

Théodore GOUVY



**Three Sérénades
for flute, string quartet
and double-bass
Introduction et Polonaise
Danse suédoise
for flute and piano**

**Markus Brönnimann, flute
Kreisler Quartet
Ilka Emmert, double-bass
Michael Kleiser, piano**

FIRST RECORDINGS

THÉODORE GOUVY: THE *SÉRÉNADES* FOR FLUTE AND STRINGS

by Olivier Schmitt

Théodore Gouvy's story is an unusual one. He was born in 1819, to a Walloon family which had moved to the village of Goffontaine, outside Saarbrücken, four years after the defeat of Napoleon and the division of Europe which gave this land to Prussia. With his joint French and German heritage, he was to move constantly between the two cultures. He went to Paris to study law in 1836 and, failing his legal studies, decided to focus entirely on music, and studied piano, violin and composition, learning from classical models.

In Paris his German nationality closed the doors of the Conservatoire to him, but he moved among musicians, attended concerts and wrote a good deal, having taken lessons from Antoine Elwart, the assistant professor of harmony at the Conservatoire. He composed trios, quartets, quintets, symphonies and songs, ignoring the fashion of the day for programmatic music. His assiduity got his music played and put his name around. He had already tasted success and obtained a number of distinctions when the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 put a halt to his progress: with nationalist reactions heightened, some found his music too French, too light, and for others it was too German, too heavy.

In voluntary exile on the family land at Hombourg-Haut in Moselle, Gouvy began to tackle works of some scale: a Requiem (1874) and a *Stabat Mater* (1875), chamber music, dramatic cantatas (among them *Egille* (1886), *Elektra* (1892), *Iphigénie auf Tauris* (1885) and *Asléga* (1876, revised in 1888)) and his two operas, *Der Cid* (1863) and *Fortunato* (also known as *Mateo Falcone*, of 1896), neither of which was performed until *Der Cid* was presented in Saarbrücken in 2001. He was also one of the major symphonists of his generation, with seven symphonies (composed between 1845 and 1892), a *Sinfonietta* (1885), a *Fantaisie symphonique* (1869) and several overtures. The success that attended the performance of these works allowed Gouvy

to build up a network of some of the best-known names of his day, with Brahms, Franck, Grieg, Lalo, Rossini, Saint-Saëns, Sarasate, Clara Schumann and Tchaikovsky among his friends and acquaintances.

After his death in 1898 Gouvy's music fell into a century of oblivion which ended only in 1995, with the establishment of the Institut Théodore Gouvy by Sylvain Teutsch, a member of the male-voice choir, the Chœur d'Hommes de Hombourg-Haut, that Gouvy himself had founded. Guided by the musicologist René Auclair, the Institut began collecting manuscripts and scores, amassing more than 160 works, organising conferences and concerts, republishing pieces and stimulating recordings. Since the transmission of its cultural heritage is one of the major aims of the *Conseil Général* of Moselle, the Gouvy collection is now housed in the Departmental Archives in Metz and is in the process of being digitised.

Taking his inspiration from Schubert's *Impromptus* and Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words*, Gouvy wrote a series of twenty *Sérénades* for piano (1855–78) as well as five for different chamber forces (including those on this disc). The piano *Sérénades* present a sizable corpus of character pieces, some of them decorative, others meditative, and varying in difficulty. Their unifying features are a degree of melodic and harmonic elegance, and a contrapuntal liveliness which belies the simplicity suggested by the title.

***Sérénade* No. 1 in G major, Op. 82, for Flute, String Quartet and Double-Bass**

The *First Sérénade*, Op. 82, in G major, was commissioned by the Philharmonic Club of New York and finished in November 1888. It consists of four movements. An earlier version was drafted in F major; perhaps Gouvy found that its colour put too much weight on the pastoral character of the work, the first movement in particular.

