers Lane stands out as an engaging and highly versatile performer, at home equally in solo, chamber and concerto repertoire. Five times soloist at the BBC Proms in London's Royal Albert Hall, Piers Lane's concerto repertoire exceeds

ninety works and has led to engagements with many of the world's great orchestras. He has recently been appointed the new Artistic Director of the Sydney International Piano Competition of Australia. Previously, Lane was the Artistic Director of the Australian Festival of Chamber Music. In great demand as a collaborative artist, he continues longstanding partnerships with violinist Tasmin Little, clarinetist Michael Collins and the Goldner String Quartet.

FESTIVAL QUARTET

BENJAMIN BOWMAN, *violin*



American-Canadian violinist Benjamin Bowman was recently appointed concertmaster of the Metropolitan Opera by maestro Nézet-Seguin. He is also a member of the Orchestra of St. Luke's. Most recently, he was nominated for a 2017

Grammy for his recording with the ARC (Artists of the Royal Conservatory) Ensemble ("The Chamber Works of Jerzy Fitelberg") and was also featured on the 2013 Juno-winning album *Levant* with the Amici Chamber Ensemble. Other collaborative work includes extensive immersion in contemporary music, improvisation and performance with singer/songwriters. Bowman received his Bachelor of Music degree from the Curtis Institute of Music.

DANNY KOO, violin



Violinist Danny Koo has carved out a distinctive professional profile as a chamber musician, soloist, and recitalist in appearances throughout the world. He has taught at New England Conservatory's Preparatory School, and currently leads

Toronto's Academy Chamber Orchestra alongside Barry Shiffman at the Royal Conservatory of Music. In Korea, he has partnered with "Pinkfong" (creators of Baby Shark) to educate and excite the youngest generation of our world about classical music. Koo is currently a Rebanks Fellow at the Royal Conservatory of Music. He holds Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees from the New England Conservatory, where he studied with Donald Weilerstein, Soovin Kim, and Malcolm Lowe.

BARRY SHIFFMAN, viola

Please see full biography on page 11.

THOMAS WIEBE, cello



Thomas Wiebe is an acclaimed in-demand cellist with performances at many of the world's finest halls and festivals. He is a founding member of the Duke Trio and is a member of the Rebelheart Collective. Recently Mr. Wiebe has performed

along with the ARC Ensemble in Bucharest and Germany as well as the Art of Time Ensemble in Toronto. On numerous occasions he has been a guest artist with the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Orchestra and Orchestra London Canada. Mr. Wiebe is Associate Professor of Violoncello at the Don Wright Faculty of Music at Western University in London.

Friday, June 21 :: 11 AM

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