

**Fauré, Chausson & Satie**  
**Piano Trios**

**FIDELIO TRIO**

# Fauré, Chausson & Satie

## Piano Trios

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### Fidelio Trio

Darragh Morgan *violin*  
Adi Tal *cello*  
Mary Dullea *piano*

#### About the Fidelio Trio:

*'[...] their interpretative touch is secure, their rapport instinctive. Together with their eloquence and passion, this all adds up to something special'*

Gramophone

*'[...] the Fidelio Trio plays it with such delicacy of touch and suavity of tone that its Frenchness and its closeness to the Ravel coupling are never in doubt'*

The Strad

Ernest Chausson (1855–1899)

#### **Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 3**

- |                  |         |
|------------------|---------|
| 1. Pas trop lent | [10:03] |
| 2. Vite          | [4:00]  |
| 3. Assez lent    | [7:15]  |
| 4. Animé         | [8:42]  |

Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)

#### **Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 120**

- |                           |        |
|---------------------------|--------|
| 5. Allegro, ma non troppo | [6:08] |
| 6. Andantino              | [8:45] |
| 7. Allegro vivo           | [4:46] |

Erik Satie (1866–1925)

arr. John White

#### **8. Prière pour le salut de mon âme**

from *Messe des Pauvres* [3:29]

#### **Le Piège de Méduse**

- |                |        |
|----------------|--------|
| 9. Quadrille   | [0:44] |
| 10. Valse      | [0:46] |
| 11. Pas vite   | [0:38] |
| 12. Mazurka    | [0:26] |
| 13. Un peu vif | [0:16] |
| 14. Polka      | [0:27] |
| 15. Quadrille  | [0:25] |

Total playing time [57:01]



Photography: Hugo Glendinning

### Fauré, Chausson & Satie: Piano Trios

Ernest Chausson (1855–1899) came from an affluent family and following the wishes of his parents, he initially studied law and qualified as a barrister in 1877. But this was not the career he wanted: Chausson's inclinations were artistic rather than legal and he established friendships with painters such as Henri Fantin-Latour (1836–1904) and Odilon Redon (1840–1916, a good amateur pianist with whom Chausson played piano duets). Soon after completing his legal studies, he started to have composition lessons with Jules Massenet (1842–1912), who invited him to join his class at the Paris Conservatoire. Massenet considered Chausson 'an exceptional person and a true artist' and did much to encourage his earliest attempts at composition. Chausson subsequently studied with César Franck (1822–1890) whose music exerted a strong influence and with whom he remained on friendly terms. Though he came late to the conservatoire system, Chausson was encouraged by Massenet to enter the *Prix de Rome* (which Massenet himself had won in 1863) but he failed to reach the final stage the competition held in May 1881. He remained in Massenet's class until the end of the Conservatoire year a few weeks later (Massenet noted on

Chausson's file that 'after failing to gain admission to the *Prix de Rome* competition, he wanted to have nothing more to do with the Conservatoire. Very intelligent and independent.' Disappointed by the result but even more resolved to create his first major work, Chausson left Paris to spend the summer in Switzerland. Between July and September 1881 he composed the **Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 3** while staying in the village of Montbovon, 25km north-east of Montreux in the Swiss canton of Fribourg. Chausson was a serious-minded young composer and – as for so many others before and after him – the experience of the *Prix de Rome* had turned out to be a dispiriting experience. But if writing a cantata to order was not his *métier*, Chausson did have a natural inclination for chamber music and his first major composition was the Piano Trio. Though it is an early work, it already demonstrates an impressive control of structure and the ability to create and develop strongly characterised ideas that were to become typical of Chausson's later chamber works: the Concerto for violin, piano and string quartet (1889–91), the Piano Quartet (1897) and the String Quartet left incomplete at the time of Chausson's death in 1899 (he was working on it the day he died in a tragic cycling accident).



Ernest Chausson

As well as the lyrical writing of Massenet and the chromatic harmonies of Franck, the other major influence on the Trio is the music of Wagner: he had seen the *Ring* cycle in Munich and like Emmanuel Chabrier (1841–1894), Henri Duparc (1848–1933), Paul Dukas (1865–1935) and Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924), Chausson fell under the spell of Richard Wagner's (1813–1883) music, though in common with all his great French contemporaries, he never produced pale imitations of Wagner.

