



Lammermuir Festival

Autumn Special

Online from 15 September 2020, 8:00pm | Holy Trinity Church, Haddington

Coco Tomita violin
Kan Tomita piano

George Enescu *Ménétrier* from *Impressions d'enfance*, Op. 28

Ludwig van Beethoven Violin Sonata No. 5 in F Major, Op. 24 ('Spring')

Ernest Chausson *Poème*, Op. 25

Eugène Ysaÿe Sonata for Solo Violin No. 6 in E Major, Op. 27, No. 6

Maurice Ravel Violin Sonata No. 2



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George Enescu *Ménétrier* from *Impressions d'enfance*, Op. 28

The Romanian composer George Enescu's *Ménétrier* (The Fiddler) forms the opening to his *Impressions d'enfance* (Impressions from Childhood), a sequence for violin and piano completed in April 1940 (though the piano only joins in the next section of the work). Pablo Casals described Enescu as 'the greatest musical phenomenon since Mozart', and his writing for the violin was highly original. *Ménétrier* draws a significant amount on traditional Romanian folk music, incorporating this into Enescu's post-Romantic tonal language. Fiendishly difficult in places, Enescu dedicated it to his first violin teacher.

Ludwig van Beethoven Violin Sonata No. 5 in F Major, Op. 24 ('Spring')

1. Allegro
2. Adagio molto espressivo
3. Scherzo: Allegro molto
4. Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo

In September 1801, the *Wiener Zeitung* carried an advert for 'Two Sonatas for piano and violin, Op. 23' by Ludwig van Beethoven, dedicated to Count Moritz von Fries. For some reason, Beethoven actually elected to split the two sonatas into two separate opus numbers, with the second of these, the Violin Sonata No. 5 in F Major published as Op. 24.

The sonata has become known as the *Frühlingssonate* ('Spring sonata'); however, this title wasn't given by Beethoven. Regardless, it is possible to hear where it came from. Written in F major, a key often used by eighteenth-century composers to evoke the pastoral, the first theme of the opening Allegro might easily be heard as a gentle stream, as the fluid melody of the violin is carried by the flowing quavers in the right hand of the piano. The development that follows is relatively conventional, as Beethoven deconstructs the opening theme to provide a series of compelling episodes. However, the slow movement in the subdominant that follows is a beautiful example of Beethoven's melodic gifts — something often overlooked in his music. The scherzo and trio make for a concise pair. They are comparatively gentle, whimsical and witty (in due course, Beethoven would later transform this form beyond all comprehension), while the closing Rondo amiably draws everything together. As a whole, this Spring sonata is a fine demonstration of Beethoven's (later) early style, as he brought together all the tenets of the Viennese Classical style, just as his own musical personality was beginning to shine through. Such pleasant music seems a far cry from the violin sonatas of the following year and all the drama of the Heiligenstadt Testament, as Beethoven began to lose his hearing and his mental state degenerated.

Ernest Chausson *Poème*, Op. 25

Written for the Belgian violin virtuoso and composer Eugène Ysaÿe, Ernest Chausson's *Poème* has become something of a showpiece for violinists. However, this belies Chausson's compositional creativity and originality. It was composed in 1896, inspired by a short story by the Russian writer Ivan Turgenev, *Le chant de l'amour triomphant*, which is worth briefly recounting. Set in sixteenth-century Italy, the tale centres around a love rivalry, as Fabio (a painter) and Muzio (an artist) fall in love with the beautiful Valeria. Valeria chooses Fabio, and Muzio departs for the Far East. Some years later he returns and surreptitiously pours a potion into Valeria's drink before playing the violin, in an attempt to seduce her. Fabio enters and stabs Muzio in the heart, instantly killing him. The story concludes with Fabio painting his wife, as she describes feeling cleansed with 'the song of love triumphant' entering her heart. Several different arrangements of *Poème* exist made by Chausson himself — with full orchestra, quartet and piano and organ, in addition to this version for piano — but it is the violin part that really tells the story. While the harmonic language owes much to Wagner and Liszt, Chausson's natural sense of melodic lyricism is incredibly striking, and its programmatic basis never gives any impression of seeming contrived.

