

SOMMCD 0628

**Robert Schumann** (1810-56)

**Franz Schubert** (1797-1828)

**Edvard Grieg** (1843-1907)

**The Carlock-Combet Duo**

Guillaume Combet *violin* · Sandra Carlock *piano*

**ROBERT SCHUMANN**

**Sonata No.2 in D minor, Op.121** [32:25]

- 1 I Ziemlich langsam – lebhaft 13:57
- 2 II Sehr lebhaft 4:39
- 3 III Leise, einfach 6:27
- 4 IV Bewegt 7:20

**FRANZ SCHUBERT**

**Sonata in A major, D574** [21:48]

- 5 I Allegretto moderato 9:15
- 6 II Scherzo 4:12
- 7 III Andantino 4:18
- 8 IV Allegro vivace 4:02

**EDVARD GRIEG**

**Sonata No.3 in C minor, Op.45** [25:15]

- 9 I Allegro molto ed appassionato 9:47
- 10 II Allegretto espressivo alla Romanza 7:19
- 11 III Allegro animato 8:08

**Total Duration: 79:40**

Recorded at The Menuhin Hall, Stoke d'Abernon on January 11-12, 2020

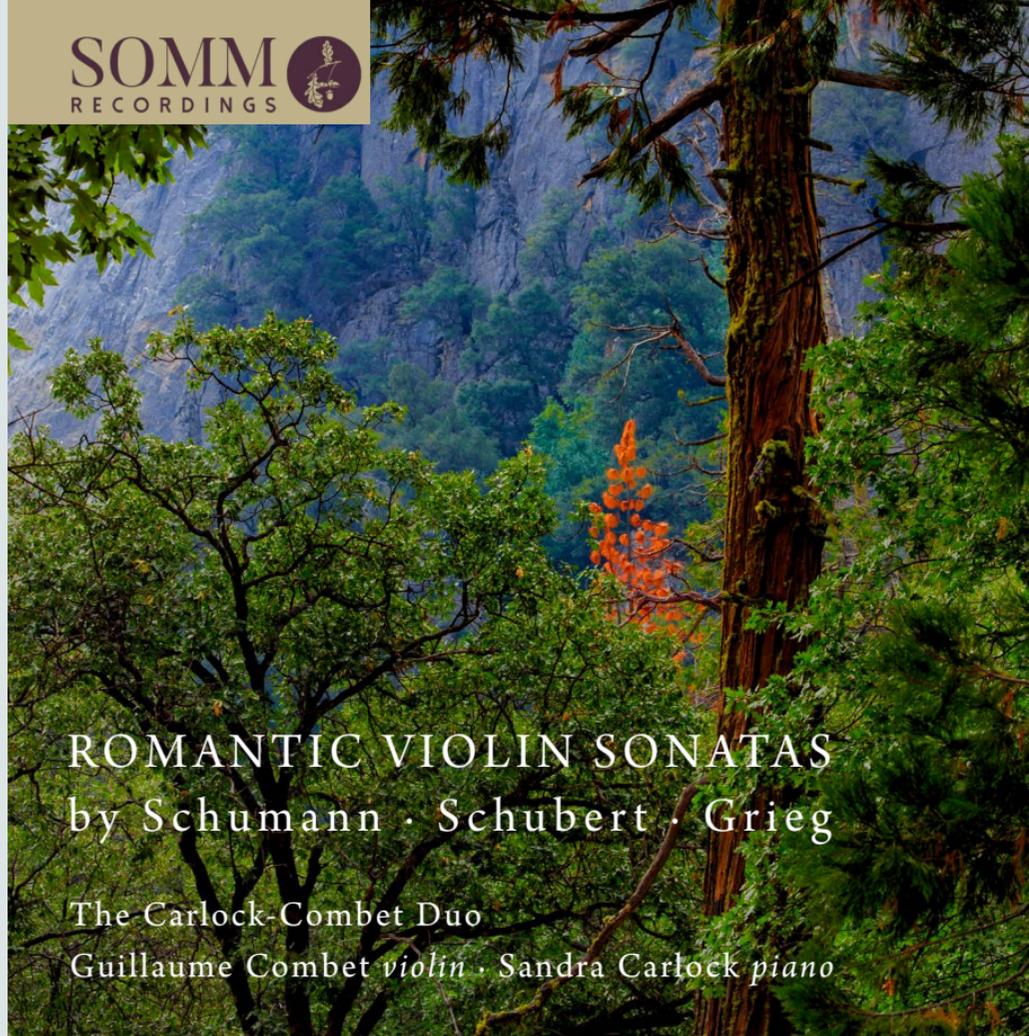
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**ROMANTIC VIOLIN SONATAS**  
by Schumann · Schubert · Grieg

The Carlock-Combet Duo

Guillaume Combet *violin* · Sandra Carlock *piano*

# ROMANTIC VIOLIN SONATAS

## by Schumann · Schubert · Grieg

The intimacy of chamber music – that of one player to a part, from two instrumentalists to larger groups of up to a dozen or so – has always characterised its greatest expressive appeal. From the mid-18th century to the early decades of the 20th, much chamber music was conceived as essentially music for the home and the recital room. It was a mark of an educated person to be able to play a musical instrument of some kind. And for the inherently musical individual, the requirements of civilised society saw the demand for chamber music increase – a demand composers were, in the main, only too willing to meet.

