

ENTENTE MUSICALE

Music for Violin and Piano

SOMMCD 0625

Frederick Delius (1862-1934) · Cyril Scott (1879-1970)
 Claude Debussy (1862-1918) · Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
 John Ireland (1879-1962) · Arnold Bax (1883-1953)

Clare Howick violin · Simon Callaghan piano

FREDERICK DELIUS

Violin Sonata in B major Op. posth [25:38]

- 1 I Allegro con brio 8:24
- 2 II Andante molto tranquillo 8:42
- 3 III Allegro con moto 8:31

CYRIL SCOTT

- 4 Cherry Ripe "For Fritz Kreisler" 3:17
- 5 Valse Caprice arr. A.W. Kramer* 4:18

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Violin Sonata in G minor [13:26]

- 6 I Allegro Vivo 4:53
- 7 II Intermède: Fantasque et léger 4:04
- 8 III Finale: Très animé 4:28

MAURICE RAVEL

- 9 Pièce en forme de habañera 3:03
arr. Jascha Heifetz

JOHN IRELAND

Violin Sonata No.1 in D minor [27:40]

- 10 I Allegro leggiadro 11:12
- 11 II Romance: In tempo sostenuto, quasi adagio 10:21
- 12 III Rondo: Allegro sciolto assai 6:06

ARNOLD BAX

- 13 Mediterranean arr. Jascha Heifetz 3:10

Total duration 80:35

*First Recording

Recorded at Wathen Hall, St Paul's School, Barnes, on October 24 & 25, 2019
 Recording Producer: Siva Oke Recording Engineer: Paul Arden-Taylor
 Assistant Editor: Clare Howick
 Front cover: *Julie and Eugène Manet*, 1883 by Berthe Morisot (1841-95)
 © Bridgeman Images
 Design: Andrew Giles Booklet Editor: Michael Quinn

Visit www.somm-recordings.com for further information

© & © 2020 SOMM RECORDINGS · THAMES DITTON · SURREY · ENGLAND · Made in EU

ENTENTE MUSICALE

Music for Violin and Piano

Bax · Debussy · Delius · Ravel · John Ireland · Cyril Scott



Clare Howick violin · Simon Callaghan piano

Entente Musicale – A meeting of musical minds and spirits

The passing of the Victorian age in 1901 and the succession of Edward VII as ruler of the largest empire the world had ever seen brought a more positive, outward-looking approach to nationhood, epitomised by the new king's personal rapprochement with the vibrant bon viveur character of the France of *La belle époque*.

The Edwardian era in Britain was not devoid of troubling events, but there is no doubt that Edward's personal diplomacy did much to foster a closer feeling of *l'entente cordiale* between Britain and France, epitomised in music by the 67-year-old Camille Saint-Saëns in 1902 composing a Coronation March for King Edward, by Claude Debussy composing his greatest orchestral masterpiece *La Mer* on the southern English coast of Eastbourne in 1905, and two years later by the 35-year-old English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams seeking to study in Paris with Maurice Ravel (five years his junior).

It was an approach initially facilitated by the English composer **Frederick Delius** – then a French resident, having lived in Paris for a dozen years until the end of the century before moving to the village of Grez-sur-Loing, 43 miles away. Delius began the process in 1902 by collaborating with Ravel on the piano transcription of a one-act opera *Margot la Rouge*.

Delius had been born in Bradford in 1862 to a wealthy German immigrant family but barely lived in England from his late teenage years. Finally convincing his father he would be of no use in the family wool business, and after some time in Florida as manager of an orange plantation followed by musical studies at the Leipzig Conservatory (where he met Edvard Grieg and his wife, who became lifelong friends), Delius moved to Paris in 1888, under the eye of his uncle Theodore, himself a resident of the French capital.

It was in Paris that the 20-something cosmopolitan composer came into his own. He had studied the violin to a good standard and amongst his 'Parisian' works is a **Sonata in B major for Violin and Piano**. The key is unusual – indeed, it is difficult to think of a similar work in this key. Perhaps it was this aspect that caused the Sonata to be turned down by the publisher to whom it was offered; although Delius never acknowledged the work as part of his later mature output, he carefully preserved the manuscript.

The B major Sonata is an extended and manifestly symphonic composition, which more than deserves entry into the standard repertoire of British violin sonatas. It was written in 1892-93, between the composition of the operas *Irmelin* and *The Magic Fountain*. It is in three movements, by no means exhibiting Delius's later individual approach to formal construction. As the Delius authority Robert Threlfall commented, "the ardour of [the Sonata's] soaring phrases forms a convincing 'portrait of the artist as a young man'".