Eugène Ysaÿe Sonata for Solo Violin No. 6 in E Major, Op. 27, No. 6

Like Chausson's *Poème*, Eugène Ysaÿe's Sonata for Solo Violin No. 6 was, in turn, written for another violinist — the Spanish Manuel Quiroga. Ysaÿe, one of the pre-eminent violinists of his time, was reputed to have been highly impressed with Quiroga's playing, and the sonata demands a significant amount of technical prowess. Cast in a single movement, it refers to several Spanish dance forms, while calling on the violinist to frequently double and triple-stop the strings, with a succession of rapid scales to the very top of the violin's register leading to a final display of bravura.

Maurice Ravel Violin Sonata No. 2

1. Allegretto
2. Blues (Moderato)
3. Perpetuum mobile (Allegro)

Maurice Ravel spent four years between 1923 and 1927 writing his Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano. It was written for and dedicated to the violinist Hélène Jourdan-Morhange, with whom Ravel frequently worked. However, in the time that Ravel took to complete it, she developed arthritis and was no longer capable of playing. Enescu gave the premiere with Ravel at the piano. The first movement opens with an elegant, seamless melody in the piano, which quickly opens out into a beautiful impressionist tableau. However, it is the raucous second movement, entitled 'Blues', that is the sonata's real showpiece, making explicit reference to the jazz and blues rhythms that Ravel and Jourdan-Morhange had enjoyed together in Paris. After a jocular introduction where the piano and violin seem to mock one another, the closing movement really does create a sense of perpetual motion. Sharp rhythms in the piano punctuate several pages' worth of unrelenting semiquavers for the violin. And by the time the end comes, it seems impossible that the violinist could continue for a single bar further.

Coco Tomita is the winner of the BBC Young Musician 2020 Strings Category. The UK-based Japanese violinist has also won various other prizes at international competitions and festivals including Golden Medals at the Vienna International Music Competition 2019 and Berliner International Music Competition 2019, Carl Flesch Prize at the Carl Flesch Academy 2019, 3rd Prize in the Junior section of the Andrea Postacchini International Violin Competition (Italy) and 1st prize at the Eastbourne Symphony Orchestra Young Soloist Competition 2017.

Coco was born in 2002 and began to play the violin when she was four years old. She became a pupil of Natasha Boyarsky when she was six, and in 2012 she was awarded a place at the Yehudi Menuhin School where she is currently studying with Lutsia Ibragimova. She also received guidance from some of the internationally renowned violinists and professors such as Pierre Amoyal, Kolja Blacher, Alina Ibragimova, Mihaela Martin, Gordan Nikolic, Feng Ning and Roman Simovic.

At the age of ten, Coco made her debut at the Cadogan Hall, London performing as a soloist with the Southbank Sinfonia. Along with numerous solo and chamber music performances at the YMS Menuhin Hall, Coco has performed and appeared in many international venues in the UK, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Italy, Netherland, Spain and Switzerland. After the success of BBC Young Musician 2020, Coco has signed an exclusive agreement with the Orchid Classics to record her debut album due to be released in 2021. Future concert engagements include a return appearance with the Philharmonie Baden-Baden in July 2021 as well as her debut in her home country with the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra at the Suntory Hall, Tokyo in February 2022.

Kan Tomita has won numerous international awards and prizes. Since his concerto debut at the Royal Festival Hall, London at the age of 15, he has been in demand both as soloist and chamber musician performing in the UK (Southbank Centre, Barbican, LSO St Luke's, Bridgewater Hall etc.), Europe (Austria, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Romania and Ukraine) as well as Japan; where music critics praised him as a 'Stunning performer with superb technical accomplishment and poetry' (*Ongaku-no Tomo Music Magazine*, Japan).



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