

Master Works

PROGRAM

Serenade, Op. 98 (1908) Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Romance in A major, Op. 69 (1895)

Papillon, Op. 77 (1898)

Steven Doane *cello*
Chiao-Wen Cheng *piano*

Violin Sonata in F Major (1838) Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Allegro vivace

Adagio

Assai vivace

Juliana Athayde *violin*
Chiao-Wen Cheng *piano*

Piano Quartet No. 1 in C minor, Op. 15 (1883) Gabriel Fauré

Allegro molto moderato

Scherzo: Allegro vivo

Adagio

Allegro molto

Juliana Athayde *violin*
Phillip Ying *viola*
Steven Doane *cello*
Chiao-Wen Cheng *piano*

PROGRAM NOTES

Gabriel Fauré

Gabriel Fauré is a transitional figure in French music. His own lifetime, 1845 - 1924, spanned the most tumultuous period in all music history. In 1845 Robert Schumann was creating his finest songs and the young Richard Wagner was beginning to make a new kind of music. In 1924, Igor Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* was already more than a decade old and Arnold Schoenberg was creating his first purely 12-tone works. The most striking quality of Fauré's musical personality is his timelessness. Fauré refused to succumb to the demands of fashion. He had little patience for Wagnerian excesses or the tendencies which in the works of his contemporaries became representative of their era. His friend and mentor Camille Saint-Saëns opined, "Fauré has no age and never shall have one." Fauré's gradual

evolution as a composer took place in harmony rather than in texture or form - in the syntax rather than the language of music.

There is no trace of musical talent in Fauré's ancestry, so young Gabriel's musical talent was surprising for his parents. At the age of eight, he was fortuitously enrolled in the *Ecolé Niedermeyer*, a Paris boarding school that his parents believed could equip him for a sensible job with a decent social status as an organist or choirmaster. Gabriel flourished at the school, winning many prizes, and became a favorite of Niedermeyer. In 1861, Niedermeyer died and Fauré lost a mentor, but in compensation, the senior piano class was taken over by a young man with phenomenal pianistic facility, great enthusiasm, and a thoroughly modern outlook: Camille Saint-Saëns then twenty-five years old. Saint-Saëns became Fauré's most influential teacher, and helped Fauré progress in his career until Saint-Saëns' death in 1921.

Fauré took an appointment as organist at the church of *St. Sauveur* in Rennes following his graduation from the *Ecolé Niedermeyer* in 1865. In 1871, he became the assistant organist at *St. Sulpice* in Paris. In this period he wrote a large number of songs, while remaining, as always, intensely critical of his own work. His compositional range changed in 1871, as Fauré mused later in life, "Before 1870, I would never have dreamt of composing a sonata or a quartet. There was no chance of a composer getting a hearing with works like that. I was given the incentive when Saint-Saëns founded the Société Nationale de Musique in 1871 with the primary aim of putting on works by young composers."

Fauré's first great masterpiece, the *Violin Sonata, Op. 13*, stems from the opportunity provided by the Société, his meeting with the great Belgian violinist Hubert Léonard and from Saint-Saëns example in writing his own first Violin Sonata. Fauré was thirty in 1875 and actively courting Marianne Viardot, the daughter of Louis and Pauline Viardot, prominent figures among the Parisian cultural elite. The success of the *Violin Sonata* seemed like a miracle, significantly helping his cause with Pauline and providing encouragement to continue to write chamber music.

In the summer of 1876, while staying with good friends in Paris, Fauré began a new chamber work, the *Piano Quartet in C minor*, continuing work when he went to stay with his parents. Progress was so swift that Fauré had hopes of finishing it, or nearly so, by the time he returned to Paris in mid-November. But serious money problems, work on his application for a position at the *L'église de la Madeleine*, the Viardot's insistence that he settle down to write an opera, and particularly the whole unhappy episode of Pauline breaking off their engagement, significantly delayed this project. The quartet was not to be finished for another three years, in the summer of 1879, and even after that there were to be revisions.