Threlfall also identified that, following the surging nature of the initial pages – *Allegro con brio* – "a phrase from Delius's just-completed first opera *Irmelin* is embedded in the second group of themes; notable also is the natural growth with which the development section unfolds".

Indeed, such is the dramatic nature of the Sonata's opening pages, that one may wonder if this material was originally considered for the opera itself – may it be, in fact, a character-portrait of Irmelin herself? If so, it is cleverly concealed within the second and third movements. The second movement, *Andante molto tranquillo* is akin to a series of subtle variations on the finely individual opening melody, each quite characteristic, before the finale appears to quote from another, then recently completed work, the symphonic poem *Paa Vidderne (On the Mountains)*, "recollected" – as Threlfall further comments – "at the start of the last movement [*Allegro con moto*],

wider varieties of mood and tempo are added to the breadth and power of the first two movements; increasing elements of virtuosity characterise the vigour and brilliance of the exciting close”.

The fact that Delius never destroyed the manuscript indicates the Sonata must have held some significance for him, and although it was naturally overshadowed by the large-scale masterpieces of his mature years, it is now accepted as part of the composer’s canon.

A second British work in our collection, **John Ireland’s First Violin Sonata**, was overshadowed by its successor, the first performance of which in 1917 proved to be the breakthrough in finally establishing Ireland’s reputation. Despite the immediate impact of the Second Sonata, the First remains an impressive score, the inherent qualities of which saw it win the Cobbett Prize for chamber music in 1909, at the head of a list of more than 100 entrants by British and foreign composers. Ireland went on to dedicate the sonata to Cobbett, revising it twice, in 1917 and 1944.

Unlike Delius’s sonata, Ireland’s First Violin Sonata was the product of an accomplished and experienced composer of chamber music. Although both composers were the same age when these works were written, Ireland did not share Delius’s cosmopolitan outlook, being content to spend almost all of his life in England. Later, however, he developed a strong affection for and attachment to the Channel Islands – which inspired some of his finest piano works.

Ireland’s D minor Violin Sonata is, like Delius’s early example, in three movements, and although it is what one might term an ‘Edwardian’ work, there are turns of phrase, harmonic sleights of hand almost, which more than suggest a knowledge of the French Impressionist school of the period. In addition, the original invention of the work declares an impressive combination of inherent nobility of thought and

lightness of expression, the composer’s undoubted musicianship expressed through a strongly individual use of language.

If the structure itself may recall late Brahms (the duration of each movement reducing as the work progresses) and whereas – in the cut of some of the melodies – the Scandinavian voice of Grieg may be felt, what surely strikes the attentive listener above all is Ireland’s natural absorption of harmonic mannerisms by his contemporaries Debussy and Ravel. In this latter regard, Ireland was not alone: he had played the work through to Vaughan Williams who pointed out a striking similarity between a phrase from Ireland’s central *Romance* and Vaughan Williams’s own song ‘Is my team ploughing?’ from his contemporaneous cycle *On Wenlock Edge* – one of the first works Vaughan Williams completed after his return to England following his studies with Ravel.

The similarity is indeed striking, serving to show the musical phraseology that was ‘in the air’, so to speak, at the time, although the attentive listener could not confuse Ireland’s work with that of Vaughan Williams, whose mind was on larger-scaled compositions. The urchin-like theme of Ireland’s finale is wholly captivating, the formal Rondo now reaching a wider audience, albeit kept under control at all times, to make the Sonata’s wonderfully expressive texture as valid today as it was when it swept the board of that international competition.

The musical aesthetic of the Paris to which Delius had moved in 1888 was exciting. His exact contemporary **Claude Debussy**, recently returned from Rome, was beginning to make a name for himself, first with his String Quartet in G minor of 1892 and much more effectively with his orchestral *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune* of 1894 – neither of which premieres Delius attended. But by 1909, the year of Ireland’s Violin Sonata and Vaughan Williams’ *On Wenlock Edge*, with his piano music, opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*

(after Maeterlinck's play) and *La Mer* having made his international reputation, the diagnosis that year of rectal cancer brought Debussy face to face with the possibility of an early death.

