

A photograph of Petteri Iivonen, a young man with glasses and a beard, smiling while holding a violin and bow. He is wearing a dark blue polo shirt. The background is dark and out of focus.

J. S. Bach
Debussy
Lefkowitz
Sallinen
Ysaÿe



YARLUNG RECORDS
BOB ATTIEH, PRODUCER

"...extremely gifted and polished...
Petteri plays with natural raw talent
and extraordinary technical and
musical finesse... his personality infuses
his music with a charm and depth
especially welcome today.

A young master."
—Hagai Shaham

Petteri Iivonen *Art of the Violin*

Petteri Iivonen: Art of the Violin

Producers Notes

I remember the first time I heard the name "Petteri Iivonen." It was late in the evening, and my phone rang at home. "Hello Bob," a dark voice greeted me, before I could say hello myself. "My name is Hagai Shaham. You do not know me, but I know a young violinist you must hear right away. He comes from Finland. His name is Petteri Iivonen." This is the sort of call, at least from musicians like Hagai, that makes producers grin from ear to ear. "You're *the* Hagai Shaham? The concert violinist? Of course I know who you are. I would be delighted."

Hagai booked time for us in Alfred Newman Hall, a beautiful concert space at the University of Southern California where Hagai teaches. It is special when the world's leading soloists take time away from performing for academic life, and even more special when they have the ability to teach well, and transmit their elusive arts to the next generation of masters. Hagai has good company. Famed violinist Midori Goto chairs the strings department at USC. Jascha Heifetz taught here. Gregor Piatigorsky taught here.

At my request, Petteri began his audition with Bach's G Minor Sonata. Within three measures I knew I was hearing someone special. Even though Petteri was only 20 years old at the time, I realized I was hearing someone who would soon become one of my favorite violinists.

It is to support young concert musicians as they begin their international concert careers, to support people like Petteri, and pianist Orion Weiss and 'cellist Elinor Frey before him, that Yarlung Artists exists. Yarlung Artists (www.yarlungartists.org) is a nonprofit which raises money to create debut albums: these recordings prove vital to young musicians' careers. I told Petteri I would ask our advisors, and if they said yes, it was a "go." Our advisors endorsed our plans, and Midori emailed immediately from USC, expressing her hope, support and encouragement.

Dean Robert Cutietta kindly invited us to record this album in Newman Hall, where I first heard Petteri play. Thanks to Rob, Yarlung Records had the pleasure of recording *Petteri Iivonen: Art of the Violin*, and *Ciaramella: Music from the Court of Burgundy* in the same week. And we ended our sessions for Petteri with a live concert recording session, from which we took the Lefkowitz and Bach performances on this album.



Petteri Iivonen
photo: Hagai Shaham

Thoughts on the Music

Belgian composer Eugène Ysaÿe lived from 1858 to 1931, and achieved great fame as a conductor, composer and concert violinist. As a violinist, he was perhaps best known for his interpretations of Bach and Beethoven. Ysaÿe's fascination, or indeed obsession with Bach inspired his writing of the sonatas — especially No. 2 in A Minor, which begins with a direct quotation from Bach's Partita No. 3.

Legend has it that Ysaÿe composed all six of his Op. 27 violin sonatas, or at least completed sketches of them, within a 24 hour period in 1924. The composer credited his inspiration to a concert in which Joseph Szigeti played Bach's G Minor Sonata (the same sonata Petteri played for me at our audition). Ysaÿe dedicated his 2nd sonata to Jacques Thibaud, and his 4th in E Minor, Ysaÿe's personal favorite, to Fritz Kreisler.

Hilary Hahn performed Ysaÿe's 2nd violin sonata in Walt Disney Concert Hall during her most recent Los Angeles recital. This was the first time I heard this piece performed live, and it was this work that I remember best from Hahn's exhilarating performance. When Petteri told me he was interested in recording this work, as well as Ysaÿe's 4th sonata, I was delighted.

