



NORTHSTAR
RECORDING
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MENDELSSOHN
ELGAR | DE RAAFF

Soundscapes



Tosca Opdam violin
Alexander Ullman piano

Contains
world
premiere
recording



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EDWARD ELGAR**Violin Sonata Op. 82**

- [1] I. Allegro. Risoluto **8:14**
[2] II. Romance. Andante **7:20**
[3] III. Allegro non troppo **8:09**

FLORENCE PRICE

- [4] **The Deserted Garden** **2:03**

FELIX MENDELSSOHN**Violin Sonata in F Major**

- [5] I. Allegro vivace **11:27**
[6] II. Adagio **6:53**
[7] III. Assai vivace **5:38**

Lieder ohne Worte Op. 62

- [8] I. Andante espressivo "Mailuft"
arr. for violin and piano by F. Kreisler **2:59**

ROBIN DE RAAFF

- [9] Sonata for Violin and Piano No.2 'North Atlantic Light'
Carnegie Hall Version * **15:53**

MARIO CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO

Arr. for violin and piano by J. Heifetz

- [10] Sea Murmurs **1:39**

Total time 70:21

* World premiere recording.

The first performance of "North Atlantic Light" was on June 4th 2018 at Carnegie Hall, New York by Tosca Opdam and Victor Stanislavsky.

Soundscapes

Movements in time and sounds in space: While visual art and music share inspirational sources, they often flourish in different realms. Museums are silent spaces, while music halls concentrate their architecture on acoustics and the experience of sounds. This CD revolves around the idea of reintroducing visual elements into the musical experience.

The term “soundscapes” refers to acoustic environments created by contingent phenomena. Sounds create scapes, evoking visual experiences. The compositions on this recording are capable of creating landscapes and seascapes in their own right. The three sonatas by Edward Elgar, Felix Mendelssohn and Robin de Raaff originate environments that allow juxtapositions, pairings with three short pieces by Florence Price, Felix Mendelssohn and Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco.

Edward Elgar (1857-1934) noted that his violin sonata is “full of golden sounds.” Inspired by the lush, radiant, British countryside near Brinkwells, the cottage in Sussex where he lived with his wife while composing this sonata, Elgar creates a kaleidoscope of lights and landscapes in different seasons and at different times of the day. In a letter to a friend Alice Stuart Wortley, who was also the daughter of the painter John Everett Millais, Elgar himself explained: “The first movement is bold and vigorous, then a fantastic, curious movement with a very expressive middle section (...) They say it is as good or better than anything I have done in the expressive way (...) The last movement is very broad and soothing.” Indeed, the expressiveness of Elgar’s sonata fills the air with golden strokes.

Florence Price (1887-1953), born in Little Rock, Arkansas, was the first African American woman to gain recognition as a symphonic composer, often combining her classical composition training influenced by European composers with African American blues and jazz, folk tunes, and spirituals. Her piece *The deserted garden*, written in 1933, is a beautiful counter reflection of Elgar’s sonata. While Elgar’s sonata calls to mind a blooming and colorful countryside, Price evokes the image of a desolate landscape in greys.

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) was not only one of the greatest composers of his time but also loved to draw. On his grand tour, he captured the turbulent waterfall of the Rhine close to Schaffhausen in Switzerland. With tender aquarelle colors, he records the everlasting force of nature. His sonata is full of brilliancy, meandering between powerful motives we recognize from his Violin Concerto and the String Octet and splashes of water. Written in 1838, the sonata was never published during Mendelssohn’s lifetime. In 1953, Yehudi Menuhin discovered the piece and prepared it for publication and performance.

How can one describe something without words? Mendelssohn’s *Lieder ohne Worte* (songs without words) provides an answer. In the context of this CD, his piece *Mailüfte* (May breezes) mirrors his sonata while widening the horizon into the abstract. The waterfall has calmed down, movement evolves from within, expanding to the surface. Imagine a glittering dragonfly floating on the serene finish along the shore.