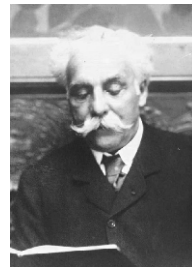
The slow introduction of the trio presents two themes that reappear in various guises throughout the work, an early example of Chausson's use of cyclic form to provide thematic unity. The mood of the first movement is predominantly dark with a turbulent main section ('Animé') that also has moments of lyrical repose. The

musical language often has a debt to Franck, above all in its free-flowing harmonic mobility. The opening ideas are recalled with dramatic force at the close. The second movement has the character of a scherzo, lightening the mood after the intense first movement and dominated by a sparkling idea that reveals Chausson as a composer of great delicacy: both the piano and string writing have a seemingly effortless lightness of touch. The expansive slow movement, marked 'Assez lent', begins with a song-like transformation of one of the themes from the first movement, and during its leisurely span, this is developed and expanded in a way that suggests the influence of Wagner as well as Franck. The finale opens with a breezy waltz-like idea in G major, but after this is extensively developed, Chausson brings back material from the first movement and the work ends in a state of unease in the key of G minor.

The first performance was given in the Salle Pleyel in Paris on 8 April 1882 at a concert of the Société Nationale de Musique. It was played by Guillaume Rémy (1856–1923, violin), Jules Delsart (1844–1900, cello) and André Messager (1853–1929, piano). Despite a programme that also included Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921) playing his own *Paraphrase sur Gallia de Gounod* and new songs by Cécile Chaminade

(1857–1944) as well as the Chausson premiere, there were no reviews of this concert and the Trio was not published until 1919, twenty years after Chausson's death. The mourners at Chausson's funeral were a tribute to the esteem in which he was held by his peers. Among others, they included Claude Debussy (1862–1918), Fauré, Duparc, Dukas, Isaac Albéniz (1860–1909), Rodin, Edgar Degas (1834–1917) and Pierre Louÿs (1870–1925).

While Chausson's Piano Trio was his first major work, Fauré's **Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 120** was almost his last. Fauré's chamber music was mostly written during two phases in his career. Between 1876 and 1886 he composed the First Violin Sonata, the two piano quartets and shorter pieces including Papillon and the *Élégie* (both for cello and piano). From



Gabriel Fauré

1887 to 1894 he had a protracted struggle with the First Piano Quintet, but his major remaining chamber works come from the end of his career, starting with the First Cello Sonata in 1917. Fauré retired as Director of the Paris Conservatoire in 1920 at the age of seventy-five, and though he was increasingly troubled by a kind of deafness that distorted musical sounds, he produced a succession of works that demonstrate a wonderful economy and concentration: the Second Piano Quintet, Second Cello Sonata and the song cycle *L'Horizon chimérique* were completed in 1921, and his only String Quartet was to occupy him from 1923 until just before he died the following year.

The idea of composing a Piano Trio was originally suggested by Fauré's publisher Jacques Durand (1865–1928). The work was started in his favourite retreat of Annecy-le-Vieux in August 1922 and his original idea was to write it for clarinet, cello and piano but he soon settled on having a violin as the top part. Progress was slow. Fauré wrote to his wife: 'I can't work for long stretches of time. My worst problem is perpetual tiredness.' Despite his increasing frailty, there's no hint of fatigue in this work, perhaps because Fauré took his time. The slow movement was the first to be completed, and the

outer movements of the Trio were finished by February 1923. The first performance was given on 12 May 1923 at a concert of the Société Nationale de Musique, played by Robert Kretzly (1891–1956, violin), Jacques Patte (cello) and Tatiana de Sanzévitch (piano), on a programme that also included Franck's String Quartet and Fauré's own *La Bonne Chanson* but Fauré was too ill to attend. He did hear a performance by the celebrated trio of Alfred Cortot (1877–1962), Jacques Thibaud (1880–1953) and Pablo Casals (1876–1973) which first played the work on 29 June, six weeks after the premiere.

The music of the first movement – written in modified Sonata form – demonstrates Fauré at his most subtle, both harmonically and rhythmically. The elegant restraint of the 'Andantino' disguises the quiet yearning of a composer in old age. Robert Orledge has written that this 'long slow movement must surely rank among Fauré's most inspired' and its seemingly effortless combination of a flowing melody and solemn piano chords is profoundly moving. The finale, marked 'Allegro vivo', is a rondo infused with vigorous vitality, and the apparent resemblance between its main theme and 'Ridi Pagliaccio' from Ruggero Leoncavallo's (1857–1919) *Pagliacci* (an opera Fauré particularly disliked) was,



Erik Satie

according to Fauré himself, entirely accidental. Fauré's biographer Jean-Michel Nectoux (b. 1946) has written that at the end of the Trio, 'all the thematic and rhythmic elements are now in place and proceed to indulge in a joyful celebration, a perfect balance between that 'fantasy and reason' of which Verlaine and Fauré speak so persuasively at the end of *La bonne chanson*.'

