

Deux-Elles

David Matthews
Gabriel Fauré

Romanza

Sara Trickey violin
Daniel Tong piano



Romanza

Notes by David Matthews

As a romantic composer who uses classical forms, I feel a certain kinship with Fauré, and am glad to share a CD with him. I especially admire Fauré's ability to write long melodic lines, often of great beauty: the pursuit of beauty in his music is something that strongly attracts me. Although I don't play the violin, it is probably my favourite instrument and I have written two concertos and many solo pieces, though only four fairly modest pieces for violin and piano, of which three are recorded here. Unlike Fauré I have written no large-scale sonatas.

Adonis was commissioned by the Presteigne Festival for Sara Trickey, and first performed there in 2007. Sara and I share an interest in the Greek and Roman classics, and she asked if I could make some connection with classical myth. At the same time George Vass, the Festival's artistic director, asked if possible for the inclusion of a Welsh folksong. I was unable to think of a way of combining these two requests until I discovered the folksong 'Mae 'nghariad i'n Fenws' ('My love she's a Venus') and decided to base my piece on the myth of

Venus and Adonis, whose culmination, Adonis's rebirth as a symbol of spring, is present in almost all mythologies, including Celtic.

There are three short movements. The first begins with Adonis's birth, out of a myrrh tree, and evokes the goddess Venus's love for him: as in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* I make Adonis (the piano) at first a hesitant lover, resisting Venus (the violin) until the end of the movement. The second enacts the boar hunt in which Adonis is killed, with classic hunting rhythms and the sounds of horns. As Adonis dies, the pizzicato arpeggio that evoked his birth is heard in reverse. Venus laments his death in a short postlude. Much of this music was written while on holiday in the Italian Apennines, where, as I was told, boars are common in the local woods: perhaps fortunately, I didn't meet any. In the third movement, Adonis is reborn, transformed into a flower, traditionally one of the Mediterranean species of anemone, with red petals coloured by his blood. The movement is mostly quiet and rather mysterious, and the folksong appears at the very end as a symbol of his metamorphosis, and in contrast to everything else we have heard – though in fact almost all the material of the piece has been derived from it.

Fauré's First Violin Sonata was composed in 1875-6 and is by far the best piece he had written up till then. In the 1870s, as a struggling young composer, Fauré was much helped by

two families: the Clercs, in Le Havre, and the Viardots, in Paris. Pauline Viardot, who had had a spectacular career as an opera singer, was now retired; her four children were all musicians and Fauré fell deeply in love with the youngest daughter, Marianne, and became engaged to her. His love, however, was never fully reciprocated and the engagement was eventually broken off. Fauré wrote most of his sonata at the Clercs' house in the summer of 1875. Its youthful ardour and the sense of exuberance that pervades it are no doubt a reflection of his feelings for Marianne.

The Sonata has the traditional four movements, the first in sonata form with repeated exposition. The prevailing mood is joyful and passionate; the writing for both instruments consistently brilliant. The slow movement is a barcarolle in D minor, mostly more intimate, though equally intense. The delightful scherzo makes frequent use of pizzicato, anticipating the scherzos of both of his piano quartets. After the first performance in 1877, Fauré wrote to a friend: "The scherzo was encored so irresistibly that we had no choice but to play it again." The finale's energy is more contained than the first movement's, but Blake's line "Energy is eternal delight" comes to mind. Saint-Saëns, a firm supporter of the young Fauré, wrote of the Sonata: "Over it and around it all hovers a charm that persuades the mass of ordinary listeners to accept the most violent novelties as being entirely natural."

My Aria was composed in 1986 for Lorraine McAslan. The title refers to the shape of the piece and to the fact that the violin sings throughout. The aria proper is prefaced by an introduction where one might imagine a singer practicing scales, followed by a cadenza where the scales become more florid. The main melody of the aria appears four times in four different registers of the violin. The violin writing is generally more demanding than in my other two pieces on this disc, with frequent use of chords, two-part counterpoint and harmonics.

