



CHANNEL CLASSICS

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Le Bal Masqué

Poulenc
d'Indy
Roussel
Koechlin

Viotta Ensemble

*members of the
Royal Concertgebouw
Orchestra*



Le Bal Masqué

Viotta Ensemble *members of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra*

Vincent d'Indy (1851-1931)

'Suite dans le Style ancien', in D

Major opus 24 for trumpet,
two flutes and string quintet (1886)

- | | |
|--------------------|-------|
| 1. Prélude | 01.36 |
| 2. Entrée | 02.38 |
| 3. Sarabande | 03.32 |
| 4. Menuet | 03.19 |
| 5. Ronde Française | 02.45 |

Albert Roussel (1869-1937)

String Trio, opus 58 for violin,
viola and violoncello (1937)

- | | |
|------------------------|-------|
| 6. Allegro moderato | 03.49 |
| 7. Adagio | 06.12 |
| 8. Allegro con spirito | 02.38 |

Charles Koechlin (1867-1950)

Sonatina nr. 2 opus 194 for oboe
d'amore, flute, clarinet, string sextet
and harpsichord (1942/43)

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 9. Andante, très calme,
presque Adagio | 03.56 |
| 10. Andante con moto | 01.16 |
| 11. Presque Adagio | 03.09 |
| 12. Finalé - Allegro | 02.51 |

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

'Le Bal Masqué' for baritone, oboe,
trumpet, clarinet, violin, percussion,
piano, violoncello and bassoon (1932)

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| 13. Prélude et Air de
Bravoure | 04.20 |
| 14. Intermède | 02.17 |
| 15. Malvina | 02.16 |
| 16. Bagatelle | 02.11 |
| 17. La Dame Aveugle | 02.15 |
| 18. Finale | 04.37 |

Total time 56.50

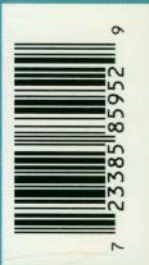
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Viotta Ensemble, members of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra

Marleen Asberg violin - **Ruud van den Brink** piano - **Ken Hakii** viola - **Liesbeth Hoppen** harpsichord - **Guus Jeukendrup** viola - **Maarten Koningsberger** baritone - **Jan Kouwenhoven** oboe - **Johan Kracht** violin - **Roland Krämer** viola - **Paul Lemaire** percussion - **Jos de Lange** bassoon - **Peter Masseurs** trumpet - **Jacques Meertens** clarinet - **Rien de Reede** flute - **Caroline Strumphier** violin - **Truus van Tol** violoncello - **Paul Verhey** flute - **Yke Viersen** violoncello - **Ruth Visser** oboe d'amore - **Jan Wolfs** double bass

photo: Piet Roorda

The **Viotta Ensemble**,

consisting of members of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, was founded in the spring of 1992. Since then it has given a series of concerts for its own special audience, the Friends of the Concertgebouw and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. The series has attracted attention not only because of the exceptional quality of the performances but also for an imaginative choice of music from the repertoire for chamber ensemble. Performances by the Viotta-ensemble, named after maestro Henri Viotta (1843-1933) who conducted the first concert to be given in the Concertgebouw in 1888, are not confined to the Concertgebouw; the ensemble can be heard regularly in other venues.

The ensemble varies to 20 musicians in size, including both strings and winds and performing repertoire in a range of settings from Mozart's Flute Quartets, Mendelssohn's Octet for Strings, and Stravinski's 'Histoire du soldat' to Milhaud's 'La Création du monde'.

Cd's with works by Van Bree, Rontgen, Van Gilse and J.M. Coenen had already appeared.

Le Bal Masqué

Max Jacob

[1] PRÉAMBULE ET AIR DE BRAVOURE

*Madame la Dauphine
ne verra pas le beau film
qu'on y a fait tirer
les vers du nez,
car on l'a menée en terre
avec son premier né
en terre et à Nanterre
où elle est enterrée*

*Quand un paysan de Chine
veut avoir des primeurs,
il va chez l'imprimeur
ou bien chez sa voisine,
Tous les paysans de la Chine
les avaient épiés;
pour leur mettre des bottines,
ils leurs coupent les pieds.*

*Monsieur Le Comte d'Artois
est monté sur le toit
faire un compte d'ardoises
et voir par la lunette
pour voir si la lune est
plus grosse que le doigt.*

*Un vapeur et sa cargaison
ont échoué contre la maison.
Chipons de la graisse d'oie
pour en faire des canons.*