The work opens with a *Pastorale* (*Moderato*, 6/8), in ABA'B'A'' form [6] – music that dates back to 1875, when it was composed as a piece for violin and orchestra (Gouvy's only *concertante* music). In the 1888 version the strings – led by the first violin, which is to have almost as important a role as the flute – unfold an extensive introduction, until the entry of the flute (Ex. 1) begins a series of elegant and aery arabesques which lead up to the harmonically unstable B section, in G, and then E, minor, and the dialogue between flute and first violin becomes tighter.

Ex. 1

Double-stopping thickens the string texture while the flute climbs towards its high register, the music becoming more forceful. But the tension thus created dissipates almost instantly as the opening material returns. The first violin takes up the *Pastorale* theme, counterpointed by trills from the flute. Section B' remains on D major, the dominant of G, reinforcing the chromaticism with double-stopping. A *ritenuto* on a pedal point allows the return of A, although only its beginning: the theme is banished by the last arabesque and trills from the flute, only the initial ascending fourth managing to hang on until the last bars (*Poco più moderato*), with an archaic plagal cadence.

The Intermezzo [7] is an *Allegretto grazioso* in common time where the flute holds pride of place; it, too, has the form ABABA. The first motif is a kind of rustic dance (Ex. 2)

Ex. 2

The B section begins abruptly by imposing, without preparation, the key of E minor in a striking contrast of tone and colour (Ex. 3).

Ex. 3

Fl. *ff*

Vln. I *ff* *p* *ff*

Vln. II *ff* *p* *ff*

Vla. *ff* *p* *ff*

Vc. *ff* *p* *ff*

Cb. *f* *f*

This motif is used as a harmonic step to modulate to the dominant of the main key, before revealing a third, calmer, motif, in D major (Ex. 4).

Ex. 4

Fl. *p*

Vln. I *p*

Vln. II *p*

Vla. *p*

Vc. *pizz.* *arco*

Cb. *p*

The elements return with a degree of variation. B is restated in the home key, and the last presentation of A is decorated with virtuoso semiquaver triplets. The ending underlines the joyful character of the movement.

The *Larghetto* [8] is marked by a jerking motif in the cello (Ex. 5) before the entry of a long singing melody, with an opening *gruppetto* which occurs throughout the movement.

Ex. 5

The musical score for Ex. 5 is written for five staves: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Cello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The music is in 3/4 time. The Violin I part begins with a *p* dynamic and features a triplet of eighth notes. The Violin II part also starts with a *p* dynamic and includes a triplet of eighth notes. The Viola part begins with a *p* dynamic and has a triplet of eighth notes. The Cello part starts with a *p* dynamic and has a triplet of eighth notes. The Contrabass part begins with a *p* dynamic and has a triplet of eighth notes. The score includes various dynamics such as *p*, *ff*, and *dolce*, and articulations like *staccato* and *gruppetto*.

In spite of some chromaticisms and insistent rhythms in the central section, the movement retains a dream-like atmosphere, with its ornamental lines constantly refreshed.

The work ends with a rondo with three episodes and a playful character (*Alla breve*) [9]. Typical of Gouvy's more rhythmic pieces, it insists on the idea of the dance. Gouvy plays with contrasts of scoring and effect. The first episode retains the rhythmic verve of the refrain, although its key of E minor endows it with a more serious tone and a brief *ff* passage gives it a contrast with the first section. The second refrain is much shortened and its theme, in the first violin, hidden behind *staccato* quavers in the flute. The second episode modulates to C minor without losing the vigour of the dance. The third refrain recalls the home key, where the music now remains. This time it is presented more fully. The third episode is less animated, at least in its first bars, because of the absence of quavers and the presence of heavy fifths in the bass. The textures thicken and the tempo accelerates, to the point where the last refrain (*più mosso*) catches fire in a brilliant conclusion.

Sérénade No. 2 in F major, Op. 84

Composed the year after No. 1, the *Second Sérénade* in F major, Op. 84, likewise consists of four movements. The first [2] is a *Tema con variazioni (Andante maestoso)* in F minor, with the sinuous theme (Ex. 6) presented by the first violin.

