



GABRIEL FAURÉ
Works for Violin & Piano



JANE GORDON violin
JAN RAUTIO piano

Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)

Music for Violin & Piano

Jane Gordon *violin*

Jan Rautio *piano*

About Jane Gordon and Jan Rautio:

*'Jane Gordon brings not only a ravishing tone and depth of timbre
but a real sense of musical line to everything she plays'*
The Independent

'Jan Rautio leads performances notable for their buoyancy and vivacity'
Gramophone

Sonata No. 1 in A major, Op. 13

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------|
| 1. Allegro molto | [7:49] |
| 2. Andante | [7:17] |
| 3. Allegro vivo | [4:29] |
| 4. Allegro quasi presto | [6:03] |

5. **Berceuse, Op. 16** [3:44]

6. **Andante, Op. 75** [4:35]

Sonata No. 2 in E minor, Op. 108

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------|
| 7. Allegro non troppo | [9:17] |
| 8. Andante | [7:46] |
| 9. Allegro non troppo | [6:39] |

10. **Romance, Op. 28** [5:57]

Total playing time [63:42]



Recording in London during the pandemic

We initially conceived this recording to celebrate a significant milestone – two decades of professional partnership, performing hundreds of concerts and collaborating on numerous artistic projects. However in 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic changed the world, bringing most activities we took for granted to a standstill, and affecting the creative industries particularly badly.

Our recording took place in August 2020, during a brief period when the UK Lockdown restrictions were eased. At a time when public performances had all but ceased, here was a much needed opportunity to make music together, following an enforced period of reflection on the purpose of a musician's life. Here was a chance to acknowledge years of collective experience from esteemed teachers and colleagues across the many stages of a musician's lifelong journey. Understandably this Fauré project acquired far greater significance to us than initially imagined. The choice of repertoire became more meaningful and the artistic vision stronger. With a long-standing affinity to the A major Sonata, which we first performed as students at the Royal Academy of Music, it was as a mature duo that we had

decided to tackle the second sonata. Having played his Piano Trio, written in 1923, we were fascinated by the composer's late style. Sourcing and securing a rare 1890s Érard piano was central to our concept of recreating the composer's sound world.

Gabriel Fauré: Music for Violin and Piano

Fauré's two violin sonatas were completed in 1876 and 1917 respectively. During this time the geopolitical and cultural landscapes were changing rapidly. At the beginning of the 1870s there were gaslights in Paris, Germany did not yet exist as a country, and Wagner was in the process of pushing the centuries-old boundaries of music to their breaking points. By the mid-1910s, electricity, motor vehicles, airplanes, jazz and atonal music were some of the new frontiers of the advancing modern world. In 1870 Fauré volunteered for military service during the Franco-Prussian War. In 1916, as he set out to write the second sonata, he was forced to watch from the sidelines as the gruesome events of World War I unfolded, his son Philippe away on active service.

Bridging the end of Romanticism and the beginnings of Modernism, Fauré is considered to be one of the most important French composers of the late-nineteenth and

early-twentieth centuries. Fauré lived through monumental changes and this is undoubtedly reflected in his writing. The restless nature of Fauré's language, already present in the earlier sonata, becomes amplified in the second, in which youthful exuberance and optimism are replaced by anxiety and turbulence, with continuous modulations resolving only in the climactic moments.

The first sonata was premiered in 1877 to huge success, and has remained one of Fauré's most popular chamber works ever since. It is at once virtuosic and elegant, precisely constructed and achingly lyrical. The listener will encounter beautiful, sweeping melodies in the opening 'Allegro molto'; the darker atmosphere of the second movement; quasi-Mendelssohnian playfulness of the scherzo; and the joyous *moto perpetuo* of the finale.

Eschewing the shock-and-awe tactics of some composers, Fauré's distinctive musical voice evolved gradually, yet significantly, over several decades. Not for him the strangeness of the twelve-tone system, nor the traumatic brutality of pieces like the *Rite of Spring*. He did not get rid of the rule book entirely; rather, he pushed and pulled the existing rules of the Western Classical canon to their

logical limits.

By the time Fauré completed his second sonata in the winter of 1917, four decades had passed since the premiere of the first. Despite increasing deafness, the composer found a way to show optimism in this powerful three-movement work. However, in order to reach the light at the end of the proverbial tunnel, the listener is compelled to embark on a perilous journey across an unpredictable musical landscape. Each movement is an ever-shifting entity of one modulation upon another, with resolutions allowed only in the very concluding moments of each movement. In common with the 1876 sonata, this later work also has sweeping melodies, but each cadence leads somewhere new, building unbearable tension until the relief of the final resolution. The first and second subjects of the first movement reappear towards the end of the finale, creating an arch-like structure, and giving the overall shape of the composition a sense of architectural solidity.

Érard Piano

The piano used for this recording is a beautifully restored 1890s Érard. A renowned and innovative make of piano, Érards were

made in London and Paris and Fauré himself owned one.

