



Nathan Meltzer (violin) and Rohan De Silva (piano) recording in the Music Room at Champs Hill, November 2019

Photograph: Susan Dangel



CHAMPS HILL
RECORDS

NATHAN MELTZER: TO ROMAN TOTENBERG



Bach
Franck
Szymanowski
Bartók
Wieniawski

Nathan Meltzer *violin*
Rohan De Silva *piano*

FOREWORD

In planning this CD, I tried to be mindful of the history of the violin that had come into my hands courtesy of the FBI, the Totenberg family, an anonymous benefactor, and Rare Violins of New York. This 1734 Stradivarius had been stolen from Roman Totenberg after a 1980 recital at the Longy School of Music and found, some thirty-five years later, locked under a tarpaulin in a California basement. The pieces recorded here with Rohan De Silva include some of our favourites as well as Professor Totenberg's, whose concerts featured the contemporary composers he championed. At a White House recital for the Roosevelts in 1936, Totenberg, then twenty-five years old, played Wieniawski's *Polonaise* and Szymanowski's *Arethusa* – and he was still performing them in the following century. Totenberg recorded the Bartók *Rhapsody* and the Franck *Sonata* on this very instrument. So with this my first CD, I give an admiring nod to the great teacher and virtuoso violinist Roman Totenberg, whose memory in some small way I hope to honour as the current guardian of his beloved violin.

I am deeply grateful to David and Mary Bowerman, Susan Dangel, Martin Denny, Alexander Van Ingen, Raphaël Mouterde, Dave Rowell, Champs Hill Records, the Windsor Festival International String Competition, and the Marks Center at the Juilliard School for their many contributions to this project.



Nathan Meltzer

TRACK LISTING

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

SONATA NO.3 FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO IN E MAJOR BWV 1016 (1720)

- | | | | |
|---|-----|---------------------|------|
| 1 | i | Adagio | 5'11 |
| 2 | ii | Allegro | 3'34 |
| 3 | iii | Adagio ma non tanto | 5'58 |
| 4 | iv | Allegro | 4'10 |

CÉSAR FRANCK (1822–1890)

SONATA IN A MAJOR FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO (1886)

- | | | | |
|---|-----|-------------------------|------|
| 5 | i | Allegretto ben moderato | 6'13 |
| 6 | ii | Allegro | 8'25 |
| 7 | iii | Recitativo-Fantasia | 7'52 |
| 8 | iv | Allegretto poco mosso | 6'46 |

KAROL SZYMANOWSKI (1882–1937)

MYTHES, 'TROIS POÈMES' Op.30 (1915)

- | | | | |
|---|---|------------------------|------|
| 9 | i | La Fontaine d'Arethuse | 6'23 |
|---|---|------------------------|------|

BÉLA BARTÓK (1881–1945)

RHAPSODY NO.1 FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO Sz.86 (1928)

- | | | | |
|----|----|----------------------------|------|
| 10 | i | Lassú. Moderato | 4'02 |
| 11 | ii | Friss. Allegretto moderato | 5'28 |

HENRYK WIENIAWSKI (1835–1880)

- | | | | |
|----|--|--|------|
| 12 | | POLONAISE DE CONCERT IN D MAJOR Op.4 (1853) | 6'07 |
|----|--|--|------|

Total time: **70'09**

Produced, engineered and edited by Raphaël Mouterde
Recorded 19th to 21st November 2019 in the Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex, UK

Cover photograph of Nathan: Jiyang Chen

Executive Producer for Champs Hill Records: Alexander Van Ingen

Label Manager for Champs Hill Records: Rebecca Dixon

PROGRAMME NOTE

On November 15, 2019, a concert with a difference happened at the Longy School of Music in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The soloist was a 19-year-old Juilliard student called Nathan Meltzer, and the instrument he played was a vintage Stradivarius violin which had been stolen at a recital in the same hall 39 years previously.