So we begin and end this album with Bach, starting with Ysaÿe's Bach quotation at the beginning of his 2nd sonata, and ending with Bach's landmark five-movement Partita No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1004, which itself concludes with his massive Chaconne, or *Ciaccona* in Italian as notated in the manuscript.

I enjoy remembering that the Chaconne most likely originated as a dance in the New World which returned to Spain (along with much gold melted into blocks from irreplaceable Pre-Columbian art and jewelry) after the conquest of the Americas. This original Chaconne offered a fast, sexy, syncopated rhythm. Composers treated this dance with increasing invention and gravity during the Baroque era. Henry Purcell wrote complex and chromatic Chaconnes for violin, and Bach's Chaconne, from his Partita No. 2, may represent the culmination of this genre. 250 years later, this work returns to Los Angeles, one of those cities in the "New World," in the capable hands of another great European musician, Petteri Iivonen.

Bach may have himself taken inspiration from a collection of partitas written by Johann Paul von Westhoff, whom Bach knew in Weimar. By writing his sonatas and partitas, Bach firmly established the violin as a solo instrument of first rank. Indeed when played well on either an original or



Petteri & Kevin in Alfred Newman green room during intermisson

modernized instrument, these works ask the violin to transmit the most tender and most personal of human emotions as well as the thunderous energy of a full orchestra. They contain an entire universe of sound and experience. As a consequence, these pieces developed an archetypal aura, as did so much of Bach's great writing.

We follow our opening Ysaÿe sonata with a one-movement work by Finnish composer and violinist Aulis Sallinen titled *Cadenze*. We know Sallinen's writing well in the United States, especially through concert series like *Green Umbrella*, and in fact Los Angeles Opera premiered his opera *Kullervo* in 1992.

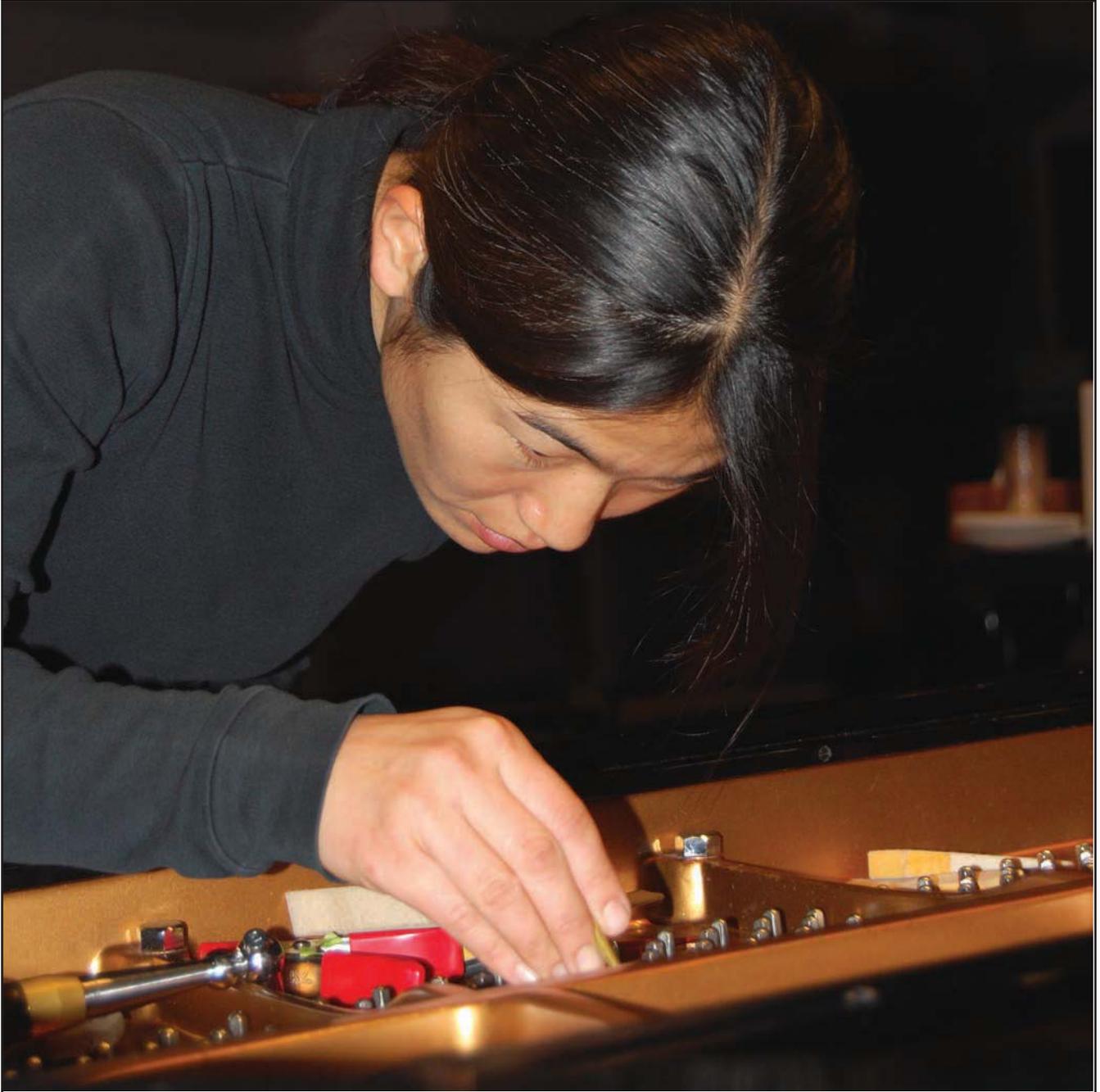
Sallinen was born in 1935, and wrote *Cadenze* in 1965 for the Sibelius Competition as its test piece. Difficult to play as this work may be, including challenging double stops and interesting left hand pizzicatti, the piece maintains its darkly lyrical quality, and in Petteri Iivonen's hands, the technical demands of *Cadenze* disappear behind the musical intent.

