

# WIGMORE HALL

Monday 6 November 2023  
1.00pm

Esther Yoo violin  
Jae Hong Park piano

Claude Debussy (1862-1918) Violin Sonata in G minor (1916-7)  
*I. Allegro vivo • II. Intermède. Fantasque et léger •  
III. Finale. Très animé*

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907) Violin Sonata No. 3 in C minor Op. 45 (1886-7)  
*I. Allegro molto ed appassionato  
II. Allegretto espressivo alla Romanza  
III. Allegro animato - Prestissimo*

Sergey Rachmaninov (1873-1943) Vocalise Op. 34 No. 14 (1915)

Henry Vieuxtemps (1820-1881) Souvenir d'Amérique on 'Yankee Doodle' Op. 17 (pub. c.1845)



This concert is being broadcast on BBC Radio 3



This concert is part of the CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust ticket scheme, offering free tickets to those aged 8-25



Our Audience Fund provides essential unrestricted support for our artistic and learning programmes, connecting thousands of people with music locally, nationally, and internationally. We rely on the generosity of our audience to raise £150,000 each year to support this work. Your gifts are, and continue to be, indispensable.

To donate, please visit <https://wigmore-hall.org.uk/support-us/wigmore-hall-audience-fund>

Wigmore Hall is a no smoking venue. No recording or photographic equipment may be taken into the auditorium nor used in any other part of the Hall without the prior written permission of the management.

In accordance with the requirements of City of Westminster persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any other gangways. If standing is permitted in the gangways at the sides and rear of the seating, it shall be limited to the number indicated in the notices exhibited in those positions.

Disabled Access and Facilities - full details from 020 7935 2141.

Wigmore Hall is equipped with a 'Loop' to help hearing aid users receive clear sound without background noise. Patrons can use this facility by switching hearing aids to 'T'.



Please ensure that watch alarms, mobile phones and any other electrical devices which can become audible are switched off. Phones on a vibrate setting can still be heard, please switch off.

The Wigmore Hall Trust Registered Charity No. 1024838  
36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP • [Wigmore-hall.org.uk](http://Wigmore-hall.org.uk) • John Gilhooly Director

Wigmore Hall Royal Patron HRH The Duke of Kent, KG  
Honorary Patrons Aubrey Adams OBE; André and Rosalie Hoffmann; Louise Kaye; Kohn Foundation; Mr and Mrs Paul Morgan



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



In 1915 the terminally ill **Debussy** planned a series of six sonatas, but lived to complete only three: for violin/piano, cello/piano and for flute, viola and harp. His new interest in unusual instrumental groups would have been continued in sonatas for oboe, horn and harpsichord, and trumpet, clarinet, bassoon and piano. Debussy is just one of many composers who have shown classical tendencies – a greater economy and simplicity - in their late works. At the opening of the Violin Sonata (1916-7), marked 'dolce, sostenuto', then 'espressivo', two soft piano chords lead to an understated, unadorned violin melody, as a rather melancholy character emerges. Debussy's encounter with the Romani violinist Béla Radics in a Budapest nightclub left slight traces of influence throughout the sonata, but more importantly, his typical fluidity, subtlety and ambiguity ('My dream is to suggest') are apparent, the mood and tempo regularly fluctuating. This movement feels improvisatory and unpredictable, its final passage marked 'con fuoco'.

*Fantastique et léger*, at the head of the second movement, translates as capricious, whimsical and light. A brief passage marked 'scherzando' offers a hint of Debussy's 'cakewalk' style (from *Children's Corner*), but the most sustained idea here is the wonderful chromatic melody played by both instruments in octaves - followed by two deeply sighing phrases on the violin. The *Finale* begins with the piano's introductory bars ('léger et lointain' - light and distant), before the violin recalls the opening theme of the work, slightly modified. Thereafter jig-like passages alternate with much slower phrases of seductive character. Mysterious and full of contradictions – from joyful optimism to melancholy, from reflection to playfulness - this sonata proved to be Debussy's final completed composition.

**Grieg** especially valued his violin sonatas - 'These three works are among my very best and represent different stages in my development'. He completed the first two (in F major and G major) within two to three years, but nearly two more decades passed before he composed the third sonata between autumn 1886 and January 1887. Its key of C minor and the *appassionato* in the tempo indication suggest a more intense, even tragic element, epitomised by the opening theme. The second subject in E flat major – melodically related to the first theme - brings spacious, lyrical contrast. The development section, including a major-key augmentation of the first subject above a rippling accompaniment, culminates in a magnificent lead-back to the recapitulation. Following a reprise of the lyrical second subject in C major, Grieg returns to the minor for a coda based on the first subject. The E major slow movement begins with a serene melody (*dolce e cantabile*). Strongly contrasting, the allegro molto middle section in E minor is a vigorous dance (*pianissimo*) with syncopated accompaniment. Again there is a strong melodic connection with the opening theme. At the

reprise of the first section Grieg surprisingly – and magically – begins in E flat major before moving into the original E major. The finale opens with a lively theme above a scintillating accompaniment, but Grieg soon shows his material to be capable of more robust and strenuous treatment. A broad cantabile melody of yearning character emerges as striking contrast. Surprisingly, Grieg's continuous development of both this and the first theme serves in place of an actual, well-defined development section. The *Prestissimo* coda in C major is based on the opening theme.

Though it is most regularly performed in its various instrumental arrangements, **Rachmaninov's** celebrated *Vocalise* was originally composed for voice. The term 'vocalise' indicates a composition in which the singer is required to use only vowel sounds rather than a text. Other composers who have written for voice without words include Fauré, Ravel, Stravinsky, Respighi and Medtner, while the most substantial piece is Glière's Concerto for coloratura soprano and orchestra. Rachmaninov composed his *Vocalise* in 1915 as a kind of postscript to a set of 13 songs, Opus 34. Rachmaninov's own dating of the autographs ('first version April 1915; second version September 1915') conflicts with the many other sources which give 1912 - the year in which the first 13 songs of Opus 34 were indeed composed. Rachmaninov wrote the *Vocalise* for the coloratura soprano Antonina Nezhdanova. With its frequent step-wise movement, the melody of the *Vocalise* is very characteristic of Rachmaninov. In the slightly more animated middle section the melody moves to a lower register while a counter-melody is superimposed. The *Vocalise* is among Rachmaninov's finest inspirations, its universal popularity reflected in the numerous arrangements to be found, which include all the most likely solo instruments as well as alto flute, euphonium, saxophone, theremin, guitar, piano trio and jazz ensemble, while there is even an arrangement for choir and orchestra.

The Belgian composer and virtuoso violinist **Henry Vieuxtemps** wrote many works for his own instrument, including seven concertos, while his other compositions include three string quartets and a viola sonata. His various sets of variations on national airs or popular tunes include this sequence based on 'Yankee Doodle'. The tune, also known from Jack and Jill and Lucy Locket, dates from long before the lyrics, possibly centuries earlier. The first publication of the song with the lyrics dates from around 1770. Its popularity grew when it was sung by British soldiers during the American Revolutionary War.

Vieuxtemps's variations, preceded by a recitative-like passage, are all recognisably derived from the tune, while virtuosity is in the ascendant – involving double- and triple-stopping, harmonics, left-hand pizzicato and rapid arpeggios across the strings.

© Philip Borg-Wheeler 2023

*Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.*