The performer on that occasion was its owner Roman Totenberg, who died, aged 101, three years before his violin was finally recovered in 2015. All of the music on this CD was performed by Nathan Meltzer at the Longy 'Homecoming' concert, where Totenberg's three daughters were present. Meltzer describes 'The Totenberg' as 'a dark and resonant instrument' with 'a warm tone in every register', and its special qualities can be relished on this, Meltzer's debut CD recital.

It opens with Bach – the singing *Adagio* introduction to his *Sonata No.3 for Violin and Harpsichord*, BWV 1016 (the keyboard part is played on this recording by a piano). So much attention focuses on Bach's towering achievement in the sonatas and partitas he wrote for solo violin, that his six sonatas for violin and keyboard are frequently eclipsed by comparison. The opening movement of Sonata No.3 shows what a mistake that is – an alluring, long-spun violin melody, trilling like a bird in song, unfolds over a gently supportive underlay of chords on the piano.

Grace and elegance are the watchwords here, as they are also in the more introspective third movement. The sonata's two quicker movements are different. Both give more prominence to the keyboard part, whose right-hand melody jostles good-naturedly with the violin, while the left hand picks out a bass line underneath. This three-way division of labour was something Bach took over from the Italian trio sonata – of which Corelli was a renowned exponent – and is a natural vehicle for the contrapuntal interplay Bach so enjoyed incorporating in his music.

Interestingly, the architectural outline of the trio sonata can still be discerned in the slow-fast-slow-fast structure of the movements in César Franck's *Sonata in A*

Major for Piano and Violin, a work written about 160 years after Bach's sonata. But the resemblances are superficial only: Franck's piece breathes the emotionally explicit atmosphere of the Romantic era, and is painted on a much broader canvas.

Its opening movement finds the violin, over a gently rocking rhythm in the piano, wistfully unravelling a winding theme which Franck will utilise throughout the sonata, in a technique of cyclic development inherited from Liszt (especially his *Piano Sonata in B Minor*). Despite moments of effulgence, the score of this opening movement is sprinkled with markings suggesting restraint and delicacy, as though the music's poetry will dissipate if insisted on too heavily.

The second movement is a different story, and a sharp reminder that the piano is the first of the two instruments Franck lists in his title for his sonata. The piano part is vaultingly athletic, and requires a virtuoso to play it convincingly. The mood is one of considerable turbulence, an effect heightened by the focused intensity of the violin writing, the poetic theme from the sonata's opening now openly agitated. The tempo slackens for a calmer interlude but soon ramps up again, the tension even higher than before, and both soloists are at full pelt in an incendiary coda.

The pensive 'Recitativo-Fantasia' which follows acts as a second slow movement, and is a much needed respite from the hyperactivity of the preceding *Allegro*. It unravels in a quasi-improvisatory fashion, as though what is needed at this point is some unstructured downtime to take stock of developments earlier in the sonata, free from stringent rules and regulations.

The air of inconclusive rumination is breezily dispatched by the blithe duetting of the piano and violin at the outset of the finale, the latter imitating the former in a canonic fashion. Franck wrote the sonata as a wedding present for the Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe, and it has been suggested that the affectionately hand-in-

glove writing of the finale is a harbinger of the companionship Franck hoped Ysaÿe and his bride would enjoy in their marriage.

The murkier episode at the movement's centre, where an impassioned re-statement of a yearning tune first heard on violin in the previous movement threatens to disturb the balance, hardly fits that idealistic template. But the storm clouds quickly part, and the sunny equanimity of the movement's opening returns as the sonata accelerates to a high-spirited, trouble-free conclusion.

In his researches for this CD, Nathan Meltzer discovered that the Polish composer Karol Szymanowski's *La Fontaine d'Arethuse* was a staple of Roman Totenberg's repertoire, and that he was still playing it in 2006 at his 95th birthday concert. The piece is one of three Szymanowski labelled 'Mythes', and he described them as 'poems' in which he felt he had created 'a new style, a new expression of violin playing'.