Yarlung Artists was especially proud to commission David S. Lefkowitz to write *Eli Eli* for Petteri's recording and concerts. Lefkowitz wrote this work in honor of Hagai Shaham, who, like Petteri, has already performed this piece on three continents. Yarlung Artists is especially grateful to the Jerry & Adi Greenberg Foundation for underwriting this commission.

Lefkowitz took the now-popular folk tune by David Zehavi based on the poem *Eli Eli* written by Hannah Senesh (הנה סנש). Lefkowitz composed music that takes inspiration from the original theme. The new Lefkowitz work ranges from virtuosic exuberance to its culmination in the tragic monophonic melody of the original. Petteri performed this live for our concert recording session at USC, and has since played this work in Spain, France, Finland and Israel.

Hannah Senesh represents optimism and determination, even in the face of death. She left her native Hungary to move to Palestine in 1939. In 1943, Senesh joined the Haganah, and trained with the British army to parachute into Nazi-controlled Europe to help rescue Hungarian Jews who were scheduled for deportation to Auschwitz. She was captured and tried by the Nazis in 1944, and executed. Her poetry continues to inspire faith in the goodness of mankind, and indeed inspired this new work of music. Thank you David Lefkowitz, and thank you Jerry and Adi, for making this possible.

One of my favorite aspects of producing this recording was participating in the musical collaboration between Petteri Iivonen and Canadian pianist Kevin Fitz-Gerald. Kevin performs in



Yasuyo Nakamura, Steinway technician

concert halls around the world as a soloist, has recorded with five record labels including Yarlung Records, and performs regularly in partnership with other musicians including Patrick Gallois, Stephen Isserlis, Richard Stolzman, Alan Civil, Camilla Wicks, Midori Goto, Eudice Shapiro, Milton Thomas, Karen Tuttle, Donald McInnes, Ronald Leonard, and the Bartok, St. Petersburg and St. Lawrence String Quartets. Kevin also performs four-hands piano works with his wife Bernadene Blaha.