With his composition *North Atlantic Light*, Robin de Raaff (*1968) derived inspiration from a very tangible artistic vision of a seascape: He approaches reflecting lights and windy waters through Willem de Kooning's brush strokes. Willem de Kooning, who left The Netherlands at a young age to move to the United States of America, painted *North Atlantic Light* in 1977. The painting, part of the collection of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, portrays a sea view from the Hamptons, New York. Amid blues, whites, and yellows, a small sailing boat crystallizes between waves of light and air. Mirrored in the depth of the canvas, the moving ship reflects its position as a suspended breath.

In De Raaff's sonata, the violinist takes on the role of the painter, sketching notes while looking for solid ground. Along the lines of De Kooning's seascape, De Raaff's sonata invokes a feeling of being afloat. Waves come in all forms and shapes, and De Raaff employs the most extreme markings to attain them in the score. From almost quiet to thunderous, very slow-paced, accelerating sounds to swift rhythms and back, he uses the full range of the piano while searching for new heights on the violin. Leading up to the climax, tone-groups cluster together in dark muddy piano textures like thick impasto layers on De Kooning's canvas. Traces of movements become sounds in time again.

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco's (1895-1968) charming little piece *Sea Murmurs* floats by like a song, taking the listener softly by the hand and passing by before it can fully materialize. Soft rocking movements reflect kinder and calmer waters, allowing the listener to lift one's eyes and ears to find ever-surprising shapes and scapes.



Tosca Opdam violin

Praised for her “enchanting musical personality” (De Volkskrant), Dutch violinist Tosca Opdam has captivated audiences and critics alike with her luminously elegant performances, musical intelligence and a gift for storytelling that surpasses mere virtuosity.

Tosca won First Prize in the 2011 Oskar Back Violin Competition. She subsequently performed at the Royal Concertgebouw and returned for a sold-out debut recital — lauded by The Huffington Post as “at times bold and regal, other times poignant and tender; at all times rendered gorgeously” - and a performance in honor of the re-opening of Amsterdam’s Rijksmuseum. Her 2015 performance as part of the Liberation Day Concert on the Amstel River, with King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima in attendance, was broadcast live on Dutch national television. Other live broadcast performances include broadcasts on NPO Radio 4, WQXR (New York), Podium Witteman (Netherlands).

Tosca Opdam made her recital debut at Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall in June 2018 performing a program that included the World Premiere of Robin de Raaff’s North Atlantic Light, dedicated to Ms. Opdam and inspired by the Willem de Kooning painting of the same name. In May 2019 she premiered the work’s orchestral version with the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra at the Royal Concertgebouw, led by Marc Albrecht.

Recent and upcoming highlights include a performance of Bartok’s violin concerto nr. 2 with the Südwestdeutsche Philharmonie Konstanz under the baton of Annedore Neufeld, recitals at the main hall of De Doelen, Rotterdam, Carnegie Hall’s Zankel Hall, the Hong Kong Generation Next Music Festival, as well as the lead role in a program dedicated to Mendelssohn year 2022, including his concerto for violin, piano and strings orchestra alongside his Octet.

An avid chamber musician and recitalist, Tosca has appeared at the Grachtenfestival (Amsterdam), Delft Chamber Music Festival, Storioni Festival, the Siletz Bay Music Festival (Oregon), YAP festival (Ottawa, and the Festival Musica Classica Joao Pessoa (Brazil).

As an outgrowth of her wider interests, Ms. Opdam often designs programs that connect music to painting, dance, and other art forms. She performed with New York City Ballet and the New York Choreographic Institute at Lincoln Center and appeared with the Dutch National Ballet. In 2020, she founded the concert series “Miniatures inspired by visual arts and music” (www.miniatures-music-arts.com), combining music and visual arts in close collaboration with museums such as the Van Gogh Museum Amsterdam.

In 2017 the Toscana Foundation was established in Tosca Opdam's name with the aim of promoting classical music worldwide through education, collaborations with other artistic disciplines, and the championing and commissioning of contemporary composers for performance in the Netherlands and beyond. She earned her masters of music degree from The Juilliard School and her bachelors of music degree from the Manhattan School of Music. Her teachers have included Catherine Cho, Patty Kopec and Sylvia Rosenberg. Tosca Opdam plays a Matteo Gofriller violin from 1700, which is generously on loan to her by a private collector.



