



**Martin Chalifour**  
in Walt Disney Concert Hall

*Trésors Ensevelis*

 YARLUNG RECORDS  
BOB ATTIEH, PRODUCER

## Martin Chalifour in Walt Disney Concert Hall

NOTES BY JIM SVEJDA

### **POULENC:** Sonata for Flute and Piano

Martin Chalifour's arrangement of Poulenc's flute sonata for violin and piano joins a body of Poulenc's music that challenged the composer greatly. It is therefore doubly welcome. Among the several works that Francis Poulenc composed during the Second World War, his actual Violin Sonata is perhaps the most surprising, given the composer's long-held beliefs about the instrument itself. "To tell the truth," he told a friend, "I don't like the violin in the singular. In the plural, it's quite different."

His first two attempts to write a violin sonata ended in disaster. The first, composed in 1919, was destroyed in manuscript; the second, from 1924, Poulenc considered even less successful: "It met the same fate as my quartet. I wrang its neck rather than let the public see it."

Written for the brilliant, tragically short-lived French violinist Ginette Neveu, Poulenc's only substantial work for the violin "in the singular" was consciously designed as a corrective to the traditional violin and piano piece. "You can only get a good balance of sound between the two instruments – violin and piano – if you treat them both fairly. The *prima donna* violin over *arpeggio* piano makes me sick."

Given Poulenc's struggles with his writing for violin and piano, one can only imagine how much he might have enjoyed Chalifour's fresh arrangement of Poulenc's flute sonata, with such careful attention to the unique gifts the violin brings to this work.

### **SCHÖNBERG:** *So wie du; Fiakerlied; Sonnenschein*

When a major recording company, which should probably remain nameless, made the first recording of a youthful string quartet by a famous composer, an executive from Columbia Records approached the Kolisch Quartet with an unusual proposal. Would they consider releasing the album without mentioning the composer's name, so patrons could have the fun of guessing? As Rudolf Kolisch was the brother-in-law of Arnold Schönberg, the violinist politely suggested he had heard better ideas.



If with its echoes of Dvorak and Schubert, it would be difficult to identify his Quartet in D Major from 1897 as a work by Schönberg, then it would be impossible to hear the future composer of *Erwartung* and *Pierrot Lunaire* in the three tiny works here receiving their first recordings. They were written by the six-year-old Schönberg as an alternative to the study pieces his violin teacher had given him to play.

**DEBUSSY:** *La Plus que Lente*

Composed as a wry commentary on the popularity of the slow waltzes being heard with monotonous frequency in the Paris cafes and dance halls of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Debussy's *La Plus que Lente* – “The Even Slower Waltz” – appeared shortly after the publication of his first set of Preludes in 1910.

Although written for the piano, a memorable early performance was given by the gypsy band led by a fiddler named Leoni, then appearing at the New Carlton Hotel. Like the G-Flat Major Humoresque of Antonin Dvorak which would finally become world famous in the arrangement by violinist Fritz Kreisler, *La Plus que Lente* would achieve its greatest mid-20<sup>th</sup> century currency as an encore piece arranged by Jascha Heifetz. For the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Martin here presents the luscious arrangement by violinist Leon Roques.

**RAVEL:** Sonata for Violin and Piano

Written during one of those rare periods in its history when France actually seemed to like most things American, Maurice Ravel's only mature violin sonata was first heard on May 30, 1927, ten days after Charles Lindbergh flew the *Spirit of St. Louis* from New York's Roosevelt Field to Le Bourget Field in Paris.

Composed in part to illustrate Ravel's theory that the violin and piano were essentially incompatible instruments, the Violin Sonata loses few opportunities to prove that they can't – and shouldn't – be blended. In the first movement, for instance, brief motifs are tossed back and forth in such a way as to emphasize the textural differences as dramatically as possible.

In the second movement, marked *Blues*, Ravel reveals his fondness for American jazz, a passion that would become even more obvious in the G Major Piano Concerto. As in the *Rhapsody in Blue* by his friend George Gershwin, it isn't jazz, *per se*, but the music suggests jazz inflections, especially in its African-American rhythms.

In the concluding *Allegro* any thought of blending becomes all but impossible, as both instruments have all they can do to play this hectic *Perpetuum mobile* of notes.

**STRAVINSKY:** *Danse Russe; Berceuse; Scherzo*

When the history of violin music in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is written, two American names will crop up long after those of far more famous violinists have become footnotes in musical history: Louis Krasner, who commissioned the violin concertos of Alban Berg and his teacher Arnold Schönberg, and the Polish-born Samuel Dushkin, for years the favorite recital partner of Igor Stravinsky.

It was Dushkin for whom Stravinsky almost *didn't* write his only Violin Concerto. Having lunch in a Paris bistro, the composer handed the violinist a napkin with a chord written on it, and asked, "Can you play this on the violin?" When told it was impossible, Stravinsky shrugged it off with a "quel dommage." Later, Dushkin returned to his hotel room, discovered the chord *could* be played and so informed the composer. Greatly relieved, Stravinsky was able to begin composing, since the chord "was my passport into the concerto."