Ex. 6



Five variations follow. The first strikes a heroic tone, sounding low chords among rapidly ascending rockets, which the viola and second violin accompany with dotted rhythms. The second variation switches the theme between the cello and the flute over rapid chromatic figuration. The third variation modulates to F major and switches to 9/8, and the flute and first violin exchange fulsome arabesques. The fourth variation (*poco più mosso*) returns to the minor for a striking transformation of the theme, which is reduced to a chromatic rising line, although it retains some elements (repeated notes, dotted rhythms). The fifth variation, in F major, offers joyous imitation between flute, first violin and cello. The music intensifies as it reaches the conclusion, which recalls the theme, shortened and back in the minor. The drama is in no way attenuated by the closing *tierce de Picardie*.

In the light and virtuosic Scherzo [3] Gouvy seems more at ease and leaves his mark on the sonata-rondo. The first theme (Ex. 7) is typical of him. The second thematic group (in the dominant, F major) uses arpeggiation as its principal element. The development, launched by the return of the Scherzo, uses scraps of themes in a passage the instability of which is exacerbated by frequent modulation. The second 'episode' (*più sostenuto*) unfolds in E flat major, its rhythm and harmony giving it a rustic flavour which contrasts with the preceding material. The repeat of the exposition is literal, and in the home key. Gouvy uses the second 'episode' to conclude the movement, using the full forces available to him.

Ex. 7

Fl.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

The G minor *Lamento* [4] returns to the gravity of the initial variations with a *basso ostinato* (Ex. 8) drawn from his 1877 cantata *Le Calvaire*, written at the time of the death of his brother Alexandre. This mournful procession is without equivalent in Gouvy's output.

Ex. 8

pp sempre leggero e staccato assai

The closing *Rondo giocoso*, in F major [5], interrupts the funeral march of the *Lamento*. Its generous construction and thematic richness make it one of Gouvy's most successful last movements. Its rhythmic vigour and instrumental writing give it a symphonic fullness.

Sérénade No. 3 in D minor, op. posth.

The *Third Sérénade* [1], which bears no opus number, is dated 1891, although it reworks the first movement of a quintet (with two cellos) in D minor, also without opus number, written between 1873 and 1879 – and that itself had already been through two versions. Gouvy often recycled music from one work to another, most frequently with a fair amount of alteration. Unlike the two preceding *Sérénades*, this one remained unpublished for many years, and it seems probable that its composer never heard it himself. The manuscript, for flute and string orchestra, is incomplete: a folio of four pages – an introduction also absent from the two-cello quintet – has been lost. As luck

would have it, there is also an adaptation for piano duet and, by using that document, I was able to restore the missing introduction. It is difficult to know if Gouvy intended to add other movements to this piece, but its ample dimensions make it a considerable work in its own right.

The introduction, in F major, opens in a pastoral atmosphere of considerable calm (Ex. 9) which reveals nothing of the tensions to follow.

Ex. 9 Introduction **Adagio** ♩ = 96

The musical score for the Introduction is written for a full orchestra. It begins with a Flûte (Flute) and Violon I (Violin I) part that is hesitant and nervous, characterized by syncopated rhythms and harmonic ambiguities. The Violon II (Violin II), Viola, Violoncelle (Violoncello), and Contrebasse (Contrabasso) parts provide a harmonic and rhythmic foundation. The lower strings play a steady eighth-note pattern, while the upper strings play a more melodic line. The score is marked Adagio (♩ = 96) and is in F major. The dynamics range from piano (p) to crescendo (cresc.).