By 1812, the 15-year-old **Franz Schubert** had had the priceless advantage of a middle-class Viennese upbringing (his father was a school teacher) in a music-loving home, and the youth's natural gifts had manifested in mastery of the violin and competence as a pianist. For Schubert, also by this time a burgeoning composer, his music found a ready outlet through being played within a few days of the ink drying on his manuscript.

This is not to claim a wide public acceptance of his work. Despite producing a constant flow of songs, music for the piano, chamber, religious and also orchestral music, little of his music was published during his lifetime, including his music for violin and piano, which remained unknown for many years after his tragically early death in 1828.

Schubert began his compositions for violin and piano with three Sonatas, composed in 1816 in a somewhat adumbrated formal style. But in August 1817, the 20-year-old produced the magnificent large-scaled **Sonata in A major, D574**, a masterpiece of the late Classical era worthy to stand with the finest examples of Beethoven.

The Sonata remained in manuscript until 23 years after Schubert's death, when it was first published – and wrongly titled 'Duo': Schubert wrote 'Sonate' clearly on his manuscript (as he had done for each of the three works of 1816: they were also published posthumously, all equally incorrectly termed 'Sonatinas').

Cast on a relatively large scale, the mood of the A major Sonata is essentially genial and outward-looking, the young genius exploring the expressive range of the violin to the full. The Sonata's lyrical, *Allegro moderato* opening is the essence of Schubert, and, as the music proceeds, it is not only the lyrical qualities which remain uppermost, but also the wonderful way in which, as naturally as breathing, he reveals the byways of tonality. Such expressions of original creativity show Schubert's seemingly effortless ability to imply tonal relationships which would have surely surprised both Mozart and Haydn, doing so with apparent simplicity, if at times energetically, that we are left in no doubt of his new voice.

No longer constrained by Classical precepts, in the *Presto* second movement Schubert pays subtle homage to Beethoven, daringly side-stepping (as in the first movement) to traditionally unrelated keys, taking the listener (and instrumentalists!) on a musical roller-coaster, to leave us breathless.

Calm is restored in the *Andantino* third movement. Yet even here Schubert's burgeoning individuality cannot be gainsaid. Ostensibly in C major (which tonality he does not truly leave), Schubert once more shows us fresh relationships, often unknown to the classicists in the manner of tonal side-steps, yet done so as to preserve the underlying calm.

The *Allegro vivace* finale brings back the dashing young man of the Scherzo, full of life and springal vivacity, at times almost fit to burst with sheer energy. Here, in music, is the epitome of youth on the cusp of manhood, an expression of how good it is to be young and alive: Schubert's personal reticence belied by his music.

Schubert eventually met Beethoven, at the end of the older man's life, when Beethoven – on reading some of Schubert's songs – asked to see him. Less than a year later, in March 1827, Schubert was a pall-bearer at Beethoven's funeral, and within 20 months he, too, was buried, at the age of 31, his greatest works – including this Sonata – unpublished.

By the mid-1830s, **Robert Schumann**, born in 1810, had begun to establish himself as pianist, composer and critic. Towards the end of that decade the first publisher to issue Schubert's late Piano Sonatas (from the last year of the composer's life) issued them with a dedication to Schumann – a dedication impossible to verify (they had never met) but indicative of how significant Schumann had become.

As we have noted, Schubert's Violin Sonata of 1817 was first published in 1851. Whether Schumann possessed a copy of the work is unknown, but it may not be fanciful to imagine that its first appearance in print led to Schumann composing his **Violin Sonata in D minor, Op.121**, which was completed in November, 1851.

Schumann's Sonata is also in four movements, with the Scherzo placed second, but in mood and character the two works are very different.

Schumann dedicated his new Sonata to Ferdinand David, leader of the Leipzig Gewandhaus orchestra, but the premiere was given by Joseph Joachim and Schumann's wife Clara towards the end of 1851. Soon afterwards, Joachim wrote to a friend: "I consider it one of the finest compositions of our times in respect of its marvellous unity of feeling and thematic significance. It overflows with noble passion, almost harsh and bitter in expression, and the last movement reminds one of the sea with glorious waves of sound".