The progress of the disease was inexorable, halted somewhat after an operation in 1915. Debussy's concerns were intensified by the enveloping First World War; he knew his time was short, and in his last years he returned to chamber music, planning a set of six sonatas for various instrumental combinations. In the event, he completed three, the last, in 1916-17, for violin and piano, in the same key as that early String Quartet. The premiere was given by Gaston Poulet and Debussy (his final public appearance) on May 5, 1917, in a programme in aid of wounded soldiers. Less than a year later, death was to claim him.

Debussy's **Violin Sonata in G minor**, as with every one of his masterpieces, broke new ground. Whilst retaining the three-movement structure of Brahms, Saint-Saëns, Franck and Fauré, the music expresses an equivocal, laconic and bitter utterance, deeply moving and pointed across its duration, an extreme compression that intensifies the profound emotional content; a private confession, almost.

Among those who fought in the war was **Maurice Ravel**, 13 years Debussy's junior. Ravel's mother was of Basque extraction, the Iberian influence remaining profound throughout his life – from the post-war *Boléro* and opera *L'heure espagnole* back to the pre-war *Rapsodie espagnole* and the remarkable **Pièce en forme de habañera** – both having appeared in 1907, coincidentally at the time of Debussy's orchestral masterpiece *Ibéria*. Ravel's hauntingly memorable *habañera* piece, originally a wordless vocalise for bass voice and piano, was soon heard – and recorded – in various transcriptions, the most famous for violin being made by Jascha Heifetz; one of two Heifetz transcriptions in our collection.

As we have seen, the aesthetics of *La belle époque* attracted many musicians from outside France – not only Delius but another English composer, **Cyril Scott**, who lived in Paris from 1903-04 where he met Debussy and Ravel as well as Fauré and was to enjoy cordial relationships with all three men. There is another curious connexion between Scott and Debussy, in that the year before the Frenchman's opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* was first heard, an orchestral overture by Scott to the Maeterlinck play had been played in Frankfurt.

Debussy was to become an admirer of Scott's music, but the Englishman's wide-ranging interests – including those outside music: mysticism and the occult – tended to dissipate his gifts to the point where his large-scale works failed to make the same impact of his chamber music and shorter pieces, which were widely performed and recorded.

Amongst the shorter gems by Scott are *Lotus Land*, *Danse nègre*, the *Tallahassee Suite* and *Water Wagtail* – pieces which, long before the outbreak of the Second World War, had been performed and recorded by such luminaries as Fritz Kreisler, Efrem Zimbalist, Georg Kulenkampff and Mark Hambourg, Sir Henry Wood and others.

Scott's arrangements of folk songs, including *The Londonderry Air* and **Cherry Ripe**, were also often heard. Whilst he is not usually considered a stalwart of the folk-song coterie, he was none the less sufficiently inspired by the results of the folk-song movement to be counted amongst them – certainly, on the evidence of this enchanting arrangement, which unites the simple inspiration of the original song with a setting suited to pre-First World War audiences. His arrangement was published in 1911 and dedicated to Kreisler, who made the first recording in 1922.

1911 was another fully creative year for Scott: it saw the publication by Elkin & Co. of a major series of pieces for solo piano, Op.74, of which the seventh, **Valse Caprice**,

soon gained independent popularity, with a number of effective arrangements. It is a concert waltz – more a study in waltz-time than a dance number – and the enormously effective version for violin and piano deserves greater attention than it has often received.

The previous summer, the English composer **Arnold Bax**, with his literary brother Clifford and fellow-musician H. Balfour Gardiner, took a holiday in the Balearic Islands, along with their guest, Gustav Holst. It was during their time in Majorca that Bax drafted a short orchestral piece, *Mediterranean*, which was first heard as part of a Wigmore Hall recital by Harriet Cohen in an arrangement by Bax himself early the following year. This haunting music, with its Impressionist allusions to Iberian musical phraseology, became very popular in various transcriptions, and we hear the version for violin and piano by Jascha Heifetz, which the great violinist made in 1935, and recorded shortly afterwards.

Robert Matthew-Walker © 2020



Clare Howick

Described by *The Strad* as “playing with beguiling warmth and affection” and by *American Record Guide* as “simply spectacular”, internationally acclaimed violinist Clare Howick is at the forefront of a generation of inspiring violinists.

Clare’s debut CD, *Cyril Scott – Sonata Lirica and Other Violin Works* (Dutton Epoch) won great acclaim and was awarded a *Gramophone* ‘Editor’s Choice’. Her recordings for Naxos of violin works by *British Women Composers* and *Cyril Scott – Violin Sonatas Nos.1 and 3*, have also received much praise, including ‘Editor’s Choice’ in *Classical*

Music magazine, ‘Recording of the Month’ on *MusicWeb International*, and ‘Recommended Recording’ on BBC Radio 3’s *Record Review*.