The first thematic group is then announced, the first motif hesitant and nervous and the second, with a long chromatic line for the flute, unable to quell the general nervousness. Syncopated rhythms and harmonic ambiguities make the transition to the second thematic group just as unstable. This second group, in F major (the relative major of the home key), is calmer, despite its own syncopations. The imitative writing which animates it will have an important place in the development, which begins with imitation of a rhythmic augmentation from the second group before the initial speed is restored and the contrapuntal play grows even tighter. The central section of the development, built entirely with material from the first group, has an echo of Mendelssohn's *Hebrides Overture*. The last part of the development modulates rapidly and boldly, using augmented fifths, until the return of the exposition. The first group is repeated literally, but the transition is again transformed before, after some bitter and uncertain chromaticisms, the second group appears in a luminous D major. The much developed conclusion returns to the minor mode (*Un poco più*

sostenuto); the string tremolos grow more and more menacing, and the tempo accelerates until a last quotation of the second motif of the first group, which is transformed into a stepwise harmonic ascent to a furious *con fuoco*. The last few bars express a mood of resignation before they are swept aside by the final cadence.

Although the *Third Sérénade* is probably incomplete, it remains one of the best constructed and most expressive works in Gouvy's output.

Introduction et Polonaise in A major for Flute and Piano

The *Introduction et Polonaise in A major* is an adaptation of the *Alla polacca* which closes the second volume of *Ghiribizzi*, Op. 83 (1890) – short and colourful fantasies for piano duet which show a lighter side of the composer. The *Introduction* is a charming *pièce de salon*, rich in contrasts between its graceful melodies and martial dotted rhythms. With its semiquaver triplets the *Polonaise* is close to some of the *Sérénades* for piano. The flute takes pride of place, with the piano offering only rhythmic and harmonic accompaniment. For all its conventionality the *Introduction et Polonaise* is an attractive and engaging piece.

Danse suédoise in C minor for Flute and Piano

The *Danse suédoise* was composed for Gouvy's Octet, Op. 71 (1879), for flute, oboe, two clarinets, two horns and two bassoons, written for Paul Taffanel (1844–1908), the leading French flute virtuoso of the day. Gouvy was particularly fond of this scherzo-like piece, of which the Leipzig composer and arranger August Horn (1825–93) made several transcriptions, including one for violin and piano, on the basis of which Markus Brönnimann has taken the initiative to prepare this new one, for flute and piano. A piece where rhythm is of the essence, it bubbles with the vivacity typical of Gouvy.

Olivier Schmitt is involved in the cataloguing and digitisation of Théodore Gouvy's music for the Département de Moselle. He holds a doctorate in musicology and is a composer, organist (he is the titulaire of the historical Dalstein-Haerpfer organ in Hayange) and harmonium-player.

Markus Brönnimann has been principal flute of the Luxembourg Philharmonic Orchestra since 1998. Swiss-born, he studied with Günter Rumpel at the Zurich Musikhochschule, where he gained both the orchestral and soloist's diplomas *cum laude*. He completed his studies with Michel Debost at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio and with Renate Greiss-Armin at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Karlsruhe. He has a number of competition prizes to his name, among them a study award from the Migros Genossenschaftsbund, an important Swiss cultural association.



His orchestral experience began as a member of the Junge Deutsche Philharmonie before playing as principal flute of the Norddeutscher Rundfunk Radiophilharmonie in Hanover and the Hagen Philharmonic Orchestra in Westphalia.

Markus Brönnimann has been exploring the chamber-music repertoire for flute from his early days and now performs in a number of groups in Europe and further afield; one of them, the Ensemble Pyramide, has its own concert series in Zurich; he has arranged a number of works – by Debussy, Mozart, Krommer, Pierné and Ravel – for the group in pursuit of his basic concern to expand the flute repertoire. His website can be found at www.markusbroennimann.com.

The **Kreisler Quartet** – Haoxing Liang and Silja Geirhardsdottir, violins, Jean-Marc Apap, viola, and Niall Brown, cello – was formed in Luxembourg in 2009 and exemplifies multiculturalism, its members being of mixed nationality and their repertoire spanning the globe. Their interpretations of the established literature have also been welcomed for its freshness and energy. Already in their short career they have appeared in concerts and festivals in several European countries including France, Germany and Luxembourg, where they performed at the prestigious chamber music hall of the Philharmonie. A regular radio guest, the Kreisler Quartet has also recorded works by the Chinese composer Gao Ping (including the

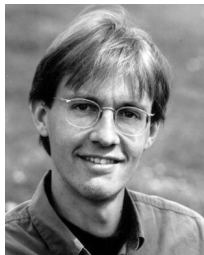


Piano Quintet) for CD release and are keen advocates of contemporary Luxembourg composers such as Alexander Mullenbach and Marco Pütz.