It was for their many recitals in the 1930s that Stravinsky arranged many works for violin and piano, including suites from *Pulcinella*, *The Fairy's Kiss* and the three pieces recorded here: the *Russian Dance* from *Petrushka* and the *Berceuse* and *Scherzo* from *Firebird*.

**BACH** (arr. SCHUMANN): Partita No. 1 in B Minor, BWV 1002

It's not simply violinists who consider the Bach solo sonatas and partitas the summit of their repertoire. When the guitarist Christopher Parkening first encountered the *Chaconne* from the D Minor Partita at a concert, he turned to his mentor, the composer Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco and said, "Wow, that's a pretty good piece!" To which the composer calmly replied, "Yes, it is the greatest single work in the history of music." The two musicians most responsible for the modern Bach revival were of course Felix Mendelssohn, whose performances of the *Saint Matthew Passion* created a sensation in 1829, and Robert Schumann – whose arrangement of the B Minor Partita is heard in this recording. Schumann tirelessly championed Bach's cause in the pages of his *Zeitschrift für Musik*.

As in all of those works he called “partitas” or “suites,” the three for solo violin are primarily collections of stylized reactions to once popular dance forms.

It’s a minor miracle that Bach, who never once left Germany, so easily absorbed the essence of both the French and Italian styles.

By including the *doubles* – variations which present the basic information of the preceding movements in cut time – within the movement itself, Schumann effectively reduces the B Minor Partita’s eight movements to four: an *Allemande* in the style of a French overture, an emphatic Italian *Corrente*, a majestic French *Sarabande* and a rustic *Tempo di Borea*.

--Jim Svejda  
KUSC-FM

## **The Sound in Walt Disney Hall: Lucky Los Angeles!**

NOTES BY MICHAEL FREMER

Funded by and named for a manufacturer of warm sounding vacuum tube electronics, New York’s Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center can sound like a bad solid state amplifier: bright, cold and hard.

Located within Dallas’s Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center, the Eugene McDermott Concert Hall, named for one of the founders of “solid-state” silicon chipmaker Texas Instruments, is world-renowned for its winning combination of warmth and clarity: its sound resembles that of a very good tube amplifier.

I speak from personal experience, having a 20<sup>th</sup> row center seat subscription to the New York Philharmonic. Thanks to an invitation by members of the Dallas Symphony, I was privileged to hear one of conductor Andrew Litton’s farewell performances of Mahler’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Symphony, sitting in a box adjacent to Ross Perot’s. (Morton H. Meyerson was a former CEO of Perot-founded Electronic Data Systems.)

I’ve yet to experience the sound at The Walt Disney Concert Hall—at least in person. However, after listening to this superb sounding disc recorded in the hall featuring the Los Angeles Philharmonic’s Principal Concertmaster Martin Chalifour, I feel as if I have. Like at the McDermott, a proscenium doesn’t shroud Disney’s stage. There’s no back wall or side walls in the traditional sense, and

therefore no back or side wall reflections. Of course there are, of necessity, hall reflections designed to amplify and project sound into the hall while producing a pleasing sense of presence, body and three-dimensionality. When all goes well, that's what you get. As this "minimalist" recording clearly demonstrates, all goes well in Walt Disney Hall!

Within the first few bars of Chalifour's violin transcription of Poulenc's flute sonata performed on a 1716 Stradivarius once owned by Nathan Milstein, you'll know you're in one of the world's finest sounding concert halls. Both Mr. Chalifour's violin and Joanne Pearce Martin's piano come through with uncanny timbral accuracy, textural clarity and three-dimensional focus and *palpability*. The presence of a large, open, delicately reverberant space behind the musicians can be both heard and felt on this acoustically transparent recording.

Many liner notes (especially those written for rock recordings) implore you to *turn it up* to get the intended effect. With this recording, do yourself and this recording a favor and *turn it down!* The delicate hall acoustic comes through best at a natural listening level. If you play this recording at full volume, the direct sound of the instruments will bury the delicate hall acoustic, which is such a treat in this album.

--Michael Fremer  
senior contributing editor, Stereophile  
editor, [www.musicangle.com](http://www.musicangle.com)

### **Trésors Ensevelis, Hidden Treasures**

NOTES BY MARTIN CHALIFOUR

I have always been drawn to lesser-known music, and long ago began to collect old manuscripts. This album includes some unusual arrangements that waited patiently for the right occasion to be "rediscovered" and now shared with you.

I am fortunate to spend much of my working life in Walt Disney Concert Hall, where I serve as Principal Concertmaster for the Los Angeles Philharmonic. It was a treat for me to record this album in our auditorium, one of the modern world's acoustic treasures.