[3] MALVINA

*Voilà qui j'espère effraie:
Mademoiselle Malvina*

*ne quitte plus son éventail
depuis qu'elle est morte.
Son gant gris perle est étoilé
d'or...*

*Elle se tirebouchonne
comme une valse tzigane;
elle vient mourir d'amour
à ta porte près du grès
où l'on met les cannes...
Disons qu'elle est morte du
diabète,
morte du gros parfum qui lui
penchait le cou.
Oh! l'honnête animal si chaste et
si peu fou!*

*Moins gourmet que gourmande,
elle était de sang lourd,
agrégée en lettres et chargée de
cours,
C'était en chapeau haut
qu'on lui faisait la cour.
Or, on ne l'aurait cue
qu'a la méthode hussarde!...
Malvina, oh Fantôme, que Dieu
te garde!*

[5] LA DAME AVEUGLE

*La dame aveugle dont les yeux
saignent choisit ses mots,
elle ne parle à personne de ses
maux.
Elle a des cheveux pareils à la
mousse,
elle porte des bijoux et des
pierreries rousses.
La dame grasse et aveugle dont*

*les yeux saignent,
écrit des lettres polies avec
marges et interlignes.*

*Elle prend garde aux plis de sa
robe de peluche,
et s'efforce de faire quelque chose
de plus.*

*Et si je ne mentionne pas son
beau frère,
c'est qu'ici ce jeune homme n'est
pas en honneur,
car il s'enivre et fait s'enivrer
l'aveugle
qui rit, qui rit alors et beugle.*

[6] FINALE

*Réparateur perclus de vieux
automobiles,
l'anachorète, hélas, a regagné
son nid.*

*Par ma barbe, je suis trop
vieillard pour Paris;
l'angle de tes maisons m'entre
dans les chevilles.*

*Mon gilet quadrillé a, dit-on,
l'air étrusque
et mon chapeau marron va mal
avec mes frusques.*

*Avis, c'est un placard qu'on a
mis sur ma porte:
Dans ce logis tout sent la peau
de chèvre morte.*

The French composers who were attracting attention around 1920, and who were given the collective title of the 'Groupe des Six' by the critic Henri Collet, were united above all by negative characteristics: they were all in rebellion against the powerful influence of Wagner and against the (in their opinion) vagueness of symbolism and impressionism. In their battle they sometimes resorted to musical pranks which were a transitory characteristic, for example, of the music of Honegger and Milhaud, but which would remain characteristic for **Francis Poulenc** (1899-1963) for some years to come.

Poulenc's cantata *Le Bal Masqué* is written to texts by the poet Max Jacob, whose work can be seen as closely approaching surrealism; it dates from 1932. The instrumentation is strongly reminiscent of Stravinsky's 'L'Histoire du Soldat': oboe, clarinet, bassoon, cornet a piston, piano, violin, cello, and percussion-the latter under the control of one single player. In addition, the composer has precisely specified the placement of the nine performers and the conductor on the podium.

Poulenc considered the work as a sort of 'carnival' which he had set up in collaboration with the poet. This makes the introduction of a 'blind lady' acceptable, a device which would be in questionable taste outside of this absurdist setting.

(Note: This cantata was composed on the eve of Hitler's 'Machtubername' in Germany. The poet Max Jacob was a Jew, originally from Brittany, who had become a Catholic convert. Neither he nor Poulenc could have suspected in 1932 that conversion would not save him: Jacob died in the French concentration camp at Drancy in 1944.)

Vincent D'Indy (1851-1931), whose teachers included César Franck, was among the founders of the 'Société Nationale de Musique', an expression of cultural consciousness after France's defeat by Prussia. An interesting paradox of this movement is that the major exemplars for this group of composers were Bach, Beethoven, and Wagner, all of whom were of German origin.

In 1896, D'Indy, in collaboration with Charles Bordes and Alexandre Guilmant, founded the 'Schola Cantorum', the aim of which was to encourage

interest in the music of the Renaissance and Baroque. D'Indy was one of the first to recognize the greatness of Claudio Monteverdi, and he can never receive sufficient credit for this act alone. His publication in 1905 of a new edition of Monteverdi's 'Orfeo' remained unnoticed for decades, but that is certainly not his fault.

The *Suite dans le Style ancien* is evidence of D'Indy's intense interest in the French music of earlier centuries. In this case it is Jean Philippe Rameau who is the source of inspiration. The unconventional instrumentation, two flutes, trumpet and string quintet (or string orchestra? the sources are not entirely clear on this point) is colorful, another characteristic shared with Rameau. The musical language bears hardly a trace of the eighteenth century, although one might hear a reference to the French music of that period in the rhythms of *Sarabande*, *Menuet*, and *Rondo*. The only truly 'ancien' feature is the trumpet part, which makes exclusive use of notes in the natural harmonic series and is cleverly interwoven with the other instruments, occasionally contributing its own thematic part as well.