A small publishing house, Hamelle, agreed to publish Fauré's compositions, but without any royalty payments - an arrangement that turned out to be highly profitable for Hamelle. Hamelle became Fauré's regular publisher between 1880 and 1906, though there were frustrations on both sides. Fauré was not overly ambitious and felt that his music was of such an individual cast that he would be hard put to find another publisher of Hamelle's unshakable goodwill. Hamelle's terms might be miserly, but he at least Fauré's compositions were published.

The premiere of the *Piano Quartet in C minor* at the Société Nationale de Musique took place on 11 February 1880 with Fauré at the piano. It was received almost as enthusiastically as his *Violin Sonata*, but after the premiere, some of his friends expressed reservations about the last movement. Disconcerted, Fauré allowed only the first three movements to be sent to the publisher and after three years cogitation ended up rewriting the finale entirely. He finished this revision in November 1883 and the revised quartet was performed at the Society on 5 April 1884.

The warm reception of two chamber works in succession encouraged Fauré to think about a cello sonata, perhaps following Saint-Saëns example with the success of his 1872 cello sonata. Fauré began his sonata in the same key as the quartet, starting as he often did with the slow movement. It remained 'in progress' for years and was never finished. In January 1883 Fauré had this single slow movement published under the title *Élégie*.

After the great success of his *Élégie*, Fauré's publisher Hamelle urged him to write another, similarly effective piece for cello and piano. *Papillon* was probably already composed in 1884, though it was only published in 1898.

Fauré was particularly known and praised in the French musical world for the homogeneity in his style across his life. Fauré was both an innovator and a traditionalist – he saw the concepts of novelty and traditionalism as complementary rather than conflicting. His thoughts are reflected in his son Philippe Fauré-Fremiet's description of the development of an artist as “gradually stripping away borrowed elements, which at first necessarily served him as the ground-rules of a language, in order to approach that perfect expression he seeks.” This idealization of the continuity of his style is reflected in his repertoire – techniques in his earliest works can be seen in those written over thirty years later, albeit in a greatly varied form.

The list of Faure's published works contains as many transcriptions as original works - in many cases the works also bear indications for alternative modes of performance right from the start, thanks to the initiative of the publisher acting more or less with the composers agreement

The last decade of the nineteenth century brought Fauré more recognition. In 1892 he became inspector of French provincial conservatories, and four years later was appointed principal organist at the *Madelaine*. That same year, he at last found further employment as a teacher of composition at the *Paris Conservatoire*, the way now open to him after the death of the old director Ambroise Thomas, who had found Fauré too much of a modernist for such a position. Nine years later, at the age of sixty, he was appointed Director of the *Conservatoire*. He thoroughly revised and revitalized the teaching of music during his fifteen year tenure as director. As a teacher and director, Fauré had a profound effect on music and musicians, counting as his protégés Ravel, Koechlin, Enescu, and Nadia Boulanger.

Fauré: Romance

This brief, utterly charming and tuneful piece for cello and piano was probably committed to paper in 1894, though Fauré based it on an older version for cello and organ. The subsequent tempo change to *Andante quasi Allegretto* made the work's original title of *Andante* obsolete. The change of name to *Romance* was also better suited to its songlike nature. After its first performance in November 1894 in Geneva with Fauré playing the piano part, the piece rapidly became popular and is a well-loved encore piece at concerts today. The opening of the *Romance* is found in the wonderful *Nocturne* from Fauré's *Shylock*, Op. 57 (1890), and again in his song *Soir*, Op. 83 #2 (1894).

Fauré: Papillon

Following the success of his *Élégie*, Hamelle soon asked Fauré for another virtuoso cello piece to complement it. The composer complied but without much enthusiasm - virtuosity for its own sake left him cold. A commission to write a virtuoso work had, in his view, no musical justification, and the results were usually uninspired. Fauré also had arguments with Hamelle about the title: the composer wanted to call it *Pièce pour violoncello*, the publisher, with an eye on sales, preferred *Libellules* (Dragonflies) which appears on the contract dated 14 September 1884. Hamelle had to wait fourteen years before Faure would agree to it being published as *Papillon*, and even then the composer was angry: “Butterfly or dung-fly,” he declared in exasperation, “call it whatever you like.” Hamelle's instinct was right as *Papillon* became played by ‘cellists throughout France.

