

SZYMANOWSKI & FRANCK WORKS FOR VIOLIN & PIANO

audite

FRANZISKA PIETSCH  
DETLEV EISINGER



**KAROL SZYMANOWSKI**

**Mythes, Op. 30, Trois Poèmes**

I. La fontaine d'Arethuse 5:55

II. Narcisse 7:41

III. Dryades et Pan 8:30

**Romance in D major, Op. 23 6:42**

**CÉSAR FRANCK**

**Violin Sonata in A major, FWV 8**

I. Allegretto moderato 6:02

II. Allegro 9:09

III. Recitativo-Fantasia: Moderato –  
Molto lento 7:25

IV. Allegretto poco mosso 6:49



## WORLDS OF CONTRAST

“César Franck and Karol Szymanowski – for me, placing these two composers alongside each other is like contrasting absolute extremes,” comments violinist Franziska Pietsch. “Franck for me has a quintessential epic quality, it’s like a culmination. The violin and piano flow together in a highly Romantic, self-contained, idyllic world whose atmosphere, form, and sound are so beautiful and smooth. What really fascinates me is this dichotomy, this total contrast. Szymanowski is still indebted to late Romanticism, but he is forever hovering around the borders of tonality and advancing toward modernism. There is still a longing for this beauty and perfection, but together with the other side – reflections of the composers themselves, but also of the times they lived in. This combination of what is almost too beautiful with something experimental is really quite special.” César Franck wrote his A-Major Violin Sonata in 1886 at the age of sixty-four. It is thus one of the Belgian composer’s later works in which his style achieved artistic maturity and perfection. During this creative phase, he also composed the Piano Quintet in F Minor (1878–79) and String Quartet in D Major (1889) which, like the Violin Sonata, are unique and exemplary works in their respective genres. Franck dedicated the piece to the renowned violinist Eugène Ysaÿe, a close friend. He offered him the piece as a wedding present, for which Ysaÿe thanked him abundantly. In a letter to the composer, he characterized the sonata as a “totally innovative work” and promised to help make it more widely known. The premiere featuring the duo Eugène Ysaÿe /Marie-Léontine Bordes-Pène soon took place on December 16, 1886 in Brussels, during a concert of the “Cercle Artistique et Littéraire” and in the presence of the composer. The A-Major Sonata has since become an integral part of the repertoire for violin and piano; like the violin sonatas of Johannes Brahms, it has maintained a firmly established place and is regarded as the most important French violin sonata of the Fin de siècle.

The work presents a number of unusual formal features, including its characteristic cyclic form, in which the motifs of the four movements are skillfully connected with each other, reminding us of the D-Minor Symphony. The sonata begins with a vague, searching passage in the piano, which is followed by the undulating main theme in thirds introduced in the violin, a sort of “idée fixe” that forms the basis of all of the work’s principal thematic figures. Typical performance indications include “molto dolce” and “dolcissimo.” The first movement resembles an introduction to the dramatic, passionately forward-driven second movement. With its free recitative in the violin, the third movement represents a sort of meditative heart of the piece, returning to a place of calm. In the Finale, the simple, song-like main theme is now developed in the bright key of A Major and later appears as a canon between the violin and piano parts. The work concludes with a magnificent climax. “Everything simply comes together in this sonata;

it's a combination of highly subtle chamber music with the challenge of a solo concerto," notes Franziska Pietsch with enthusiasm. "Both the violinist and pianist experience this in the same way. The piece feels like an entire symphony. And you can demonstrate the violin's whole range of expression. The same is true for the piano, of course, since Franck wrote equally effectively for both instruments. The A-Major Sonata simply stands on its own; it's a masterpiece that really doesn't need much by way of words."