British Music for Violin and Piano (Naxos), which includes Elgar’s Violin Sonata and rarities by Delius, Scott, Bridge and Ireland, was selected as ‘Drive Discovery of the Week’ on Classic FM, featured on BBC Radio 3 and was awarded ‘Editor’s Choice’ by *AllMusic.com*, with *The Strad* praising “a ravishing account of the Elgar Sonata that tends to sweep the board... utterly captivating”.

Her recent debut concerto disc, *British Violin Concertos*, with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, featuring world premieres of concertos by Gordon Jacob, Kenneth Leighton and Paul Patterson, was selected as a ‘Recording of the Year 2018’ by *MusicWeb International*. *Fanfare* magazine described Clare’s playing as “unfailingly expressive... she is a first-class musician” and *The Strad* praised her “brilliant performances... outstanding premiere recordings”.

Most recently, her debut disc for SOMM, *British Violin Sonatas*, with Simon Callaghan, which features the Walton Violin Sonata and 20th-century works, was selected as a ‘Recommended Recording’ by *The Strad*: “a glorious programme... arresting sensitivity... with such glowing affection and lyrical intensity... grips the attention from first note to last”. The British Music Society praised the Walton Sonata “this performance is superb” and the Leighton Sonata “I cannot imagine a better performance... It is good to know that British music for the violin is in such capable hands.”



Photograph: Guy Mayer

Clare has performed most of the violin concerto repertoire (encompassing 54 concerti and works) with orchestras including the Philharmonia Orchestra and BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, and has performed at major festivals in the UK such as the Covent Garden, Buxton and Cheltenham International festivals.

www.clarehowick.co.uk

[@ClareHowick](https://twitter.com/ClareHowick)

[@ClareHowickviolin](https://www.facebook.com/ClareHowickviolin)

Simon Callaghan

“The commanding and virtuosic musicianship of Simon Callaghan” *MusicWeb International*

“Callaghan’s judgement is proved spot-on, and he makes an eloquent advocate” *Sunday Times*

Praised for his “velvet-gloved pianism of ravishing sensitivity” (*The Strad*), Steinway Artist Simon Callaghan performs internationally as a soloist and chamber musician. Recent tours have taken him to Japan, Malaysia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Canada and throughout Europe, and he has performed at all of the UK’s major concert halls.



Photograph: Kaupo Kikkas

Simon has a long-established relationship with SOMM, with whom he recorded solo works by Roger Sacheverell Coke and chamber music by Brahms, Delius and Ravel. His discography includes solo works by Sterndale Bennett and Parry, chamber music by

Schumann and Chopin and music for two pianos by Parry, Sherwood and Delius with Parnassius Duo partner Hiroaki Takenouchi. His most recent solo recording, released in 2019 on Nimbus, features miniatures by Schumann and Poulenc.

Simon is particularly interested in bringing rarely performed works to new audiences. His recording of Roger Sacheverell Coke’s Concertos with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and Martyn Brabbins for Hyperion in 2017 reached No.2 in the classical charts. For the same label, his world-premiere recordings of works by Jean Louis Nicodé was released in 2019 to critical acclaim, *Gramophone* praising his “superb artistry”.

Festival invitations have included Husum Piano Rarities, English Music Festival, Wintertide Festival (Canada), Absolute Classics, Highgate, Cervo, Hertfordshire and Whittington. In chamber music he has collaborated with Feng Ning, Jack Liebeck, Sheku Kanneh-Mason, Alexander Sitkovetsky, Thomas Gould, Nicholas Daniel, Raphael Wallfisch and the actors Timothy West, Prunella Scales and Samuel West. Contemporary music performances included works by Joseph Phibbs, Julian Anderson and Kenneth Hesketh. His world-premiere recording of Paul Patterson’s *Allusions* (with Midori Komachi and Sophie Rosa) was released in 2017.

Simon is Head of Piano at the Ingenium Academy (Winchester) and Director of Music at Conway Hall, where he oversees the longest-running chamber music series in Europe. Simon also recently completed a PhD at the Royal Northern College of Music, working to bring Roger Sacheverell Coke’s music into the public domain.

www.simoncallaghan.com

[@simondcallaghan](https://twitter.com/simondcallaghan)

This recording was supported by the Delius Trust, the John Ireland Charitable Trust, and the RVW Trust.