CHAMPS HILL
RECORDS

ESPOSITO: Violin and Cello Sonatas

Mia Cooper *violin*
William Butt *cello*
Lance Coburn *piano*

MICHELE ESPOSITO *(1855-1929)*

SONATA FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO IN G MAJOR Op.32

1	Moderato	*06'52*
2	Lento	*07'17*
3	Allegro vivace	*05'07*

SONATA FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO IN E MINOR Op.46

4	Allegro moderato	*07'46*
5	Andantino	*04'36*
6	Con fuoco	*06'41*

SONATA FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO IN A MAJOR Op.67

7	Affettuosamente	*09'39*
8	Allegretto moderato	*03'35*
9	Andante cantabile	*04'22*
10	Allegretto grazioso	*05'10*

SONATA FOR CELLO AND PIANO Op.43

11	Allegro moderato	*07'10*
12	Lento	*06'51*
13	Allegro moderato	*04'25*

Total playing time: 79'44

Mia Cooper *violin*
William Butt *cello*
Lance Coburn *piano*

Produced & Engineered by Michael Ponder
Edited & Mastered by Richard Scott

Recorded on 3rd – 5th September 2012 in the Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex, UK
Cover photograph of the Cliffs of Moher, Ireland, by Agnieszka Gaul
Tray photograph of the Cliffs of Moher at sunset in Co. Clare, Ireland, by Patryk Kosmider
Photographs of artists by Frances Marshall
Executive Producer for Champs Hill Records: Alexander Van Ingen
Label Manager for Champs Hill Records: John Dickinson

The idea behind recording these overlooked sonatas stemmed from an idle chat (whilst returning doubtless overdue items) with Philip Shields, librarian at the Royal Irish Academy of Music in Dublin, who was in the process of scanning the Academy's tattered and rare copies onto the virtual catalogue. Philip illuminated me as regards Michele Esposito's importance not only in terms of the Academy's history but also as the figurehead for musical life in Dublin around the turn of the twentieth century.

At first curious only to hear the music, its richness and lyricism then took me by surprise, and it seemed a shame not to make such beautiful music more widely known. It was not hard to seize the opportunity to play with superlative colleagues Lance and Bill, and with the generosity of David and Mary Bowerman, and also Deborah Kelleher, Esposito's successor and present-day director of the Royal Irish Academy of Music, this CD was made possible.

Royal Irish Academy of Music

The idea that one of the leading Irish composers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries should have been an Italian from the Bay of Naples sounds something of an Irishism in itself, but such was the case. Michele Esposito spent almost his whole professional life in Ireland, and he was a respected and hugely influential figure throughout that time – indeed, a very lynch-pin of Irish musical life. Though his own compositions have suffered a period of eclipse, they are undergoing a gradual revival, as the present recording demonstrates.

Esposito was born on 29 September 1855 near Sorrento, to poor parents, at Castellammare di Stabia (next to the ancient Roman naval base of Stabiae, destroyed in the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD). He showed early musical talent and as a boy became a pupil at the Naples Conservatory, studying piano with Beniamino Cesi (1845-1907) who had been a favourite pupil of the great Sigismond Thalberg. (Cesi's father had studied with Carl Czerny, friend and pupil of Beethoven.) Esposito also studied composition with Paolo Serrao (1830-1907), the teacher of Francesco Cilea and Esposito's near-contemporary Giuseppe Martucci. After some years in Naples Esposito went to Paris, where he met many of the leading personalities of the day and was principally known for his concerts as a brilliant pianist. He also took a Russian wife, Natalia Klebnikova: they met in Naples in 1879 and their children grew up speaking French, Russian, Italian and English. (The children included the renowned medieval scholar Mario Esposito, whose researches into the extent of Latin learning in Ireland in the Middle Ages have been described as epoch-making.)

