

NAXOS

Eugène
YSAÏE

String Trio
‘Le Chimay’

Sonata for
Two Violins

Cello Sonata

Henning Kraggerud
and Bård Monsen,
Violins

Lars Anders Tomter,
Viola

Ole-Eirik Ree, Cello



Eugène Ysaÿe (1858–1931)

Sonata for Two Violins • String Trio 'Le Chimay' • Cello Sonata

Eugène-Auguste Ysaÿe was born on 16th July, 1858, in the Belgian city of Liège. He had his first lessons on the violin from his father, Nicolas-Joseph Isaye, a violinist and conductor, at the age of five. Upon entering the Conservatoire in Liège when he was seven, Ysaÿe studied with Desiré Heynberg and helped to support himself and his family by playing in local orchestras, one of which was conducted by his father, on tours and at village festivals. In 1872 he resumed his studies in Liège as a pupil of Rodolphe Massart, moving two years later to Brussels, where his principal teacher, in the class of Henri Vieuxtemps, was Henryk Wieniawski. In 1876 he went to Paris, studying there with Vieuxtemps and meeting César Franck and Anton Rubinstein. From 1879 to 1882 Ysaÿe was leader of the Benjamin Bilse Orchestra in Berlin, later to become known as the Berlin Philharmonic orchestra. Despite appearing relatively often as a soloist in addition to his orchestral duties, he nevertheless aspired to engage in a full-time solo career. When Anton Rubinstein managed to release him from his orchestral contract in order to go on tour with him, Norway was in fact one of their destinations. Their preferred repertoire was Edvard Grieg's sonatas, of which Grieg had only composed two at the time, and during a three-week stay in Bergen he met the great composer, receiving due praise for his playing. There Ysaÿe also played a concert for the Ole Bull Foundation; the great Norwegian violin virtuoso Ole Bull had died only two years earlier, to wide national mourning. According to Ysaÿe himself, the tour of Norway, as well as a tour of Russia, also arranged by Rubinstein, were significant steps towards his development as a violinist of world renown.

The *Sonata for Two Violins* was composed in 1915 and dedicated to Queen Elisabeth of Belgium. Ysaÿe had close connections with the Belgian Royal family, and particularly the Queen. She was his violin student, and apparently quite skilled as a musician. We do not know whether they ever performed the *Sonata* in public, or if the Queen was able to play the demanding parts. A version for

trio, however, was later reconstructed (the first movement from Ysaÿe's hand), seemingly a natural choice, considering that the *Duo* probably is the most orchestral piece ever written for two violins. Frequent use of double stops and multi-layered chords in both parts at times makes it sound more like a string quartet than a duo.

Ysaÿe composed his *Sonata for Two Violins* in a highly personal style, although one can trace influences from many different styles and composition techniques. The work is full of modal chords, late romantic chromaticism, impressionistic and expressionistic traits. The first movement is the most dramatic and heroic in character, resembling the famous *Solo Violin Sonata No.3, 'Ballade'*, as well as *Sonata No. 4*, especially the first movement. The characteristic main motivic strand (a three-note upbeat and its culmination) permeates the movement. It uses more or less traditional sonata form, with a central great fugue that forms the climax. The second movement is more rhapsodic, clearly inspired by French impressionism. A beautiful theme presented at the beginning reappears in different versions throughout the movement. The third movement is similar to a classical rondo in construction. Ysaÿe here combines romantic virtuoso violin techniques with chromatic and expressionistic passages. The edition used for this recording is predominantly the facsimile of Ysaÿe's autograph (Schott Frères), since the modern printed edition (Ries and Erle) contains a number of inaccuracies (even a few wrong notes).

The 1927 *String Trio, Op. posth., 'Le Chimay'*, so named after the venue of its first performance after the composer's death, is a work somewhat neglected, rarely emerging from under the shadow cast by the six famous *Solo Violin Sonatas, Op. 27*. Whereas the *Duo* hints at elements that Ysaÿe further developed in the *Sonatas*, the *String Trio* rather continues this maturing process. The series of powerful chord progressions at the end of the *Trio*, reminiscent of the ending of *Solo Sonata No. 3*, is only one of numerous examples bearing witness to this fact. In one continuous movement, the *Trio* exhibits highly