All but one movement of John White's Erik Satie (1866–1925) arrangements come from the incidental music Erik Satie wrote for his play *Le Piège de Méduse*. The text was written in February–March 1913 and the music was composed a few months later. The play was published (without the music) in 1921, illustrated with woodcuts by Georges Braque (1882–1963)

and Darius Milhaud (1892–1974) conducted a private performance of the same year in an arrangement by Satie for small orchestra with Satie himself playing the part of Baron Méduse. The pieces, most of which reflect Satie's interest in reinventing popular dance forms, were published in a version of solo piano in 1929 and the instrumentation Satie had in mind was evidently flexible, making it an ideal piece for arrangement as a piano trio. Performances of *Le Piège de Méduse* were few and far between, though one given (in English) at Black Mountain College, North Carolina, on 14 August 1948 is of particular interest: the music was played on the piano by John Cage (1912–1992), the part of Baron Medusa was played by the futurist architect Buckminster Fuller (1895–1983), his servant Polycarp was played by the writer Isaac Rosenfeld (1918–1956), the part of Jonas the mechanical monkey was performed by Merce Cunningham (1919–2009, who also devised the dances) and the decor was by William (1904–1997) and Elaine (1918–1989) de Kooning. The remaining movement comes from Satie's *Messe des Pauvres*, his only liturgical work, written in 1893–5 and published posthumously in 1929 in an edition by his friend and disciple Darius Milhaud.

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Ever since my early teenage years I have admired the music of Erik Satie for its sprightly originality and occasional passages of unexpected profundity. It was with delight that I received a commission from the Fidelio Trio to make arrangements of some of Satie's keyboard music for piano trio. My intention has been to re-compose the pieces as though they had always been destined to be played by violin, cello and piano. The pieces I've addressed so far have been *Le Piège de Méduse* (seven dances for piano) of 1913, and the last movement 'Prière pour le salut de mon âme' (from the organ *Messe des pauvres*) completed in 1895.

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### Fidelio Trio

The 'virtuosic Fidelio Trio' (*The Sunday Times*) is Darragh Morgan, violin, Adi Tal, cello and Mary Dullea, piano. Shortlisted for the 2016 Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards, the Fidelio Trio is an enthusiastic champion of the piano trio genre, performing the widest possible range of repertoire on concert stages across the world; it has broadcast regularly on BBC Radio 3, RTÉ Lyric FM, WQXR, and featured on a Sky Arts documentary.

Since their debut at London's Southbank Centre, the trio has appeared at the Wigmore Hall and Kings Place, at festivals including Spitalfields, Cheltenham, St. Magnus and Huddersfield. In Ireland it regularly performs at National Concert Hall, Dublin, Kilkenny Festival and Belfast Festival at Queen's as well as overseas in Shanghai, Beijing, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Porto, Paris, Venice, Florence, Johannesburg, Harare, New York City, Princeton, San Francisco and Boston.

The trio's extensive discography includes Ravel and Saint-Saëns for Resonus Classics; Philip Glass *Head On & Pendulum on Orange Mountain*; Korngold and Schoenberg (*Verklärte Nacht* arr. Steuermann) for Naxos; the complete Michael Nyman Piano Trios for MN Records; multiple releases on NMC, Delphian Records including portrait albums for composers such as Luke Bedford and Michael Zev Gordon. Their previous release of French Piano Trios for Resonus was a *Gramophone* Editor's Choice.

The Fidelio Trio has given masterclasses at Peabody Conservatory, Curtis Institute, NYU, NAFA Singapore, and Stellenbosch Conservatorium South Africa. They have been artists-in-residence at St. Patrick's College, Dublin City University, University

of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, and the State University of New York.

The Trio has premiered music by composers including Toshio Hosokawa, Charles Wuorinen, Johannes Maria Staud, Michael Nyman, Gerald Barry, Donnacha Dennehy, Joe Cutler, Evan Ziporyn, Simon Bainbridge, Judith Weir, Alexander Goehr and Kevin Volans.

Inspirational musicians The Fidelio Trio has collaborated with include Nicholas Daniel (oboe), Richard Watkins (horn), Joan Rodgers and Patricia Rozario (soprano), Rachel Roberts (viola) and, with spoken word, author Alexander McCall Smith and T.S. Eliot prizewinning poet Sinéad Morrissey.

The trio often performs Beethoven's Triple Concerto, most recently with KZN Philhamonic Orchestra South Africa and RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland.

The three members of the trio are Artistic Directors of the annual Winter Chamber Music Festival at Belvedere House, Dublin City University and continue to be passionate in advocacy for the piano trio across the world.

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

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