In 1882, aged only 26, Esposito was appointed principal professor of pianoforte at the Royal Irish Academy of Music, a post he would occupy for more than 40 years, founding an influential school of piano-playing. From the first he threw himself into the cause of arousing enthusiasm for classical music in Dublin. In 1886 he founded and ran the chamber music recitals given by the Royal Dublin Society, and gave recitals for the Society every year. With Sir Stanley Cochrane (1877-1949), a mineral water magnate and one of Dublin's foremost patrons of music, he founded a music publishing house – C & E Editions – which issued Esposito's own editions of Mozart, Beethoven and other established composers, as well as his own music. It was under Cochrane's aegis that Esposito, together with the violinist Achille Simonetti and a cellist rejoicing in the name of Clyde Twelvetrees, performed a cycle of the complete Beethoven piano trios. He was also active as a conductor, and not only in Ireland – so much sought-after, in fact, that in the winter of 1897-98, in Moscow, he gave the Moscow premiere of Mussorgsky's *Khovanschina* and the world premiere of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sadko* at the Solodovnikov Theatre. He also, in 1898, founded the Dublin Orchestral Society and was its conductor until 1914 as well as conducting the Sunday Orchestral Concerts in the city. Esposito also conducted the London Symphony Orchestra when it visited Ireland in 1913 and 14 to give concerts in the hall at Woodbrook, Sir Stanley Cochrane's mansion on the outskirts of Dublin. He was, furthermore, active as a concert promoter and as an adjudicator at musical competitions: in 1894 he established a country-wide network of Local Centres Examinations that flourishes to the present day. Well known in literary and cultural circles, Esposito numbered James Joyce among his friends. He continued to work in Ireland through World War I and the foundation of the Irish Free State, finally retiring in 1928. He moved to Florence (where his son Mario was already living) and died there on 19 November 1929, aged 74.

Esposito composed little during his first years in Ireland, but he was later prolific in several genres, especially chamber and piano music, though he also wrote a cantata for soli, chorus and orchestra, *Dierdre* (1897), said to have been the first such work based on an Irish legend, and a *Sinfonia Irlandese* or *Symphony on Irish Airs* (1902): both works received awards from the Feis Ceoil, the Irish musical society which has had an annual cultural festival of music and dance since 1897. His music won numerous other awards. Esposito also composed an orchestral *Irish Suite*, two one-act operas, *The Tinker and the Fairy* (1910, with a libretto by Douglas Hyde) and *The Post Bag* (to a libretto by A.P. Graves), as well as a Piano Concerto (1913), which he premiered with the London Symphony Orchestra at Woodbrook under the baton of another notable Irish musician, Hamilton Harty. He also wrote songs, and made

arrangements of Irish folksongs. Though his personal idiom was rooted in the romantic era of the later 19th century, he had a deep regard for Irish folk music, and he encouraged younger Irish composers to use it as a source of material for extended compositions, though he thought these should be in fully developed European forms, rather along the lines indicated by Stanford's 'Irish' Symphony and Dvorák's Symphony *From the New World*.

With the possible exception of the Cello Sonata, there are no obvious Irish characteristics in the four works on this disc, however. Perhaps more surprisingly, Esposito's basic idiom is not notably 'Italian' either – certainly no more so than the idiom of two Italian contemporaries who concentrated on instrumental rather than operatic music, namely Martucci and Sgambati. But whereas their models were mainly Germanic (such as Brahms), Esposito – though he has his Brahmsian moments – seems more attuned to contemporary French repertoire: Saint-Saëns and, especially, Fauré come to mind as comparisons.

Esposito composed three Violin Sonatas, all of which are recorded here. They (and the Cello Sonata) are music of real distinction, absolute clarity of form, elegance of thought, strong melodic appeal, and show real mastery of the potential of the instruments involved. They show him strongly attached to the instrumental forms of his great continental forebears and contemporaries – it is interesting that he tends (apart from in Sonata No.1) to write his finales in sonata form as well as his first movements. He is not often a formal innovator, but the music lives on because of its obvious melodic attractions. He is also a skilful contrapuntist, fond of writing lines in contrary motion, something that tends to come naturally for a pianist through the movement of two hands at the keyboard.

Violin Sonata No.1 in G major, Op.32 is dedicated to Guido Papini (1847-1912), a Florentine-born violinist-composer who was chief professor of violin at the Royal Irish Academy until 1896: he and Esposito often played as a duo and presumably gave the Sonata's first performance. From the outset Esposito shows himself as a composer of considerable melodic flair. The first subject is flowing and mellifluous, the violin borne upon a continuous rippling accompaniment from the piano. The second subject is rather more dramatic, developing the hint of a waltz. The development section proper, which opens with the initial subject in the piano, deftly exploits the potential of the materials and comes to a thrilling climax with the violin in octaves. In the recapitulation the first subject is now shared as a duet between piano and violin, and it is again the piano that introduces it in the peaceful coda.

The *Lento* slow movement, in E major, is marked *con molto sentimento* and at first could almost be a sort of drawing-room serenade, but it develops a little too much emotion and rhythmic interest to sustain this impression. A delicate chromatic passage with syncopated piano harmonies then alternates with a passionate contrasting theme before a beautifully judged transition leads back to the serenade, now with an entirely different accompaniment. It rises to an ardent climax that dissolves into the serene concluding bars, the violin climbing to a sustained high E.

