

ANAM RECITAL: MIRIAM NIESSL (VIOLIN)

Bisous, bisous

TUESDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 1.30PM

ROSINA AUDITORIUM, ABBOTSFORD CONVENT

Eugène YSAÏE (1858-1931) Violin Sonata No. 3 in D Minor, op. 27 *Ballade* (1923) 8'

Ernest CHAUSSON (1855-1899) *Poème*, op. 25 (1896) 14'

César FRANCK (1822-1890) Violin Sonata in A Major, op. 13 (1886) 28'
i. Allegretto moderato
ii. Allegro
iii. Recitativo-Fantasia. Ben moderato
iv. Allegretto poco mosso

Miriam Niessl (QLD) violin

Berta Brozgul (ANAM Associate Faculty) piano

Approximate duration: 50 minutes

ABOUT MIRIAM NIESSL

Miriam Niessl was born into a large musical family where the passion for music has brought immense joy. With immense gratitude to her former teacher Michele Walsh, Miriam graduated from the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University being awarded the 'Rotary Club of Brisbane Endowment Award' and 'The Griffith Award for Academic Excellence'. Miriam is now in her second year at ANAM and is thrilled to be learning from Adam Chalabi.

While Miriam hopes to further pursue her performance career, she loves to teach and sees teaching as one of her ultimate goals as a musician. Miriam is a strong advocate for the Arts and has herself experienced the powerful emotions that music can evoke within us.

Miriam is supported by ANAM Syndicate donors Lyndsey Hawkins, Michael Schwarz and David Clouston, Michael Tyazhky and Mila Tyazhka, Julie Wehbe.

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EUGÈNE YSAÏE: THE KING OF THE VIOLIN

Debussy, Fauré, Roussel, D'Indy, Saint-Saëns, Chausson, Franck: a handful of the composers who dedicated works to the incomparable violinist **Eugène YsaÏe**. Artists like Carl Flesch celebrated him as "the most outstanding and individual violinist I have ever heard in my life." Pablo Casals claims to have "never heard a violinist play in tune before YsaÏe!" YsaÏe's enduring legacy as one of the most extraordinary violinists and composers makes him a daunting figure to centre a recital around, yet the connection between him, Chausson, and Franck brings a certain charm to the program.

Interestingly, YsaÏe dedicates each of his six sonatas for solo violin to other prominent violinists of the time. His *Ballade* is dedicated to George Enescu and is possibly the most famous and beloved sonata of the six. This particular work is structured as one continuous movement with multiple contrasting sections. The beginning slowly winds up until the famous outburst. YsaÏe's harmonic language is advanced for his time, employing a variety of unexpected harmonic shifts and modulations, giving the piece a sense of ever shifting emotional depth.

Ernest Chausson's *Poème* was at first given the much longer title of *Le chant de l'amour triomphant: poème symphonique pour violon et orchestra*. I believe it is enlightening to examine the short story *Le chant de l'amour triomphant* ('The Song of Love Triumphant') by Ivan Turgenev, as we may discover that Chausson's *Poème* isn't simply a gorgeous piece, but is one holding a hidden story within itself. Turgenev's tale concerns the unlucky passion of young violinist Muzzio for lutenist Valeria, who herself preferred Fabius, a painter, to Muzzio. It is a story of unrequited love, betrayal, uneasy dreaminess, music and murder, to which many speculate is actually allegorical to Turgenev's own affairs. Drama! My guess is that this is why Chausson removed his original title, but there's no clear indication as to why the shorter name was preferred. But in studying this piece, the turmoil of Chausson's own life has its own emotional depths, comparable to Turgenev. Though Chausson was raised in a wealthy family, he studied law in order to please his father who thought there was no future in music. It was only later in life that Chausson studied composition under Massenet and Franck. Throughout his career, Chausson struggled with self doubt, feeling "haunted" by Wagner's influence, "at sea in the larger scale genres" he tackled and, in the end, died in a fatal accident at just 44 years old. To me, playing this piece feels incredibly intimate, feminine and heartbreaking. It is a stunning example of opulent French Romantic writing.

César Franck's violin sonata was written by the 63-year-old as a wedding present for the then-28-year-old YsaÏe. Whilst Franck was not present at the wedding, their mutual friend Charles Bordes gifted the work to YsaÏe and his bride, Louise Bourdeau de Courtrai. After what I can only imagine to be a very hurried rehearsal, YsaÏe and Bordes' sister-in-law, pianist Marie-Léontine Bordes-Pène, performed the sonata to the wedding guests. The sonata was given its first public concert later that year, again by YsaÏe and Bordes-Pène. In their lengthy recital, the sonata was the final item. By the time the sonata arrived, dusk had fallen and the gallery was bathed in gloom — the museum authorities permitted no artificial light whatsoever. Initially, it seemed the sonata would have to be abandoned but YsaÏe and Bordes-Pène decided to push ahead. Reaching the second movement, the gallery was now in total darkness. YsaÏe and Bordes-Pène continued from memory. When violinist Armand Parent criticised YsaÏe for playing the first movement faster than the composer intended, Franck replied: "From now on there will be no other way to play it."

YsaÏe kept Franck's sonata in his repertoire for the next forty years of his life, playing with a variety of pianists including Ernest Chausson. His championing of the sonata contributed to the public recognition of Franck as a major composer — though the acknowledgement came too late as Franck passed away just four years after the sonata's public premiere. If I had to describe Franck's sonata, I would say it explores almost every possible emotion, a monumental journey from tenderness and passion to melancholy, tension, triumph and an unveiled sense of joy.

Words by Miriam Niessl