Arethusa, in Greek mythology, is a nymph who flees the amorous attentions of the river god Alpheus, and is changed into a spring. The rippling of water can be clearly heard in the opening piano figurations of *La Fontaine*, marked 'delicate, whispering, flexible'. But the harmonies suggest uneasiness and trepidation too, and these feelings are reinforced by the high-lying keenings of the violin, and the fleet, scampering figurations Szymanowski writes for both performers. Arethusa is eventually tracked down by Alpheus, and we might imagine the rushing turmoil of their meeting in the music's more turbulent central episode, where their waters combine before calming to a barely discernible ripple.

Where Szymanowski draws on an ethereal vein of poetic fantasy, Béla Bartók's *Rhapsody No.1 for Violin and Piano* is firmly rooted in the peasant soil of eastern Europe. Folk tunes from Romania and Bartók's native Hungary provide the main

melodic content of the piece, and its two parts follow the 'lassú-friss' (slow-fast) structure of the Hungarian *verbunkos*, a dance performed at military recruitment events.

In the slow opening section Bartók already places considerable demands on the violinist, with multiple (including quadruple) stopping and tricky arpeggios peppering the writing. They are as nothing, though, compared to the acrobatics involved in the 'friss' section which follows, where Bartók whips a concoction of five folk melodies together in a fashion occasionally bordering on frenzy.

Bartók's *Rhapsody* would make a generous encore, but at half the length the Polish composer Henryk Wieniawski's *Polonaise de Concert in D Major* would probably fit the bill better. It too stretches the soloist technically – Wieniawski was a precociously gifted teenage violinist when he wrote it – though in a mood more generally blithe and carefree than Bartók. It is a fittingly celebratory way to end a recital played on the storied 'Totenberg' Stradivarius – 'the violin of a great man', as Nathan Meltzer puts it.

Terry Blain

I NATHAN MELTZER *violin*

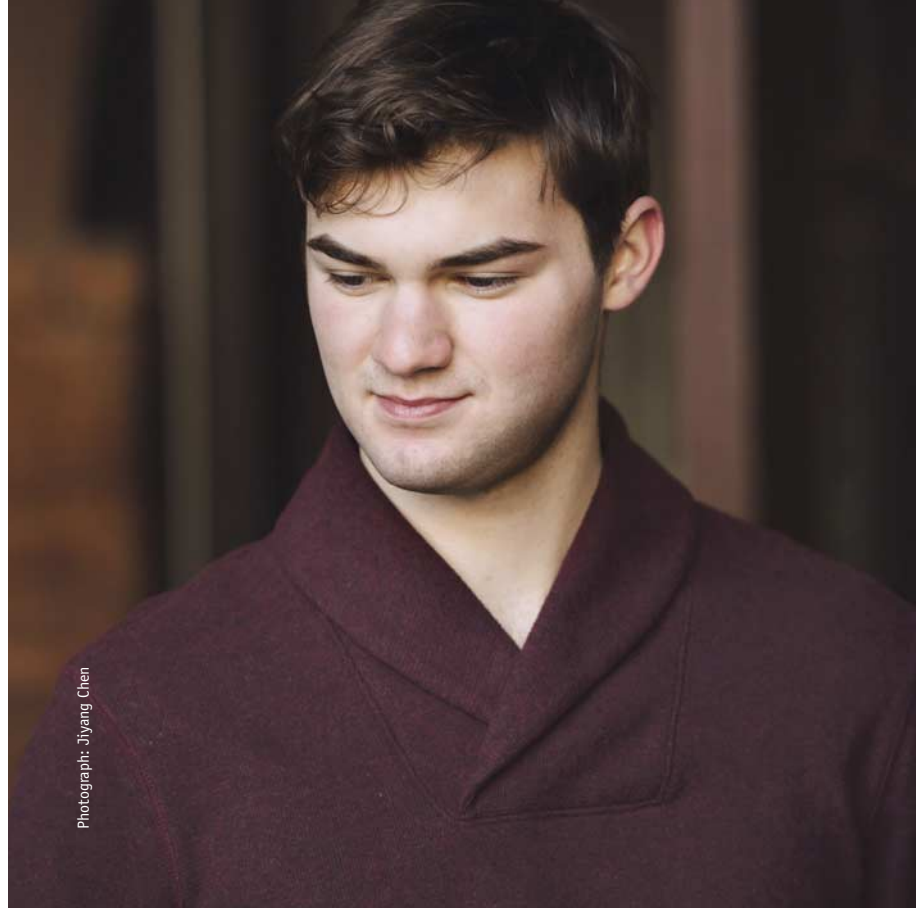
Introduced to the violin during primary school in Vienna, Nathan has studied with Itzhak Perlman and Li Lin at Juilliard since he was thirteen. He has performed at Windsor Castle, the Berliner Philharmonie, the Philharmonie de Paris, and five times at Carnegie Hall, with radio broadcasts on NPR, WGBH Boston, WCLV Cleveland, WQXR New York and MDR Dresden. Nathan is the youngest musician ever to win the Windsor Festival International String Competition, whose awards included the recording of this CD and a solo performance with the Philharmonia Orchestra.