original and compelling worlds of sound, colours and textures. It is difficult to place within a specific musical genre or style, and although evocative of Debussy and Ravel it is arguably not influenced by the so-called impressionistic idiom itself. At times it can resemble early Schoenberg (for example, *Verklärte Nacht*), though not uniformly adhering to this particularly Germanic late romantic style. Written during a time when tonal music was either abandoned, as in the Second Viennese School, or expanded, as in the work of Richard Strauss, Janáček, Sibelius and Szymanowski among others, it clearly belongs to the latter camp, seemingly stretching tonality to its very limits. It is an exciting testament to an ideal of expression that sought further to develop tonality and its potential, rather than crucify it (the proponents of tonal music are undoubtedly saddened by the fact that so many twentieth-century schools of composition seemed to disprove or abolish completely this development of music as exemplified by *Le Chimay*, but, on the other hand, are certainly comforted by the regrets uttered by Schoenberg late in his life for the consequences he saw after having pronounced tonality 'dead'). For this recording facsimiles of the original handwritten parts, reprinted from the Ysaÿe Edition by Schott Frères, have been the basis of interpretation, although virtually no dynamic, tempo- and expression-markings exist from the composer. The printed edition available, however, (Ries and Erler, edited by the Gaede Trio) is obviously more readable, but caution should be taken in that the parts, apart from a very small number of mistakes in the score itself, include the editors' own suggestions for interpretation (as regards tempo, expression, dynamics etc.), making it extremely difficult to inspire alternate interpretations without considerable delations.

That Ysaÿe, first and foremost a brilliant violinist, would venture to compose an unaccompanied sonata for cello is perhaps not that surprising, since he was allegedly quite accomplished on the instrument himself, as well as

sustaining important friendships with a number of cellists, notably Pablo Casals. The work is an especially welcome addition to the pre-avant-garde repertoire for solo cello where it ranks among popular works such as the arguably unsurpassed *Suites* by Bach, the three *Suites* by Reger and Britten, and the sonatas by Kodály and Hindemith. Still, Ysaÿe's contribution is to some extent strangely neglected. Based on craftsmanship, taut musical architecture and idiomatic writing (it does, however, explore unusual and demanding aspects of cello technique, although never outside the realm of playability), it should surely deserve a firm standing within the standard repertoire of today's cellists. The relatively recent edition of the musical score used in the present recording (G. Henle Verlag) will perhaps be of great interest and assistance to modern cellists. Unlike the other readily available editions, it includes Ysaÿe's own fingerings and bowing instructions, which are predominantly of a musical character. These, again, are evidence of the composer's thorough knowledge of the instrument's capabilities. As his six *Solo Violin Sonatas* (1923-24) owed much to a lifelong study of Bach's *Sonatas* and *Partitas*, there is strong evidence of the *Cello Sonata* being additionally influenced by Ysaÿe's own solo works for violin. The manuscript dates back to the summer of 1923, around the same time as that of the *Solo Violin Sonata No. 2*, and shares a similar movement structure to the *Solo Violin Sonata No. 1*, as well as similarities in thematic-motivic construction with the others. The *Cello Sonata*, dedicated to Maurice Dambois (1889-1969), cellist in the Eugène Ysaÿe Quartet and Trio, consists of four movements highly concentrated in structure, and strongly related through the use of similar or identical motifs, something especially true for the first movement *Grave* and the *Finale con brio*. These outer movements are offset by an especially graceful *Intermezzo*, followed by a suspenseful introductory *In modo di recitativo*, setting the stage for the brilliance and polyphonic mastery of the *Finale*.

**Henning Kraggerud, Bård Monsen,
Lars Anders Tomter, Ole-Eirik Ree**



Henning Kraggerud

Born in Oslo in 1973, the Norwegian violinist Henning Kraggerud studied with Camilla Wicks and Emanuel Hurwitz and is a recipient of Norway's prestigious Grieg Prize, the Ole Bull Prize and the Sibelius Prize. He is a professor at the Barratt Due Institute of Music in Oslo, and appears as a soloist with many of the world's leading orchestras in Europe, North America, Asia and Australia. He has enjoyed successful artistic collaborations with many conductors including Marek Janowski, Ivan Fischer, Paavo Berglund, Kirill Petrenko, Yakov Kreizberg, Mariss Jansons, Stéphane Denève and Kurt Sanderling. A committed chamber musician, Henning Kraggerud also performs both on violin and on viola at major international festivals, collaborating with musicians such as Stephen Kovacevich, Kathryn Stott, Leif Ove Andsnes, Jeffrey Kahane, Truls Mørk and Martha Argerich. His recordings include an acclaimed release of the complete *Unaccompanied Violin Sonatas* of Ysaÿe for Simax and he is a winner of the Spellemann CD Award. His recordings for Naxos include Grieg's *Violin Sonatas* and *Norwegian Favourites* for violin and orchestra. He plays a 1744 Guarneri del Gesù instrument, provided by Dextra Musica AS, a company founded by Sparebankstiftelsen DnB NOR.