The five sections of *Papillon* contain contrasting material: the odd-numbered ones might equally be a French *Flight of the Bumblebee*, preempting Rimsky-Korsakov's 1899 version; in the two enclosed sections the cello sings a lyrical, symmetrical song that finally takes wing over one of Fauré's favorite descending bass lines.

Mendelssohn: *Violin Sonata in F major*

As a young child, Mendelssohn was a prodigy on both piano and violin. Along with his sister Fanny (also a musical prodigy), the young Felix went to Paris to study the work of Mozart and Bach; the two composers had a great and lasting impression on Mendelssohn, and many of his works show his penchant for classical logic, form, and elegance over the more contemporary trademarks of the Romantic period. Mendelssohn's gifts were not limited to music, however; he was also a painter and had natural aptitude with languages; at the age of 12, Mendelssohn was introduced to the poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, to whom he dedicated his B-minor Piano Quartet. He also was influenced by the works of Shakespeare, and wrote the overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* when he was only 17.

Mendelssohn composed three violin sonatas over the course of eight years. The third, the Sonata in F major, was written in the summer of 1838 when Mendelssohn had a new wife and a baby. During that summer he had time to turn his attention to chamber music. This sonata is an extremely ambitious work, concerto-like for both instruments while remaining true to the form. He intended the work for the violinist Ferdinand David, concertmaster of the Gewandhaus Orchestra then conducted by Mendelssohn, but after completing the first draft, he became dissatisfied with the first movement and began its revision, then set the entire project aside. The sonata remained unpublished in manuscript form until 1953 when Yehudi Menuhin published the first edition by conflating the two autograph versions of the first movement. The two versions as Mendelssohn initially wrote then were released on the bicentenary of the composer's birth, 2009.

The first movement, marked *Allegro vivace*, is fraught with drama from the beginning. The piano begins with a statement of dotted-rhythm sequences moving up. Then the violin takes over the melody while the piano ripples. The two climb and fall as they trade melody and accompaniment back and forth.

A vastly more reflective *Adagio* follows; the piano again starts, this time with quiet chords and single notes sounding out a lovely melody. The movement ends with the violin sustaining a high note while the piano plays much lower in register.

The final *Assai vivace* is a feather-light race between the two partners; there's a sense of happy exploration as the movement seems to happen in one large sweep of action.

Fauré: *Piano Quartet No. 1 in C minor, Op. 15*

In the opening bars of the first movement, the bold first theme appears as a single line shared by all three string instruments. Soon, the stage is set for a vibrant conversation between instrumental voices. It unfolds in a continuous, ever-changing stream which finds quiet resolution only in the final bars.

The second movement is a sparkling and effervescent scherzo. A playful dialogue unfolds between the piano and strings, propelled forward by bouncy pizzicato. In the trio section, veiled muted strings float over glistening splashes of color in the piano. The pulse ticks along with intricate precision. At the same time, the music seems to float through the air. Alternating between 6/8 and 2/4 time, at moments the meter seems to evaporate.

The *Adagio* begins as a solemn and mournful funeral procession, or perhaps an elegiac pavane. The scholar, Kathryn Koscho, notes that "it is striking for its unsettled, lachrymose air, which Fauré prolongs through a combination of frustrated harmonic progressions and ascending melodic fragments." Unfolding with the hazy illusiveness of a mysterious dream, the third movement remains suspended between lament and transcendence.

Following the premiere, Fauré discarded the original *finale*, which does not survive. The new final movement, composed in 1883, is a dazzling tour-de-force which is simultaneously turbulent and playful. A vibrant instrumental conversation unfolds amid glistening piano arpeggios. One climactic moment brings a dose of jarring, twentieth century dissonance. Near the end of the movement, the swirling, incessant forward motion comes to an abrupt and dramatic halt. The Quartet's vast, dramatic stream

seems to hit a brick wall. Soon, the music springs to life again with a greater sense of transcendence. The *coda* section shimmers with angelic, childlike innocence before surging to a triumphant final cadence.

Notes compiled by Eric Zeise from text by Patrick Castillo, Timothy Judd and the
biography by Jean-Michel Nictoux, *Gabriel Fauré: a musical life*.