The String Trio opus 58 is **Albert Roussel's** (1869-1937) third work for three instruments. The first, a work for the classic ensemble of violin, cello, and piano, dates from an early period: it is his opus 2. Much later Roussel composed a trio for the unconventional setting of flute, viola, and cello (opus 40, 1929).

This string trio was to be Roussel's last completed work; Roussel was working on another trio for oboe, clarinet, and bassoon (Trio d'anches) until shortly before his death, but only the Andante was finished.

The string trio exhibits all of the stylistic characteristics of Roussel's last compositional period: transparency and tightly condensed form. In the extremely concise first movement, two pieces of melodic material appear, returning in reversed order after a tumultuous middle section (there is no 'development'!).

The finale is remarkable for its combination of an extended rondo with the character of a scherzo, and not just a scherzo but one in the typically Roussel mode. Its light-hearted gigue rhythm clearly refers to the scherzo of the Fourth Symphony.

As is generally the case in Roussel's later chamber works, the center of gravity is in the slow movement, an *Adagio* filled with the utmost tension. In addition to the long postponement of a clear tonal center, the dramatic force of this movement is increased not a little by an almost agonized chromaticism, which is only resolved in the last measures by a pianissimo chord of F Major.

Charles Koechlin (1867-1950) is certainly among the most interesting and versatile French composers of his generation. He was a student of Gabriel Fauré, who already charged him in the 1890s with the task of orchestrating Fauré's music for an English production of Maeterlinck's 'Pelléas et Mélisande'. Koechlin would perform a similar service for Debussy's ballet music 'Khamma'. Koechlin not only left a considerable oeuvre as a composer, but was also the author of numerous articles, theoretical works (on instrumentation and counterpoint), a biography of his teacher, and a pamphlet 'La musique et le peuple'.

In fact, Koechlin continued to experiment throughout his entire life with harmonies, rhythms, and combinations of instruments. In some of his songs composed before 1900, there are already harmonic developments which explore regions undreamed of at that time even by Debussy.

The *Sonatine op. 194 no. 2* is a vivid testimonial to Koechlin's enterprise in the field of instrumental ensembles. Although this is a chamber music composition, one instrument, the oboe d'amore, has a prominent role as soloist. The composer combines the oboe with nine other instruments; however, in the coloristic tradition beloved of French composers, none of them is employed in all of the movements. A complete tutti is deployed only in the last movement.

In the first movement both violins are silent, as are the winds and harpsichord in the second movement and the clarinet in the third movement.

The character of the first and third movements is predominantly meditative; the second movement is clearly inspired by dance music of the 17th and 18th centuries. The primary rhythm of the last movement is also like that of a dance: a Gigue, which, however, is interrupted by an *Allegro très animé*.

Marius Flothuis (Translation: David Shapero)

Vincent d' Indy (1851-1931)

Peter Masseurs
Paul Verhey
Rien de Reede
Johan Kracht
Caroline Strumphler
Ken Hakii
Truus van Tol
Jan Wolfs

'Suite dans le Style ancien' in *D Major opus 24 for trumpet, two flutes and string quintet* (1886)

trumpet
flute
flute
violin
violin
viola
violoncello
double bass

Albert Roussel (1869-1937)

Johan Kracht
Ken Hakii
Truus van Tol

String Trio, opus 58 for violin, viola and violoncello (1937)

violin
viola
violoncello

Charles Koechlin (1867-1950)

Ruth Visser
Paul Verhey
Jacques Meertens
Johan Kracht
Marleen Asberg
Roland Krämer
Guus Jeukendrup
Truus van Tol
Yke Viersen
Liesbeth Hoppen

Sonatina opus 194 nr. 2 for oboe d'amore, flute, clarinet, stringsexet and harpsichord

oboe d'amore
flute
clarinet
violin
violin
viola
viola
violoncello
violoncello
harpsichord

François Poulenc (1899-1963)

Maarten Koningsberger
Jan Kouwenhoven
Peter Masseurs
Jacques Meertens
Johan Kracht
Paul Lemaire
Ruud van den Brink
Yke Viersen
Jos de Lange

Le Bal Masqué, for baritone, oboe, trumpet, clarinet, violin, percussion, piano, violoncello and bassoon

baritone
oboe
trumpet
clarinet
violin
percussion
piano
violoncello
bassoon

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