The finale is an *Allegro vivace* that starts out in G minor with a wild, almost Russian-sounding dance (the first four notes of the main tune recall the 'Dies Irae' plainchant). After a pause, Esposito then introduces a smooth and lyrical contrasting tune, con espressione in the relative major (B flat). Reminiscences of the dance soon lead to its recurrence, and the tune is put through bravura paces in terms of *pizzicato*, double-stopping and so on. By the time the *espressivo* tune returns all has moved confidently into G major, but we return to the minor for the final helping of Esposito's rather tongue-in-cheek 'danse macabre'.

Esposito's Violin Sonata No.2 in E minor, Op.46 gained a prize in an international competition mounted by La Société Nouvelle de la Musique in Paris in 1907. Published the same year, it is dedicated 'à Monsieur Henry Deutsch (de la Meurthe)'. Deutsch (1846-1919) was a petroleum millionaire, early enthusiast for aviation, and general philanthropist; presumably he financed the competition. It opens in the manner of passionate recitative, only gradually settling in to the first subject of the first movement's broad sonata design. This includes a passage in dotted rhythm that the piano turns into fanfare-like chords. The lyrical second subject is sweetly sung

dolcissimo by the violin. After a development that makes use of all the material heard thus far, and an orthodox recapitulation (led up to by imaginative use of the dotted-rhythm figure) that brings back the second subject in E major, Esposito leaves room for an expansive coda, *largamente*, full of passion and animation.

The middle movement, a delightful C major *Andantino*, starts with the violin being strummed *pizzicato*, almost like a guitar, while the piano introduces the wisp of what passes for the main melodic idea. When the opening music returns, the violin's chords are bowed triple stops, leading now to an exprssive tune that rises to a romantic climax before subsiding. At the end the violin's *pizzicati* are punctuated by the *staccati* of the piano. The whole movement is a witty and ingenious study in colour and kinds of attack. The finale, *Allegro con fuoco*, is in a full-hearted E major with a main dance theme that is once again reminiscent of Fauré. The second subject, in B major, starts off with a mazurka-like transition and leads to a dreamy *dolcissimo* tune. A brief development based on the dancing first subject introduces a broad recapitulation with the second subject group now in E, as orthodoxy requires. An exciting coda returns to the dance for one last bravura page.

Dedicated to the Irish conductor-composer Hamilton Harty, Esposito's Violin Sonata No.3 in A major, Op.67, dates from 1920-21 and has four movements rather than three. Though a comparatively late work, there are only hints here and there (principally in the first two movements) that Esposito might have been influenced by the music of his younger contemporaries of the early 20th century: generally speaking the work is still in the romantic, melodically generous idiom of the previous two sonatas. Its first movement opens with a romantic and rhapsodic introduction, *Affetuosamente*, that prefaces the entry of the rather quicker main subject, *un poco animato*. The first three notes of the introduction become a motif in their own right, however, and after the rather nervously rhythmic second subject they round off the exposition. The development section is animated and agitated, based at first on the *poco animato* theme and building to a big *appassionato* climax and then developing the second subject somewhat in the manner of a chorale. This leads to what sounds like a joyous new theme (*con gioia*) but eventually reveals itself as a transformation of the rhapsodic introduction, which naturally enough brings about the recapitulation. There is no extended coda: after the reprise of the second subject has run its course in full, the calm closing bars refer us back to the rhapsodic introductory theme.

The second movement, in F sharp minor, is a bittersweet waltz, with a rippling moonlit trio in F sharp major. Esposito's piano writing here suggests he may have been taking account of at least the earlier works of Debussy. The return of the waltz is no mere da capo but a dramatic development of it. The movement ends with a reference to the rippling trio. The slow movement is a deeply expressive *Andante cantabile* in D major with a haunting main theme in dotted rhythm that predominates throughout through a variety of keys, moods and textures. A subsidiary figure featuring little scalic runs comes into its own in the closing bars.

The amiable, ambling opening theme of the *Allegretto grazioso* finale is presented first by the violin, then by the piano. A brief turn to A minor brings in the second subject, which has two ingredients: an aspiring five-note figure and a little flurry of semiquavers in thirds, both of which prove capable of extension. What appears to be the development begins smoothly with the semiquaver motion continuing as accompaniment to the reappearance of the first subject melody, but in fact this is already the start of the recapitulation: Esposito seems to be writing a movement in so-called 'sonatina' form with exposition and recapitulation but no development. Instead, some vigorous development takes place in the closing section, based almost entirely on the opening tune but creating a brilliant sign-off.