The original genius Schumann exhibits in many of his late works demonstrates that his creativity, far from declining in the final years of his life – as is often claimed – actually deepened in new and profound ways. The qualities of his first Violin Sonata, Op.105, are here taken further to produce a masterpiece, in Schumann's profound inmost style, from the majesty of the opening bars throughout the work's flow of serious and gripping expression.

Throughout the profound first movement, Schumann's invention is at its finest and most gripping and his almost instinctive mastery of organic construction is heard in the second and third movements – phraseology that could be by no other composer is here revealed as having its origins in the opening chords of the work – but so subtly hidden. Put to such different expressive uses, we may not recognise them – but they provide that almost indefinable unity which makes Schumann's control such a wondrous aspect to experience: this music can belong nowhere else but in this Sonata.

The finale retains the power and drive of the overall inspiration – no relief of dance-like rondo good humour, but another sonata structure that seemingly carries all before it on wave after wave of organic energy – until the major mode triumphs in the concluding pages with a brilliant D major. No wonder Joachim was so impressed.

Schumann's soon-to-emerge mental instabilities took him from Clara and their eight children at the age of 46. She outlived Robert by 40 years, continuing to compose herself, to perform regularly, and to teach generations of fine pianists.

For a period, she was associated with the Leipzig Conservatoire, which Mendelssohn had founded in 1843, the year of **Edvard Grieg's** birth in the Norwegian city of Bergen. By 1858, when the 15-year-old Edvard enrolled as a student of piano and composition, the Leipzig Conservatoire was arguably the finest in Europe.

It was there that Grieg heard Clara play her husband's Piano Concerto, which experience surely planted the seed which bore fruit in his own A minor Concerto in 1868. By that time, having left the Conservatoire with the highest commendations as a composer and pianist, Grieg had written the first two of his three Sonatas for violin and piano. The **Third Sonata, in C minor**, his Opus 45, was written several decades later, in 1887.

As with its predecessors, the C minor Sonata falls into three movements. It retains a more Classical overall structure for the period than one might expect, and was Grieg's last completed chamber work, although he left three further works, all planned on a large scale, unfinished.

The Sonata begins with a passionate and defiant theme, dark-hued and dramatic. This is contrasted by the second subject, a coming of half-lights heralded by the

arrival of a calmer, more subdued, idea. The juxtaposition leading to the longest movement in any of Grieg's Violin Sonatas. The opening theme eventually triumphs in this movement, to end the music in a genuinely fiery, energetic mood.

The second movement, *Allegretto espressivo alla Romanza – Allegro molto – tempo primo*, is in the rather unusual key of E major. It has a structural resemblance to the slow movement of the First Sonata, but here the *Romanza* predominates, by way of a nobly lyrical theme first heard on the piano, before it is memorably taken up by the violin. A curious connexion, this time with the Second Violin Sonata, is that the theme of the Third Sonata's second movement is actually a variant of the folk-like theme in the same second movement of the Second Sonata! A faster central section brings a more agitated mood before the calm returns to close the movement in a mood of peace and tranquillity.

The finale at once dispels the reverie, returning to the passion and ire of the first movement. This leads to a contrasted subsidiary theme, soon brushed aside, but which, as the movement progresses, assumes greater importance until it alone sings out, above the rest of the music, in the violin's highest register, transformed into an "emotional statement of singular power" as the American critic James Lyons described the closing pages of this great work.

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**Sandra Carlock** holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, a Master of Music from the State University of New York and further post-graduate study at The Juilliard School. Her teachers have included Rosina Lhévinne, Arthur Dann and Martin Canin. She is well known throughout the United States as a recitalist, master teacher, lecturer and recording artist. Sandra has performed frequently in Great Britain and Europe, both in recital and as soloist with orchestra. She has presented numerous recitals on the British early and historic piano collections at Finchcocks and Hatchlands Park (The Cobbe Collection). She was the first artist to perform the music of American composer Edward MacDowell at Trolldhaugen in Bergen, Norway, the former home of MacDowell's friend and mentor, Edvard Grieg. Sandra was also honoured by being asked to perform on the 1892 Steinway belonging to Grieg which remains in the villa at Trolldhaugen.

Sandra's CD *Sandra Carlock In Recital*, music of Liszt, Bach and Chopin, was recorded live at St. John's Smith Square, London. Her most recent solo CD, *Piano Music by Edward MacDowell*, was released to great critical acclaim by SOMM Recordings. She has been heard frequently as featured artist, and has been interviewed on WFLN and WRTI, Philadelphia, Classic FM, London and WQXR, New York City.