Petteri and Kevin perform the G Minor Debussy Violin Sonata on this album, and recorded additional sonatas which Yarlung Records plans to release in the future.

This sonata is one of my favorites, and was the last complete work that Debussy wrote before his death. He completed it in 1917, and performed it himself on piano with Robert Godet on violin. Debussy, perhaps the quintessentially “French” composer, who enjoyed celebrating his inheritance from Rameau and Couperin, nevertheless incorporates rich Wagnerian sonorities in this sonata, as well as influences from his gypsy friends, and musical styles from Spain and Asia. Debussy knew he was very ill when he wrote and performed this work. This music comes directly from the heart of this dying man, but at the same time includes a happier retrospective, not only of himself and his illustrious career, but of France in its heady period before the Great War. Light and Darkness combined. *Chiaroscuro*. In a note to Robert Godet in preparation for the premiere, Debussy wrote: “Don’t trust any piece that appears to hover in flight from heaven - it could have been brooded in the dark depths of a sick man’s brain! For instance, the finale of my sonata: the simple play on a thought that twists itself like a snake biting its own tail...”

Petteri Iivonen was born in 1987, and began to study the violin at the Helsinki Conservatory when he was four years old. It is telling that Petteri won the Erkki Melartin chamber music competition when he was 15 years old: Petteri’s nuanced talent as a musical collaborator (as a partner who listens) remains easy to hear, even in his solo and concerto repertoire.

Since 1997, Petteri’s principal teachers have been Tuomas Haapanen and Hagai Shaham. Petteri continues to study despite his increasingly busy concert schedule of solo recitals and concertos in the United States, Germany, Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands, Israel, Portugal, Spain and Italy.

Petteri has performed with Paul Neubauer and David Grossman of the New York Philharmonic, and Kevin Fitz-Gerald in Los Angeles. Petteri was invited to perform with pianist Ryan MacEvoy McCullough to open The Broad Stage in Santa Monica in 2008.



Petteri commands his instrument with ease. While much of his music is exceptionally beautiful, it is not beautiful for the sake of being pretty. I have heard very few violinist's with Petteri's ability to control color and timbre, and even fewer who use this ability for such musical and appropriate ends. Listen, just for some examples among many, to the colors Petteri employs in the first movement of the Debussy sonata, especially in the flautando sections. Or the extreme tenderness of the second movement of Ysaÿe's Sonata No. 2. And then compare that with the icy brilliance of the same sonata's fourth movement after the one minute mark. Note too the yearning of an entire nation, perhaps the entire Twentieth Century, in the arrival of the *Eli Eli* theme in tracks twelve and thirteen. And then evaluate this music in comparison with the titanic Bach Partita, and enjoy the world of color and emotion that Petteri delivers in this final work on our recording.

Petteri plays a Ferdinandus Gagliano violin, built in 1767, kindly loaned to him by OKO Bank Art Foundation. Kevin plays New York Steinway serial number 567908 in the Debussy violin sonata.

Yarlung Artists

Petteri's affable personality galvanized as much support for his debut recording as did his exceptional talent with the violin. Yarlung Artists wants to thank the underwriters who made this recording possible, especially Gary and Marcia Hollander, Ann and Jim Mulally, David and Margie Barry, the Jerry and Adi Greenberg Foundation for underwriting the commission of *Eli Eli*, Lawrence Davanzo, Kevin & Silvia Dretzka, Najib Canaan, Mike Rosell in memory of Joan Rosell, Sally Mosher and Carlos and Haydee Mollura.

Companies and Foundations that contributed vital support to Petteri's debut album include Salesforce.com, Red Sky Solutions, Gearworks Pro Audio, The Mari and Edmund D. Edelman Foundation for Music and the Performing Arts, Dean Robert Cutietta and the University of Southern California, Phoenix Classical, OKO Bank Art Foundation, Los Angeles Philanthropic Committee for the Arts, Linn Records Scotland, and Karen Knauer Photography.