Poland had not produced any composers of international stature since Frédéric Chopin. The end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century represented a low ebb in Polish musical history, when the nation seemed to have lost touch with the developments in more forward-looking Western Europe. The unorthodox and progressive musical language of the young Karol Szymanowski thus found little resonance in Polish musical life at the turn of the century, firmly entrenched as it was in tradition. Instead of making compromises to accommodate the prevailing spirit of the times, Szymanowski decided to expand his musical horizons abroad. Berlin, then Europe's musical capital, beckoned him with its passionate espousal of the music of Wagner and Strauss. In Leipzig he became acquainted with Reger's counterpoint, also drawing inspiration from both the Second Viennese School and the impressionistic tonal language of Debussy and Ravel. Mediterranean musical culture kindled his enthusiasm, and even the exotic sounds of the Near East and Polish folk music served as sources of inspiration. "He wanted to be the Polish Stravinsky," as a friend noted. Whatever musical influences Szymanowski came into contact with, his genius assimilated them, in each of his creative periods, into his unmistakable individual style. He was thus a true innovator, rising to prominence as the most important representative of the Polish avant-garde during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Szymanowski had always been interested in the violin's expressive possibilities; in his orchestral works, he singled out the instrument from the very beginning with solo passages. Nearly all of his violin compositions originated in collaboration with violinist Paweł Kochoński (1887–1934), his friend and fellow countryman with whom he hoped to create "a new style, a new expressive language for the violin." After the early Sonata, Op. 9 (1904), he composed the Romance, Op. 23 (1910), *Nocturne and Tarantella*, Op. 28 and *Myths*, Op. 30, the *Three Paganini Caprices*, Op. 40 (1918), and of course the two magnificent violin concertos.

Since his efforts did not meet with recognition in his Polish homeland, Szymanowski moved to Vienna in 1910, where he remained until the outbreak of the First World War. With their luxuriant chromaticism, his works from this period, which include the Romance, still reveal the influence of the German Late Romanticists Reger and Strauss. But we already sense an opening toward the future with their tendency toward a dissolution of tonality that reveals the influence of Debussy and Scriabin. "The Romance seems almost reconciliatory; it's something like a bridge between Romanticism and innovation," as Pietsch describes this music. "There is still a discernible form,

and it feels similar to playing Franck. It remains a self-contained work, an integrated whole. Szymanowski was taking in many influences at the time. We notice how he sets out into uncharted territory, how he starts experimenting and throwing off convention, how his style is beginning to take shape. It is unmistakably Szymanowski, but still very different from the *Myths*.”

Szymanowski wrote the *Myths*, Op. 30 in 1915, in close collaboration with violinist Paweł Kochański, and dedicated the work to Kochański's wife. “This cooperation between Szymanowski and Kochański created a real challenge for us violinists,” Pietsch notes. “Together, they wanted to expand the violin's range of expression, and this seems to have started with the *Myths*. When you approach these works as a violinist, this is exactly what you feel. It's somehow different from everything else that had been composed before then. And you also need to figure out how to implement these sound ideas on the instrument. Of course I found this very exciting. The third piece in particular, *Dryades et Pan*, is very challenging technically both for the violin and piano. It's somehow related to chaos and destruction.”

The work, which bears the French title *Trois Poèmes pour Violon et Piano*, is in three parts and based on scenes from ancient Greek mythology. Each of the three pieces has a unique character of its own, and Szymanowski expresses himself here in a strikingly individual musical language. Oriental sonorities, the pentatonic scale, exotic melodic patterns and ornaments, idiosyncratic tone colors, and complex rhythms merge with impressionist stylistic features. All of this makes considerable demands on the violinist. As Pietsch explains, “There are many harmonics in fourths that are by nature difficult to play on the violin. Trills in every position and combination, even in double stops, which are rarely encountered elsewhere in the violin literature. Most of the piece is played very high up on the fingerboard, in a narrowly confined space. You want to play powerfully, but this is only called for in certain passages. There are rapid changes of expression; you have to switch between them in a matter of seconds, and by the end you need to have the feeling that it's a unified whole. This is incredibly exciting, and you have to find out how to achieve all of this completely on your own. Finding this expression, this special combination is very difficult, and of course for the pianist, too, the work is extremely challenging. The violin and piano parts are given equal importance and are closely interconnected with each other. With Franck, you know right away how it has to sound and so your heart can express itself naturally. Szymanowski might be better compared to modern art. His language is more artificial, there's an invisible wall that you need to break through. This takes work, but then you feel the lifeblood of the music, the inner strife, its dreamlike quality. And you have the feeling of delving deeper and deeper into something that doesn't want to end.”