Throughout her career, Sandra has been active as pianist in various chamber music ensembles. Also known as an authority on the piano music of Clara Schumann and Edward MacDowell, she has presented lecture recitals on these composers at The Juilliard School, Oxford University and the North Carolina School of the Arts – to name but a few. In 2016, 2017 and 2018, Sandra was recognized with Steinway & Sons' annual Top Teacher Award. The awards are given for outstanding instruction and leadership in piano education. Sandra holds the Arthur Judson Distinguished Faculty Chair in Piano at Settlement Music School in Philadelphia, PA, where she teaches piano and chamber music by Special Arrangement.

In recent years, she has begun to make her mark as a versatile and sensitive photographer, from landscapes, cityscapes and architectural images to portraiture. Her images feature on the covers of the Duo's two SOMM Recordings CDs.

[www.sandracarlock.com](http://www.sandracarlock.com)

[www.settlementmusic.org](http://www.settlementmusic.org)

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**Guillaume Combet** is an Associate Professor of Violin at the University of Delaware. He was concertmaster of the Chicago Civic Orchestra under Daniel Barenboim and Pierre Boulez, soloist and assistant concertmaster of the Chicago String Ensemble, soloist with the Orchestre Symphonique de Tours, and toured internationally with Les Virtuoses de France. He has performed with numerous orchestras and chamber ensembles in Paris, Chicago and Philadelphia, Orchestra de l'Opéra de Paris Bastille, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Fulcrum Point New Music Project, Network for New Music, Opera Philadelphia, Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, Philly Pops, Academy of Vocal Arts, Black Pearl Chamber Orchestra, New Music Delaware and Pennsylvania Ballet.

As a sought-after chamber musician, he has performed throughout the US, including the Luckman Fine Arts Complex, Los Angeles, Chicago's Cultural Center (in the WFMT Dame Myra Hess Concert Series), University of Chicago, University of Delaware, Temple University, Philadelphia Ethical Society and WRTI. Guillaume is a devoted teacher, and in addition to his position at the University of Delaware he teaches at the University of Pennsylvania and Temple University Music Preparatory Division.

Mr. Combet graduated with a Premier Prix (First Prize) in Violin and Chamber Music from the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris where he studied with Gérard Poulet and Sylvie Gazeau, and received his Advanced Certificate in Violin Performance from The Juilliard School where he studied with Joel Smirnoff, Robert Mann and William Lincer.

**The Carlock-Combet Duo** is currently entering their seventh year of collaboration while continuing to delight audiences with their musicianship and dynamic programming for violin and piano. Their first disc, released by SOMM Recordings in 2017, featured sonatas by three great French composers, Franck, Poulenc and Saint-Saëns, and was named a CD of the Month and a Recording of the Year by *Music Web International*. James Palmer of

*Musical Opinion* writes that the CD “is such that one looks forward to further recordings from this well-matched team whose insight into this music is of consistent depth of understanding”. The Duo find special pleasure in releasing this new disc of sonatas during the world-wide pandemic which has made it all but impossible to play live concerts.

[www.thecarlockcombetduo.com](http://www.thecarlockcombetduo.com)

Sandra and Guillaume dedicate this disc to longtime friend and colleague **Lee Snyder**, master violin teacher and ardent supporter of The Carlock-Combet Duo since its inception in 2014. Thank you, Lee, for your ongoing, deeply appreciated advice and encouragement, and for all of the ways you have shown your excitement about what we have accomplished. We are profoundly grateful.



Photograph: Todd Trice

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Guillaume and Sandra would like to thank our wise and wonderful producer, Siva Oke, and our terrific engineer, Paul Arden-Taylor. Their skill is strongly evident in so many ways. We are so pleased to have collaborated during SOMM’s 25th anniversary year.

**Sandra:** Many thanks to my deeply gifted Duo partner, Guillaume Combet, for his intuitive artistry and solid commitment to the development of The Carlock-Combet Duo. The blending of understanding, patience, determination and friendship has helped to create a vital and dynamic partnership.

**Guillaume:** To my loving wife, Helen Eaton, thank you for your unwavering support; to my two children – Guilhem and Claudia Combet – thank you for your endless patience as my violin playing woke you up most mornings of your young lives.

I would like to thank Sandra Carlock, my wonderful Duo partner, for being such an inspiration to me in her life-long devotion to our art form. You have brought joy, beauty and wisdom alike in your performances, teaching and collaborations, and have profoundly affected how I think about one of the most amazing partnerships in music: the piano and violin.

Sandra thanks her colleague and former student, Kristin Ditlow, who patiently and skilfully turned pages for the recording session. Her support was tangible and Sandra is grateful beyond words.