Petteri wishes to express personal thanks also to Steve Hoffman, Ron and Judith Rosen, Hagai Shaham, Kevin Fitz-Gerald, Dean Rob Cutietta, Midori Goto, Ann and Les Noriel, Mason Shefa, Steven Stucky, Ann and Jean Horton, David and Mahnaz Newman, Peachy and Bud Spielberg, Milo Talwani, Lynne Taciak, Ken and Sally Williams, Jan Freiburgs, Corwin & Ruby White, Anne and Jeffrey Grausam, Linda Attiyeh, Jim McDaniels, and Jerry Fecher. Without you, we would not have been able to release this album. Our sincere thanks.

Yarlung Artists is a 501(c)(3) public charity, and your contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. If you would enjoy supporting future musicians as they launch their international concert careers, please see www.yarlungartists.org, or write to us at:

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We recorded this album in Alfred Newman Hall at the University of Southern California, where Hagai Shaham serves on the music faculty, and where Petteri came to study. Newman Hall exemplifies the warm and yet transparent and lively sound of the concert halls that I favor for recordings, and its acoustics adjust easily to provide different lengths of decay. We chose a legendary Austrian AKG C-24 stereo microphone with the original brass surround CK12 tube, made available to us by Gearworks Pro Audio. We used five-foot long Yarlung-Records-designed interconnects with a flat silver ribbon suspended in air for the dielectric, customized vacuum tube preamplifiers and no mixer. The signal path was as short as we could make it, with as few electronics between performer and final product as we could manage. We always try to record this way, but I feel Petteri's sound lends itself especially well to this sort of minimalist recording technique. I would like to thank our friends Jon Fisher of Gearworks Pro Audio for our beautiful microphone, and Joseph Rauen and Michelle Maestas, our valiant stage crew in Newman Hall, whose USC hospitality and boundless enthusiasm contributed greatly to our recording. We hope you enjoy the results.

Bob Attiyeh, producer

graphic design: Eron Muckleroy

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1-4	Eugène Ysaÿe	
	Sonata No. 2 in A Minor	12:28
	Obsession	02:19
	Malinconia	02:52
	Danse des ombres	04:14
	Les Furies	03:03
5	Aulis Sallinen	
	Cadenze	03:33
6-8	Claude Debussy	
	Sonata for Violin and Piano in G Minor	13:13
	Allegro vivo	04:49
	Intermède: Fantasque et léger	04:11
	Finale: Très animé	04:14
	<i>with Kevin Fitz-Gerald, piano</i>	
9-11	Eugène Ysaÿe	
	Sonata No. 4 in E Minor	11:57
	Allemanda	05:42
	Sarabande	03:00
	Finale	03:15
12-13	David S. Lefkowitz	05:22
	Eli Eli *	03:54
	Original Eli Eli folk tune by David Zehavi	01:29
14-18	J. S. Bach	
	Partita No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1004 *	30:53
	Allemanda	05:20
	Corrente	02:50
	Sarabanda	04:19
	Giga	04:04
	Ciaccona	14:20

* live concert performances



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Art of the Violin

Petteri Iivonen, violin & Kevin Fitz-Gerald, piano

- 1-4 Ysaÿe Sonata No. 2 in A Minor
 - 5 Sallinen *Cadenze*
 - 6-8 Debussy Sonata for Violin and Piano in G Minor
 - 9-11 Ysaÿe Sonata No. 4 in E Minor
 - 12-13 Lefkowitz *Eli Eli* *
 - 14-18 J. S. Bach Partita No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1004 *
- * live concert performances

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Gary & Marcia Hollander

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Mike Rosell	OKO Bank Art Foundation

Underwriting for the commission of *Eli Eli*:
Jerry & Adi Greenberg Foundation

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Monitoring Equipment: Elliot Midwood
Steinway Technician: Yasuyo Nakamura

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