**FRANZISKA PIETSCH**

Born in East Berlin, she received her first violin lessons from her father at the age of five. She gave her debut at the Komische Oper Berlin aged eleven, after which she regularly performed as a soloist alongside renowned orchestras of the GDR. She entered the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler as a junior student, where she studied with Werner Scholz. As an emerging talent, she enjoyed special state support until her father escaped to the West in 1984. Two years of reprisals by the regime followed until she was able to leave the country in 1986. She continued her studies with Ulf Hoelscher (Karlsruhe), Jens Ellermann (Hannover) and Dorothy Delay at the Juilliard School in New York. Masterclasses with renowned musicians including Wanda Wilkomirska, Ruggiero Ricci and Herman Krebbers rounded off her musical training.

Also the third audite album reflects facets of her biography: The contrast of extremes – Szymanowski's idiosyncratic, often experimental sounds meet the direct musical language of Franck's Romantic Violin Sonata – finds its analogy in the extremes of Franziska Pietsch's life: from celebrated child star to repressive boycott, and back to success.

Franziska Pietsch has won numerous competitions, including the Bach-Wettbewerb Leipzig, Concours Maria Canals in Barcelona, the International Kocian Violin Competition and the International Violin Competition Rudolfo Lipizer. She won the Parke-Davis Förderpreis as well as the Prize of the Brahmsgesellschaft Baden-Baden. As a soloist, she has appeared in many European countries as well as in America and Asia, performing under conductors such as Antoni Wit, Arpad Joó, Moshe Atzmon, Julia Jones, Toshiyuki Kamioka and George Hanson. From 1998 until 2002 she was First Concertmaster of the Sinfonieorchester Wuppertal, and from 2006 until 2010 she was Deuxième Soliste of the Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg. She is also regularly invited to lead the orchestras of the Düsseldorf and Frankfurt opera houses as well as the WDR Sinfonieorchester Cologne.

Franziska Pietsch is particularly passionate about chamber music. Since 2012, she has performed many concerts with her piano partner, Detlev Eisinger. She became a member of the String Trio Lirico in 2014. She is a founding member of the Trio Testore. Alongside her busy performing schedule, she also arranged the trio's annual chamber music festival, "Mai Klassik". In summer 2015, Franziska Pietsch parted with the ensemble in order to be able to focus on other chamber music formations and her solo career. Her audite albums of Grieg Sonatas and works by Prokofiev have received rave reviews from the international press as well as nominations for the German Record Critics' award (Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik) and the International Classical Music Award.

Franziska Pietsch plays a violin by Carlo Antonio Testore (Milan) of 1751.



**DETLEV EISINGER,**

born in Munich, began playing the piano at the age of seven and gave his first piano recital, as well as performances with orchestra, at the age of thirteen. He studied with Walter Krafft and later with Professor Erik Then-Bergh at the Hochschule für Musik in Munich, where he graduated in 1980 with distinction. In 1986, he won a scholarship to attend the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris.

After graduating, Detlev Eisinger embarked on a busy career as a performer in Germany and abroad, an exceptional initial project being the complete performance of JS Bach's *Well-tempered Clavier* in Munich, Vienna, Graz, Salzburg and Klagenfurt. He was also invited to give concerts in Menton, Paris and Montpellier, at the *Kissinger Sommer*, the *Richard-Strauss-Tage* in Garmisch and at the *Kodály Festival* in Hungary. He has given piano recitals and played concertos in major European cities (including at the Philharmonie Berlin and *Münchner Klaviersommer*) as well as in Canada and the USA. He has also toured South Africa several times. Radio and CD recordings followed.

Alongside his career as a soloist, Detlev Eisinger also performs chamber music and appears as an accompanist, having worked with singers such as Hermann Prey and Kieth Engen. Since 2012 he has appeared regularly with the violinist Franziska Pietsch, resulting in the foundation of the Duo Pietsch-Eisinger, giving concerts and making recordings.

Detlev Eisinger's lecture recitals have proved popular with audiences. A further facet of his versatile career are his introductions to the dramatic works of Richard Wagner: from 2002 until 2008, he introduced the complete Wagner operas at the Bayreuther Festspiele in the form of piano matinees, resulting in further invitations from opera houses and festivals in Germany and abroad.



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piano: Steingraeber (Gerd Finkenstein)

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