There are very few currently available in good working order, suitable to withstand the demands of performing and with a high quality sound, therefore we were fortunate to be able to acquire this particular one.

A sensitive instrument, the Érard resonates in a different way from a modern piano. In contrast to the homogenous sound of the latter, each register of the Érard possesses its own unique timbre, with clear distinctions between the registers. The bass may not be as powerful as that of a modern grand, but the middle range is lyrical, and the upper limits of the keyboard have a transparent quality. Overall, I found it easier to achieve good balance with this Érard. My hope is that in this recording you will hear the sort of soundscape that the composer himself would have conceived.

Any interpretation is a time capsule which captures the way the musicians are thinking at that moment. Were we to record these sonatas again in twenty years time, we will have produced, I hope, a rather different take. For example, based on research we conducted leading up to the recording we decided to be sparing

in our use of rubato, as Fauré was said to not have been a fan. However, we considered his opinion in the context of the times – and rubato was certainly very popular then.

Violin modes of expression

In keeping with the historically informed approach, I used covered gut strings for this recording as opposed to modern synthetic core and metal wound strings. The gut strings allowed for a more nuanced and sensitive style of playing, and I felt I could draw out a wider range of expression particularly with the softer range of dynamics. Typically not powerful strings, there were no issues of balance with the Érard and it felt very natural and cohesive passing melodic material back and forth, weaving through the phrases.

By the mid nineteenth century, the most significant schools of violin playing were emerging: the German, Russian and Franco-Belgian, and with each came very distinctive performance styles. I researched vibrato and portamento styles from this period and felt free to explore new ideas though ultimately guided by what felt most tasteful to my modern ear. It is my understanding that in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries a deeply personal

singing style of playing was held in the highest regard.

What is clear from the earliest twentieth century recordings of 'Golden Age' violinists is that the playing was highly distinctive and recognisable. These performers are identifiable by their individual use of vibrato, rubato and bowing.

Whilst we cannot and should not try to emulate a particular historical player's sound when considering these performance practices, it is interesting to deviate from the often immaculately clean playing heard today. Perhaps by exploring taste and trends of late-nineteenth and twentieth century playing, we can keep challenging and exploring our modes of expression.

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Jane Gordon (violin)

Jane's expressive and refined performances have won critical acclaim, establishing her as one of the leading violinists of her generation. A wonderfully versatile musician, her musical activities span classical concerti, solo recitals, a wide variety of chamber music, period instrument performance and play/directing orchestras from the violin. She has performed extensively at major festivals and concert halls throughout Europe, Asia and America.

Jane has a long standing partnership with Jan Rautio in performances of duo repertoire and together with cellist Victoria Simonsen they play as the Rautio Piano Trio.

As a period instrument specialist, Jane has worked as guest leader with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment (directing, UK), London Bach Society (directing, UK), European Brandenburg Ensemble (Trevor Pinnock, Germany), Early Opera Company (Christian Curnyn, UK), Casa da Musica (Laurence Cummings, Portugal) and is a member of the English Baroque Soloists, under Sir John Eliot Gardiner.

Off stage, Jane has written articles published in *Classical Music Magazine* and *The Strad*, and has given interviews on BBC Radio 3, World Service and Radio 4 on a variety of music-related topics. Jane is artistic director of Hastings Early Music Festival. In 2017 she was elected Associate of the Royal Academy of Music.





Jan Rautio (piano)

Jan Rautio was born in Russia, grew up in London and was a scholar at both the Royal College of Music and at the Royal Academy of Music. His work as a pianist, composer and conductor has taken him to many performance venues across the UK, Europe, Russia and the USA. He has given numerous live broadcasts on BBC Radio 3 together with the Rautio Piano Trio, having established a reputation as a critically acclaimed chamber musician with the latter.

Jan is the Music Director of the 'Diversity' chamber choir. As their conductor he led them in performances in London's St Paul's Cathedral, Gasteig Philharmonie in Munich and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, amongst others. His recent compositions include *Gloria, laus et honor* for choir and a chamber ensemble, and his first String Quartet.

In 2017 he was made Associate of the Royal Academy of Music for his services to music life in the UK.

Instruments used in this recording:

Jane Gordon plays a fine Pietro Guarneri of Venice violin on loan through the Beare's International Violin Society.

Jan Rautio plays an Érard Piano c.1890

Acknowledgements

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Richard Goldstein for tuning the Érard during the recording, as well as fixing the odd squeaks and creaks. Old pianos can be very temperamental!

Chris and Steve Gordon for housing the piano for our rehearsals.

Renee Rautio, Jan's daughter, for COVID-secure, same household page turning.



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Producer, engineer & editor: Adam Binks

Piano technician: Richard Goldstein

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Cover image: Gabriel Fauré next to his piano, in his apartment in the boulevard Malesherbes, Paris by Dornac (1858–1941)

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