Fauré's Romance in B flat was composed in 1877. It is in ABA form and the two sections are widely contrasted: the A sections might be thought to evoke a cosy interior, the B section a brisk walk in the country. After a performance with his violinist friend Paul Viardot (brother of Marianne), Fauré wrote to Marie Clerc: "The first time round we were greeted with applause through clenched teeth. At the second performance a little light began to dawn and after the third they were comparing it to the limpid stream that runs through the green meadow! What a shame the third performance can't always come first!"

Madeleine Mitchell commissioned my *Romanza* in 2012 and the idea of the title, with its implications of lyricism and emotional warmth, came from her. Madeleine also suggested that I might write two versions, one with piano and

one with strings. This also seemed a good idea: I composed the piece initially for string orchestra and then made a reduction for piano.

The opening section is marked *Andante appassionato*. It contains two main themes, the second more gentle and reflective. When I had brought this opening section to a natural close I was uncertain for some time what should come next. Then I read an essay by Bayan Northcott in which he pointed out how rare it is to find the 3/4 metre in contemporary music, whether serious or popular. He suggested that if composers want to do something fresh they should try reviving the waltz. I liked this idea and, as much of my opening section was already in triple time, it was easy to speed it up and for a waltz to emerge. This waltz forms a substantial middle section, after which the opening material returns, in a different form, before accelerating again to a distant reminiscence of the waltz (I imagined it played by a musical box). At the end, the waltz theme, now played by muted violin, dissolves, leaving a final falling major second on the unaccompanied violin, the interval with which the piece begins.

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David Matthews



Sara Trickey enjoys a varied career as soloist, chamber musician and teacher. She is the violinist in the Odysseus Piano Trio and the Joachim String Trio, the latter playing on gut strings. She performs with the mixed ensemble Sound Collective, and plays in a two violin duo with Andrew Watkinson of the Endellion Quartet. She has performed most of the major repertoire for violin and orchestra with orchestras that include the City of London Sinfonia and the Orchestra of St Johns.



Sara plays regularly with pianist Daniel Tong, with whom she has made an acclaimed recording of Schubert's Sonatinas ("irresistible" - Barry Millington; "a simply stunning CD" - TheWholeNote). She and Dan also enjoy collaborating with musicologist Richard Wigmore, with whom they explore music written for their combination of instruments.

Sara has made a world premiere recording of the William Mathias violin sonatas, and has an ongoing collaboration with composer David Matthews, who wrote the piece *Adonis* for her as well as the Double Concerto for violin and viola (along with violist Sarah-Jane Bradley).

www.saratrickey.com



Daniel Tong enjoys a varied and diverse career, primarily as a chamber music pianist but also as soloist, song accompanist, teacher, writer and festival director. Gramophone magazine have described him as "an extraordinarily sympathetic Schubertian" and his first solo CD of music by Schubert was released on the Quartz label. He has broadcast many times on BBC Radio 3.

As chamber musician, Daniel has collaborated with the Elias, Heath, Navarra, Dante and Callino

quartets. His London Bridge Trio is a vibrant presence on the UK chamber music scene. Their second Frank Bridge disc was nominated for a Gramophone award. He is founder of the Wye Valley Chamber Music Festival and the Winchester Chamber Music Festival. With 'Music Discovery Live', Daniel collaborates with musicologist Richard Wigmore on study sessions and concerts. 'Beethoven Plus' commissioned ten new works to be performed alongside the ten sonatas for violin and piano and has recently premiered at Kings Place. Daniel has been performing this cycle with Krysia Osostowicz at various venues around the UK.

He plays frequently with violinist Sara Trickey and this is their second CD recording together. Daniel loves teaching and is Head of Piano in Chamber Music at the Birmingham Conservatoire.

www.danielotong.com

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Adonis, Op.105**David Matthews**

- 1** Venus and Adonis 3:59
- 2** Death of Adonis 2:59
- 3** Metamorphosis 4:13

Violin Sonata in A, Op. 13**Gabriel Fauré**

- 4** Allegro molto 9:41
- 5** Andante 7:28
- 6** Allegro vivo 4:23
- 7** Allegro quasi presto 5:36

- 8** **Aria for Violin and Piano, Op. 41** 10:43

David Matthews

- 9** **Romance in B-Flat, Op. 28** 6:15

Gabriel Fauré

- 10** **Romanza for Violin and Piano, Op. 119a** 12:51

David Matthews

Producer and Engineer - John Taylor

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