Bård Monsen

Bård Monsen, a former student of Mauricio Fuks at Indiana University and Stephan Barratt Due at the Barratt Due Institute of Music, works today mainly as a chamber musician and teacher. He has appeared in a number of festivals, and frequently performs with various ensembles. He is a principal in the Oslo Camerata and has several times appeared as a concert-master with the Trondheim Soloists. He teaches at the Barratt Due Institute of Music, the University Of Trondheim (NTNU) and the University of Agder.



Lars Anders Tomter

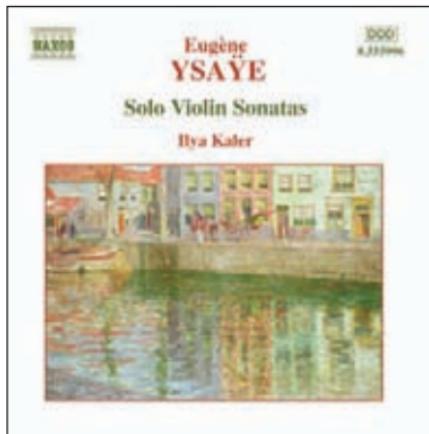
Lars Anders Tomter is one of today's most outstanding violists. He studied viola and viola with Leif Jørgensen at the Oslo Music Conservatory and the Norwegian Academy of Music, and made his début on both instruments at the age of seventeen. After continuing his studies with Max Rostal and Sándor Vegh, he was awarded a special prize for his interpretation of Bartók's *Viola Concerto* at the International Viola Competition in Budapest in 1984, and won the Maurice Vieux International Competition in Lille in 1986. Since then his appearances as a viola soloist have been greeted with the highest public and critical acclaim throughout the world. Tomter has performed with major orchestras throughout Europe, collaborating with the most distinguished conductors. He is a regular guest at festivals, including Schleswig-Holstein, Lockenhaus, Kissingen Summer, BBC Proms, Mondseetage, Styriarte, as well as a number of Scandinavian festivals. His recordings include Walton's *Viola Concerto* for Naxos (8.553402). In addition, he is artistic director of the Norwegian Risør Chamber Music Festival. Lars Anders Tomter is a professor at the Norwegian Academy of Music. He plays a Gasparo da Salò viola dating from 1590.



Ole-Eirik Ree

After several years in the United States, cellist Ole-Eirik Ree is establishing himself in his native country of Norway as a teacher, currently part-time Assistant Professor of Cello at the renowned Barratt-Due Institute of Music in Oslo, where he is also director of the master's degree programme; chamber musician, as co-principal of the Oslo Camerata and co-founder of the Kristiansund Festival Quartet, and as a soloist. Together with violinist Bård Monsen, he is currently in charge of a collective enterprise between Oslo Camerata, sponsored by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Apprendiz: Música Escola na Niterói, sponsored by the Ministry of Culture in Niterói, a project seeking to offer musical and intellectual stimulus to children from the favelas in Niterói, Brazil. He currently plays a Rocca cello owned by the Dextra Musica Foundation, Norway. www.oleeirikee.com

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While Ysaÿe's *Six Solo Violin Sonatas* (Naxos 8.555996) remain his best known works, the Belgian virtuoso also composed other pieces which translate his thorough knowledge of the violin's capabilities into thrilling music. The performance here of his *Sonata for Two Violins* is based on the composer's autograph and that of the *String Trio* draws on the original hand-written parts. For the recording of the *Cello Sonata* the artist referred to Ysaÿe's own fingering and bowing instructions. All three works display the composer's dazzling mastery of technique and instrumental colour.

Eugène
YSAÏE
(1858–1931)

Sonata in A minor for Two Violins, Op. posth. 30:29

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Poco lento, Maestoso – Allegro fermo | 11:45 |
| 2 | Allegretto poco lento | 7:28 |
| 3 | Finale: Allegro vivo e con fuoco | 11:10 |

String Trio 'Le Chimay', Op. posth. 17:54

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 4 | Molto lento – Allegro non troppo – Lento, ben sostenuto –
Allegro – Poco presto – Presto | |
|---|---|--|

Sonata for Solo Cello, Op. 28 12:14

- | | | |
|---|--|------|
| 5 | Grave, lento e sempre sostenuto | 4:36 |
| 6 | Intermezzo: Poco allegretto e grazioso | 2:54 |
| 7 | In modo di recitativo: Adagio | 1:33 |
| 8 | Finale con brio: Allegro Tempo fermo | 3:05 |

Henning Kraggerud¹⁻⁴ and Bård Monsen¹⁻³, Violins



Lars Anders Tomter, Viola⁴
Ole-Eirik Ree, Cello⁴⁻⁸



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Booklet notes: Henning Kraggerud, Bård Monsen, Lars Anders Tomter, Ole-Eirik Ree

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