Nathan has also been a soloist with the Aalborg, Berlin, Concepción, Indianapolis, Medellín, and Pittsburgh symphony orchestras, the Orchestre national d'Île-de-France, and the Royal Northern Sinfonia, performing in Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Switzerland, and across the US.

Nathan has participated in ChamberFest Cleveland, the Heidelberger Frühling, the Moritzburg Festival, the Musical de l'Orne, the Perlman Chamber Workshop, and the Verbier Festival Academy. Seven years a member of the Perlman Music Program, Nathan has been a concert artist with Omega Ensemble since 2016.

Nathan performs on the 'Ames, Totenberg' Antonio Stradivari violin, Cremona 1734, which is on loan from Rare Violins In Consortium, Artists and Benefactors Collaborative.

www.nathanmeltzer.com



Photograph: Jiyang Chen



Photograph: John Beebe

I ROHAN DE SILVA *piano*

Rohan De Silva was born in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and has collaborated with Itzhak Perlman, Cho-Liang Lin, Joshua Bell, Anne Akiko Meyers, Kurt Nikkanen, Gil Shaham, Kyoko Takezawa, Vadim Repin, and Midori. He has performed at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall, the 92nd Street Y, Kennedy Center, Library of Congress, Philadelphia Academy of Music, Disney Hall in Los Angeles, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, London's Barbican Hall, Tokyo's Suntory Hall, and Milan's La Scala. He has also appeared at the Aspen, Heifetz, Interlochen, Manchester, Pacific, Ravinia, Schleswig-Holstein, and Wellington festivals. Among De Silva's awards are the best accompanist special prize at the ninth International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow. He performed at the White House in 2007 for President George W. Bush and Queen Elizabeth and in 2012 with Perlman for President Barak Obama and Shimon Peres. Radio and television credits include PBS's Live from Lincoln Center and the Colbert Report with Itzhak Perlman, The Tonight Show with Midori, CNN's Showbiz Today, NPR, WQXR, WNYC, Berlin Radio, Japan's NHK, and the 2000 Millennium Grammy Awards. De Silva has recorded on the BMG, CBS/Sony Classical, Chandos, Collins Classics, and DGG labels.

De Silva holds BM and MM degrees from Juilliard, where he studied piano with Martin Canin and chamber music with Felix Galimir. He was the first recipient of the Sri Lanka President's Fund scholarship to study at Juilliard, where he has been on the faculty since 1991. He also studied piano with Hamish Milne while attending the Royal Academy of Music from 1975 to 1981, from which he earned a Fellowship in 2015.