

# NORDIC TALES



GRIEG Violin Sonata No. 2

RAUTAVAARA Lost Landscapes

ABRAHAMSEN Capriccio Bagateller

SIBELIUS Danses Champêtres

EMMANUEL BACH - violin  
JENNY STERN - piano



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## EDVARD GRIEG (1843-1907)

Violin Sonata No. 2 in G, Op. 13	22:53
1. I. Lento doloroso - Allegro vivace	9:38
2. II. Allegretto tranquillo	6:54
3. III. Allegro animato	6:21

## EINOJUHANI RAUTAVAARA (1928-2016)

Lost Landscapes (2005)	21:34
4. I. Tanglewood	6:43
5. II. Ascona	6:17
6. III. Rainergasse 11, Vienna	5:10
7. IV. West 23rd Street, NY	3:24

## HANS ABRAHAMSEN (b. 1952)

Capriccio Bagateller for Violin Solo (1990)	3:31
8. I.	1:03
9. II.	0:57
10. III. (alla marcia)	0:43
11. IV. (Hymne)	0:48

## JEAN SIBELIUS (1865-1957)

Danses Champêtres, Op. 106	17:43
12. No. 1. Largamente assai - Vivace	4:25
13. No. 2. Alla polacca	2:32
14. No. 3. Tempo moderato	4:14
15. No. 4. Tempo di menuetto	3:36
16. No. 5. Poco moderato - Allegretto	3:06

TOTAL TIME: 65:45

With grateful thanks to Edward Clark and the UK Sibelius Society for their support.

Composed in 1867, Edvard Grieg's *Sonata No. 2 in G for Violin and Piano, Op. 13* has a distinctly Norwegian voice. Though written at a time when Grieg was disillusioned with the reception of his music, it is outwardly buoyant, possibly partly the result of being composed during his honeymoon with his wife Nina. It draws directly on the style, rhythms and melodic types of Norwegian folk music. The first movement's melancholic introduction paints a nostalgic picture of early morning, dispelled by the lively first subject of the sonata-allegro. This theme is closely modelled on the *springar*, a Norwegian folk dance in triple time. One can readily imagine Peer Gynt on capers through the countryside. The second movement, in ABA form, explores a different side of Grieg's writing. The major middle section melody has a simple tenderness and reappears in the slow movement of Grieg's third Sonata for Violin and Piano. The third movement's bare-fifth introduction sets the scene for a folk-inspired dance, again drawing on the *springar*, bringing a rustic quality to this movement, which culminates in triumph.

Celebrated for his *Cantus Arcticus* (1972), which uses taped birdsong, Finnish composer Einojuhani Rautavaara's works encompass a spectrum of styles, genres and interests. *Lost Landscapes* of 2005 is a retrospective work written for and dedicated to the violinist Midori. Each movement evokes a place where the composer studied and lived during what he called his *Wanderjahre*: 'Tanglewood' (USA); 'Ascona' (Switzerland); 'Rainergasse 11, Vienna' (Austria); and 'West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NY' (USA). Rautavaara observed: 'All these landscapes are full of memories and atmosphere, visual as well as auditive views – they are musical life-themes for me.' *Lost Landscapes* inhabits a tonally elusive world, shaped by moments of tonal reprieve, with Rautavaara's harmonies depicting a world that is both ethereal and intense. The subtle harmonies and winding melodies of 'Tanglewood' capture the strange light, aged trees and verdant hills of the Berkshire landscape. The explosive start of 'Ascona' conveys the towering Alps, with fleeting passages evoking snow glancing through icy air and later harmonies ushering in a surreal world. 'Rainergasse 11, Vienna' is shrouded in half-light, recalling the decaying Baroque Palais Schönburg, with time seeming almost to rewind. 'West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NY' makes a jump-cut to real time for a frenetic ride through the dizzying lights of New York.

Danish composer Hans Abrahamsen is a leading figure in contemporary Western classical music. His notable works include the song cycle for soprano and orchestra *Let me tell you* (2013), a concerto for piano left hand called *Left, Alone* (2015) and an opera *The Snow Queen* (2018). *Capriccio Bagateller* of 1990 for Violin Solo explores different timbres and registers on the violin. It is dedicated to the violinist Christina Åstrand. In keeping with its title, it represents both a *capriccio*, from the Italian for 'whim', indicating a short, possibly fantastical piece in no particular form, and a *bagatelle*, usually a short work. It is in four short connected sections and was written in the year in which Abrahamsen essentially ceased composing, recommencing in 1998. This compositional silence parallels Sibelius's 'silence of Järvenpää', in which he produced no major complete works. Unlike Sibelius, Abrahamsen re-emerged.