Biographical Notes

Juliana Athayde, appointed concertmaster of the RPO in 2005, has made numerous solo appearances with the RPO, including several premieres, and with orchestras across the country. She has also appeared as guest concertmaster with several orchestras. A dynamic teacher, Ms. Athayde is Associate Professor of Violin at the Eastman School, and serves on the faculty at music festivals across the U.S. She has held visiting faculty positions at the Cleveland Institute of Music and at Cornell University, and has guest taught at Rice University Shepherd School of Music. Ms. Athayde holds a B.M. from University of Michigan, as well as M.M and A.D. degrees from Cleveland Institute of Music where she was the first graduate of the CIM's Concertmaster Academy.

A versatile musician and educator, Taiwanese pianist **Chiao-Wen Cheng** has performed as soloist, recitalist, and chamber musician in major venues throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia, and has won numerous piano competitions and awards. Since 2019, Cheng has been an Artist-Faculty Piano Collaborator at the Perlman Music Program. In 2022, she was hired as the Collaborative Pianist for the U.S. premier of Tan Dun's trombone concerto. Cheng's solo engagements include concerto performances as well as solo recitals in major venues. She began piano lessons with her aunt at the age of four. She completed her bachelor's degree at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, where she received a Van Cliburn Scholarship. She completed her master's degree at Peabody Institute, Johns Hopkins University, where she received a full scholarship. Cheng holds a doctoral degree from the Eastman School of Music, where she was a student and teaching assistant of Barry Snyder. At Eastman, she was also the recipient of a graduate assistantship as a collaborative pianist and large ensemble pianist. Currently she is an Assistant Professor of Collaborative Piano at the Eastman School of Music and Principal Keyboardist of the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra.

Cellist **Steven Doane** is an internationally known soloist, recitalist, chamber musician, recording artist, and pedagogue who has performed throughout the US and overseas. He received his BM from Oberlin Conservatory and his MM from SUNY Stony Brook. He received a Watson Foundation Grant for overseas study in 1975, and had further studies with Richard Kapuscinski, Bernard Greenhouse, Jane Cowan, and Janos Starker. Mr. Doane and Eastman School pianist Barry Snyder made an acclaimed series of recordings together, including the complete music for cello and piano by Gabriel Fauré. The second of the series was of works by Benjamin Britten and Frank Bridge. A 2012 release included the Rachmaninoff Sonata for cello and piano, and the fourth included the Britten Solo Suites. Mr. Doane has been awarded prizes and awards for teaching, and as a member of the New Arts Trio. He currently holds the title of "visiting professor" at the Royal Academy of Music, London.

Phillip Ying, as violist of the Ying Quartet, has performed across the US, Europe, and Asia. He is a recipient of the Naumburg Award for Chamber Music, has won a Grammy for a collaborative recording with the Turtle Island String Quartet, and has been nominated three additional times, most recently for a collaborative album with pianist, Billy Childs. He maintains a vital interest in new music with recent and planned premieres of works by Chen Yi, Augusta Read Thomas, Kevin Puts, Ned Rorem, Jennifer Higdon, Sebastian Currier, Paquito D’Rivera, Lowell Liebermann, Paul Moravec, and Kenji Bunch and is currently engaged in a multi-year commissioning project with the Institute for American Music.

Mr. Ying also pursues creative projects across musical styles with other artists such as Garth Fagan and Tod Machover. During the summers, he has performed at the Colorado College, Bowdoin, Aspen, Marlboro, Tanglewood, Caramoor, Norfolk, Music in the Vineyards and Skaneateles Music Festivals. Mr. Ying is an Associate Professor of Chamber Music and Viola at the Eastman School of Music. He served a six-year term as President of Chamber Music America, a national service organization for chamber music ensembles, presenters, and artist managers, and has been published by Chamber Music magazine. He is a frequent speaker, panelist, and outside evaluator on subjects such as arts-in-education, advocacy through performance, and chamber music residencies. Mr. Ying received his education at Harvard University, the New England Conservatory, and the Eastman School of Music, and has studied principally with Martha Katz, Walter Trampler, and Roland Vamos.

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