Esposito's Cello Sonata in D major, Op.43, won a prize from the London Incorporated Society of Musicians in 1899 and was published the same year by the German firm of Breitkopf & Härtel with a dedication to Henry Bast (whom I cannot identify). It opens quietly with the cello, low and unaccompanied, trading phrases

with the piano. This shortly solidifies into the singing first subject. A livelier second subject follows, involving dotted rhythms, triplets and *pizzicati*. The development begins with the cello-piano exchanges, almost as if the exposition is going to be repeated, but soon passes to more animated music, rather like a march in 3/4 time, based on the second subject. A *tranquillo* passage leads to a brief *cadenza* for the cello based on its opening phrase before the development presses on to a climax involving some very Brahmsian piano-writing. In the recapitulation the first subject is shortened, being reserved for the coda in which it appears *con gran espressione* before the quiet, almost laconic final bars.

The main theme of the B minor slow movement, stated at once by the cello, contains a notable series of 'scotch snap' rhythms – one of several respects in which it resembles an Irish folksong, though Esposito does not identify it as such. It has something of the character of a heroic lament, both pathetic and rugged. To this is contrasted a haunting melody in B major, marked *come da lontano* (as if from afar) and very delicately accompanied by the piano. The folk-like theme returns, with the stealthy accompanying tread of the piano, and persists to the end, the final bar being a soft *dolcissimo* appeal.

The long-limbed opening subject of the finale, however, has the ring of confidence and fulfilment, which persists through the quicker contrasting material before arriving at a B minor second subject in triplet rhythm that becomes more agitated. A fluid development modulates quite widely to a passionate climax, but there is no recapitulation as such. Instead, in the major structural surprise in any of these four sonatas, Esposito simply writes a slow and thoughtful epilogue, distantly derived from the second subject, over a pedal D, that seems to leave the movement open for further possibilities.

Malcolm MacDonald

Mia Cooper has lived in Dublin since her appointment as leader of the RTE Concert Orchestra in 2006, an orchestra of inexhaustible diversity as likely to be found performing at the Vatican for Pope Benedict (2009) as captivating an audience of Wellington-booted festival goers (Electric Picnic 2010). She previously held principal positions with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and City of London Sinfonia, has appeared as guest leader of many of the UK's symphony orchestras and freelanced with London's finest chamber orchestras and ensembles.

Equally at home as a chamber musician, Mia has performed and recorded with ensembles such as the Brodsky Quartet, Barbican Trio, London Conchord Ensemble, Fibonacci Sequence, Gould Piano Trio, and Robert Plane, and participated in chamber music festivals in Ireland, the UK, France, India, and Lithuania.

Mia studied with renowned pedagogue Yossi Zivoni at the Royal Northern College of Music, and whilst studying with him made a recording for Meridian Records of Bartok Duos. Mia continued her training at the Paris Conservatoire. She teaches violin at the Royal Irish Academy of Music.

William Butt was born in London. His musical career started early, as a chorister in St.Georges Chapel, Windsor. Later he studied at the Royal Northern College of Music with Moray Welsh and after winning awards and scholarships such as the Royal Society of Arts, Martin Trust and first prize in the Muriel Taylor competition, he furthered his studies with Antonio Lysy in Montreal. He now enjoys a busy career as soloist, chamber musician and is professor of cello at the Royal Irish Academy of Music in Dublin.

In recent seasons he has appeared as soloist with the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, the Orchestra of St Cecilia and the Ulster Orchestra for BBC Radio 3. He has worked with conductors such as Alexander Anissimov, Gerhard Markson, Rumon Gamba, Vernon Handley and Barry Douglas.

William's performances have been frequently broadcast on the radio including a feature as a guest artist on the "In Tune" programme on BBC Radio 3. In recital he has played for festivals and series such as the Royal Dublin Society, BBC Radio 3 and the Music in Great Irish Houses festival.

His 2004-released recording of the three suites for solo cello by Benjamin Britten by Warner Music UK (Warner Classics/Apex) received rave reviews in the English press including a 5-star review in the *Independent on Sunday*. Recently he performed the Schubert Quintet in C with the Vanbrugh String Quartet, and he works regularly with his own string quartet, the Schumann Quartet.

He plays on a fine cello made by Giovanni Grancino in Milan (1690).