Jean Sibelius's *Danses Champêtres*, or 'Rural Dances', are a set of five character pieces exploring Finland's pastoral side. Composed in 1925, the same year as his tone-poem *Tapiola*, they date from just after Sibelius completed his Sixth and Seventh Symphonies in 1923 and 1924 respectively. Sibelius's *Danses Champêtres* are strongly characterised and capture the composer's powerful interest in his nation's heritage. This interest was borne out in part by his use of the *Kalevala*, the Finnish national epic, as inspiration for works since his *Kullervo* of 1892. Trained as a violinist, Sibelius had a great affinity for the violin, reflected in his Violin Concerto, Sonatina and other works, including the *Danses Champêtres*. These dances are by no means Sibelius's only *musique de genre*: other examples include his *Humoresques* and the *morceaux de genre* sets Op. 79 and Op. 81. He also wrote a *Suite Champêtre* in 1921 for string orchestra. It is significant to note that violin-piano pieces feature among Sibelius's last works before his retirement, the 'silence of Järvenpää'. His final published opus was the *Three Pieces*, Op. 116, for violin and piano, of 1929.

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**Emmanuel Bach** won the Royal Over-Seas League Strings Competition 2018 and prizes in international competitions, and has performed as soloist and chamber musician at Queen Elizabeth Hall, Wigmore Hall, De Montfort Hall, St Martin-in-the-Fields, St James' Piccadilly, St John's Smith Square and St George's Bristol. Maxim Vengerov described his playing of the Brahms Concerto as 'a superb rendition...a very deep and emotional performance.' He has performed as a co-soloist with Anne-Sophie Mutter in JS Bach's Double Concerto, and has performed live and been broadcast on BBC Radio 3. Formerly a Countess of Munster Trust Recital Artist, he regularly gives recitals, performs concerti and plays chamber music across the UK and also abroad. Classical Music Daily praised his 'deeply thoughtful musicianship.' As a soloist, Emmanuel has performed numerous concerti, working with conductors including David Hill MBE, Jonathan Willcocks, Maxim Vengerov and Ken Woods. Reconnecting with his roots, he has toured South Africa several times.

As a chamber musician he has performed at festivals including Norfolk Festival (USA), FynArts, Silver Mountain Music Festival and Johannesburg International Mozart Festival (South Africa), CreArt Box (Spain), IMUSE (Belgium), Blanc European Festival, Un Fiume di Note Altolivenza Festival (Italy), and BBC World Music Day and Beaminster Festival (UK).

Emmanuel read Music at Magdalen College, Oxford, gaining a Double First. He studied with Natasha Boyarsky, receiving a Master's from the Royal College of Music and the Artist Diploma, latterly studying with Radu Blidar. He has also studied with Dr Felix Andrievsky. He has received masterclasses from violinists including Shlomo Mintz, Maxim Vengerov, Miriam Fried and Pierre Amoyal. He was awarded an English-Speaking Union Scholarship. He is supported by Talent Unlimited. He has recorded four CDs, with the previous, *Lennox In Paris* (Willowhayne Records), being described by Pizzicato as 'an intense journey through time'.



Photo: Chris Christodoulou

South-African-born pianist **Jenny Stern** has recorded for radio and television in Europe and her home country. She made her debut playing Mozart's Piano Concerto K450, with the conductor Alberto Bolet. Following studies at the Royal College of Music with Lamar Crowson, she completed a Masters in South Africa, winning the prestigious Emma Smith Overseas Scholarship for further study.

She has performed extensively in the UK and abroad as a soloist and chamber musician, collaborating with principal players from orchestras including the English Chamber Orchestra and Royal Opera House Orchestra. In South Africa, her major performances include acclaimed live broadcasts of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1 and the Grieg Piano Concerto, and concerti with the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra, Natal Philharmonic and Bloemfontein Symphony Orchestra.

Jenny has been invited to give masterclasses at venues including Dartington Summer School of Music and Euro Music Academy in Vienna. She has given over 500 concerts and workshops at universities and schools. She currently teaches at Eton College and the Royal College of Music, Junior Department. Jenny regularly performs with violinist Emmanuel Bach. Their previous CD *Lennox In Paris* was released by Willowhayne Records in 2022.





Photo: Chris Christodoulou

An impressionist painting of a Parisian street at night, likely by J.M.W. Turner. The scene is filled with warm, golden light from street lamps and building windows, reflecting on a wet, cobblestone surface. The brushwork is visible and expressive, capturing the atmosphere of the city.

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