Ilka Emmert, double-bass, studied in Frankfurt-am-Main with Günter Klaus and has been a prize-winner in a number of competitions. Her first professional position was in the Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra, from where she moved to the Radio Symphony Orchestra in Saarbrücken (now called the Deutsche Radiophilharmonie Saarbrücken-Kaiserslautern). Outside her orchestral work she has a keen interest in chamber music and historical performance practice, and has toured America, Asia and Europe as a member of different ensembles. She also has a good number of CD recordings to her name.



Michael Kleiser, piano, lives in Zurich, where he is active as an accompanist and chamber musician. He studied piano, organ and vocal accompaniment in Zurich and London, with Giuliana Stehli-Altwegg, Peter Feuchtwanger and Irwin Gage. He is intensively involved in the performance of contemporary music, not least as a member of the ensemble Collegium Novum in Zurich, where he is also *Korrepetitor* at the Hochschule für Musik. His wide musical interests regularly bring him into contact with other parts of the musical worlds – jazz, musicals, popular song – as a pianist and choir-leader.



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**PALAZZETTO
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ROMANTIQUE
FRANÇAISE



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THÉODORE GOUVY *Sérénades* for Flute and Strings

[1] **Sérénade in D minor, op. posth.** (1891; ed. Olivier Schmitt) **11:06**
Adagio – Allegro moderato

Sérénade No. 2 in F major, Op. 84 (1889) **18:55**

[2] I *Tema con variazioni. Andante maestoso* 6:18

[3] II *Scherzo. Allegro vivace* 4:33

[4] III *Lamento. Andante patetico* 2:44

[5] IV *Rondo giocoso. Allegro* 5:20

Sérénade No. 1 in G major, Op. 82 (1888) **22:24**

[6] I *Pastorale. Moderato* 7:42

[7] II *Intermezzo. Allegretto grazioso* 4:32

[8] III *Larghetto. Lento non troppo* 5:59

[9] IV *Rondo. Alla breve* 4:11

[10] **Introduction et Polonaise for flute and piano** (1890) **5:15**

[11] **Danse suédoise for flute and piano** (1879) **3:56**

(from the Wind Octet, Op. 71, arr. by Markus Brönnimann)

TT 61:42

FIRST RECORDINGS

Markus Brönnimann, flute

Kreisler Quartet [1]–[9]

(Haoxing Liang and Silja Geirhardsdottir, violins;

Jean-Marc Apap, viola; Niall Brown, cello)

Ilka Emmert, double-bass [1]–[9]

Michael Kleiser, piano [10], [11]



A Saarländischer Rundfunk recording, 2013



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The rediscovery of the three *Sérénades* for flute and strings by the Franco-German Romantic Théodore Gouvy (1819–98) – two of them commissioned by the Philharmonic Club of New York – brings a welcome expansion to the repertoire of nineteenth-century chamber music for flute. Gouvy's charming melodic language disguises the expert craftsmanship of a composer who, not belonging to any national school, has not had the attention his warm-hearted music deserves.

THÉODORE GOUVY *Sérénades* for Flute and Strings

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|-----------|---|--------------|
| I | <i>Sérénade in D minor, op. posth.</i> (1891; ed. Olivier Schmitt) | 11:06 |
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| | (arr. from the Wind Octet, Op. 71, by Markus Brönnimann) | |

Markus Brönnimann, flute

Kreisler Quartet **I–9**

(Haoxing Liang and Silja Geirhardsdottir, violins;

Jean-Marc Apap, viola; Niall Brown, cello)

Ilka Emmert, double-bass **I–9**

Michael Kleiser, piano **10, 11**



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