Since winning 1st prize at the Tomassoni International Piano Competition, Cologne, in 2001, **Lance Coburn** has performed worldwide as both concerto soloist and recitalist, and broadcasts frequently for radio Deutsche Welle, BBC Radio 3, RTE Lyric FM (Ireland) and ABC FM (Australia).

A critic described Lance's performance of Beethoven's "Emperor" concerto: "Coburn approached the grandiose work....with the vigour of a classically-inspired artist". He has performed as a concerto soloist with many international orchestras including the RTE National Symphony Orchestra, Central Florida Symphony Orchestra, Israel Symphony Orchestra, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Brisbane Symphony Orchestra and Adelaide Symphony Orchestra.

Beginning his studies in his homeland of New Zealand, Lance furthered them in Australia, the Tchaikovsky Conservatoire – Moscow and finally with John O' Conor at the Royal Irish Academy of Music. During his studies, Lance was the recipient of many first prizes, including the Hephizibah Menuhin Scholarship, the inaugural Lev Vlassenko Piano Competition, and the Australian Young Performers' Award (Keyboard Section), culminating in a performance of Liszt's 1st Piano Concerto with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, in the Sydney Opera House, which was also broadcast live across Australia on ABC Television.

Lance is in demand as a solo performer, chamber musician and accompanist. He also adjudicates at numerous festivals in Ireland. He has a close affinity with the works of Australian contemporary composer Carl Vine, recently recording a CD of Vine's solo piano works. He is also a full time staff member of the keyboard faculty in the Royal Irish Academy of Music.

CHRCD014

LONDON CONCHORD ENSEMBLE
with FLORIAN UHLIG
JS BACH

Suite No.2 in B minor for flute & strings
Concerto in A major for oboe d'amore
Concerto in C minor for oboe & violin
Concerto in D minor for two violins
Brandenburg Concertos Nos.2, 4 & 5
Sheep may safely graze *(arr. Daniel Pailthorpe)*
Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring *(arr. Daniel Pailthorpe)*

"Nimble playing, and the Ensemble communicates infectious enthusiasm and commitment."
BBC Music Magazine

"... If you want stylish Bach orchestral music on modern instruments ... this could be for you"
Gramophone Magazine

"Definitely worth adding to your Bach concertos collections" ***Musical Pointers***

CHRCD061

COMPLETE PRELUDES VOL.1
ALEXANDRA DARIESCU - *piano*
CHOPIN & DUTILLEUX

24 Preludes Op.28 (1838-1839) *Frédéric Chopin*
Trois Préludes (1973-1988) *Henri Dutilleux*
Prelude Op. posth. Presto con leggierezza - A flat major *Frédéric Chopin*
Prelude Op.45 Sostenuto - C-sharp minor *Frédéric Chopin*

Alexandra Dariescu presents the first disc in a "Trilogy of Preludes" containing the complete works of this genre by Chopin and Dutilleux.

CHRCD031

BACH SOLO FLUTE
DANIEL PAILTHORPE & JULIAN MILFORD

Sonata in B Minor BWV 1030
Sonata in A major BWV 1032
Partita in A minor for solo flute BWV 1013
Orchestral Suite in B minor BWV 1067

A new recording of Bach solo partitas and sonatas for flute from leading flautist Daniel Pailthorpe. One of the few orchestral principals of international standing who plays on a modern wooden flute, Daniel Pailthorpe is a familiar face from the BBC Last Night of the Proms, as Co-Principal Flute of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, especially in the Sailor's Hornpipe!

"The best thing on this disc is the performance by Daniel Pailthorpe, thrown off with splendid vigour and virtuosity" ***Gramophone Magazine***

CHRCD063

LUDWIG THUILLE: SONGS
SOPHIE BEVAN - *soprano*
JENNIFER JOHNSTON - *mezzo-soprano*
MARY BEVAN - *soprano*
JOSEPH MIDDLETON - *piano*

For this new and revelatory Champs Hill Records release, championing the songs of Ludwig Thuille, in-demand accompanist Joseph Middleton brings together some of the finest young voices in the UK. Many of these songs are recorded for the first time, following extensive diligent research to locate the music. Songs for soprano and for mezzo-soprano, are accompanied on this 2-CD set by three winsome trios.

"Joseph Middleton is everywhere a sensitive and imaginative accompanist..."
BBC Music Magazine

"Sophie Bevan is pure sunshine ... what an enchanting performer she is ..."
Daily Telegraph

"[Johnston has] serene, majestic sound and fine taste." ***Bachtrack***