Alexander Ullman piano

Praised for his subtle interpretations and refined technical mastery, British pianist Alexander Ullman has impressed audiences and critics worldwide with his deep understanding of the scores he interprets, his elegant touch and crystalline phrasing.

Recent highlights include performances with the NCPA Orchestra in Beijing (Liszt Piano Concerto No. 2 under Markus Stenz) and Orquestra Simfònica de Barcelona (Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No. 1 under Josep Vicent), as well as his debuts at Lucerne Piano Festival and Montreal Chamber Music Festival. He also made his debut with the Moscow State Symphony Orchestra and performed recitals in Germany (Munich, Bayreuth, Weimar and Berlin), Austria (Wiener Konzerthaus and Liszt Festival Raiding), Hungary (Liszt Academy Budapest), the Netherlands, Poland, Italy, Georgia, Mexico, Korea (Seoul Arts Center) and his native UK.

The 21/22 season sees his evening recital debut at Wigmore Hall and debuts with Münchner Symphoniker (under Joseph Bastian) and Hong Kong Sinfonietta (under Ola Rudner), both with Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No. 3. He returns to the Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra (Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 4 under Dennis Russell Davies) and Klavierfestival Ruhr, and performs a recital at Hong Kong's Premiere Performances.

In Spring 2019, Alexander's first album on Rubicon, featuring Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite, Prokofiev's Six Pieces from Cinderella, as well as Stravinsky's Petrushka and Firebird suites, received rave reviews. In Spring 2022 the label will release a second album, featuring Piano Concerto Nos. 1 and 2 by Franz Liszt with the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Andrew Litton, coupled with his Piano Sonata in b minor.

The winner of the 2017 International Franz Liszt Piano Competition in Utrecht, Alexander has appeared with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Norwegian Radio Orchestra, St. Petersburg Philharmonic, Budapest Radio Orchestra and Korean Symphony Orchestra, as well as the New Jersey, Fort Worth and Montreal symphonies, working with conductors such as Vladimir Ashkenazy, Giancarlo Guerrero, Miguel Harth-Bedoya, Valentin Uryupin and Cristian Măcelaru. In the 17/18 season he closed the Lille Piano(s) Festival with Orchestre de Picardie under Jean-Claude Casadesu.

He has performed at Wigmore Hall and Queen Elizabeth Hall (London), the Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), Gewandhaus (Leipzig), Kimmel Center (Philadelphia), Kennedy Center (Washington DC), Seoul Arts Center, Shanghai Oriental Arts Center and the NCPA in Beijing, and has been featured in the Nottingham and Oxford international piano series, on BBC Radio 3, France Musique and MDR Klassik.



Chamber music highlights include performances at the International Musicians Seminar at Prussia Cove (UK), Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Germany), the Pablo Casals Festival in Prades (France) and La Jolla Summerfest (US) with performers such as the Dover Quartet, violinists Barnabas Kelemen and Aleksey Semenenko, and cellist Michael Petrov.

Alexander first came to international attention in 2011 after winning the Franz Liszt International Piano Competition in Budapest. From 2014 to 2017 he was represented by Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT). Born in London, in 1991, he studied at the Purcell School, the Curtis Institute and the Royal College of Music, completing his Artist Diploma as the "Benjamin Britten Piano Fellow" in 2017 (awarded by the Philip Loubser Foundation). His teachers have included William Fong, Leon Fleisher, Ignat Solzhenitsyn, Robert McDonald, Dmitri Alexeev, Ian Jones and Elisso Virsaladze.

This Recording was produced, engineered and edited using the 'High Quality Musical Mastering' principle with the use of Sonodore microphones, Avalon Acoustic & Musikelectronic Geithain monitoring, Siltech Mono-Crystal cabling and dCS - & Merging Technologies converters.



NORTHSTAR
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