Many violinists, myself included, perform the Poulenc sonata for *violin*. However I have long wanted to introduce the magnificent **Poulenc Flute Sonata** into the string repertoire. The idea first came to me

when I heard the slow movement in concert and imagined the violin being able to slide and have a gutsier sound in the lower register. In my arrangement of the sonata I add double stops, pizzicati, and transpositions to lower registers in areas where the flute has less power than a bowed instrument. In the *Cantilena* I take it further and tune the violin's G string a half step lower, giving the violin a deeper resonance throughout the key of B-Flat Minor.

These **Schönberg duets** are pure fun to play. Along with this album's Stravinsky pieces, I wanted to celebrate some famous composers who lived in Southern California. I occasionally had trouble deciphering the hand of the approximately six-year-old Schönberg. I had to repeat a bar here or there to make the two violin parts coincide, but that is the nature of a hand-written manuscript from such a young composer.

**La Plus que Lente** by Debussy is an arrangement, very dear to me, by violinist Leon Roques. It complements the other music on our recording, and serves as one of my favorite encores.

I could not resist including the **Ravel Sonata**, especially in the company of Debussy and Poulenc. This masterpiece stands as the only work on our recording that was originally written for violin and piano.

Stravinsky settled in Los Angeles at the age of 58, and reportedly spent more time here than anywhere else in his lifetime. He lived at 1260 North Wetherly Drive in Beverly Hills, not too far from Arnold Schönberg's home in Brentwood. The famed composer collaborated with violinist Samuel Dushkin in rendering these **Three Ballet Excerpts** for violin and piano.

"Don't mess with Bach," or so they say.... But long before Stokowski came Robert Schumann, who, like his friend Mendelssohn, found powerful inspiration in Bach's music. Joanne and I chose the least performed of Bach's partitas, one which I also find the most successful of Schumann's arrangements of these works. Bach's original **B Minor Partita** receives less attention from violinists than others in the set, perhaps because as a solo work it sounds the driest, and the least polyphonic. Schumann shines a rich light on this traditional baroque masterpiece, bringing its harmonies to life.

--Martin Chalifour







## Producer's Notes:

I love Walt Disney Concert Hall. When Martin Chalifour and I first discussed making this album, we hoped it would be possible to record in the hall itself.

Using Walt Disney Concert Hall for this project made perfect sense. Martin plays over one hundred concerts in this space each year, and I personally attend about forty. The acoustics have continued to improve since the hall opened in 2003, and they were good at the beginning. However, it was not easy to find time in this great building and it is thanks to Deborah Borda and Gail Samuel that this recording became possible. (Many thanks to you both!)

The Los Angeles Philharmonic owns one of my favorite pianos. The orchestra bought this instrument from Steinway in New York for the hall's opening. Hélène Grimaud helped by trying the best pianos available at the factory, and sent four to Los Angeles. This one, serial number 562930 "won the competition" once these pianos arrived in Los Angeles. I have been itching to work with this instrument since I first heard it. (Incidentally, Mitsuko Uchida sent four Hamburg Steinways to Walt Disney Concert Hall as well, and the orchestra owns one of these magnificent instruments. I prefer the New York sound, which is darker and more linear, so we used it for this album.)

Additionally, we used five violins in this recording, each of which sounds very different. Jerry and Terri Kohl own the famous "ex Goldmann" Stradivarius (1716) played for most of his career by Nathan Milstein. It is this violin, more than any other, with which Milstein made Bach's sonatas and partitas so famous in the twentieth century, both in concert, and on his renowned Capitol Records and Deutsche Grammophon recordings. The Kohl family kindly allowed Martin to use this instrument, and Martin plays it for much of this album. The Los Angeles Philharmonic owns the 1729 "Joachim," or "Petschnikoff" or "Jack Benny Strad," owned and played by the comedian, and given by him to the orchestra. This second Stradivarius is the instrument Martin usually plays in concert with the Philharmonic. Martin owns a beautiful Josef Filius Andrea Guarneri, known as the "ex Sigmund Biel" (ca. 1720), and he borrowed his friend Cheryl Norman's Michael Fischer violin made in Los Angeles in 1995 as well. Michael Fischer used the "Joseph Guarnerius fecit Cremonae" (1741) as his model for Cheryl's new violin. For the Schönberg duets, Martin plays the Fischer on the left track on our recording and Maia Jasper plays her Lavazza (ca. 1720) on the right track. The manuscripts indicate that Schönberg wrote these charming ditties when he was six years old. It may be, however, that he was the ripe old age of eight or nine. Either way, they reveal Schönberg's delightful whimsy years before he became *the* Arnold Schönberg.

It is always a pleasure to work with our friend Joanne Pearce Martin, principal keyboardist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. You may have her Yarlung Records release *Joanne Pearce Martin: Barefoot* (also recorded on a spectacular instrument, by the way, Steinway Concert & Artists piano number 599 in Zipper Hall at Colburn School across the street from Walt Disney Concert Hall). I have known Bryan Pezzone and enjoyed his playing for years, both with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. I met Maia Jasper through this project, and look very much forward to hearing more of her music!

Thanks to our friend and supporter Jon Fisher at Gearworks Pro Audio, I selected two matched U-47 Neumann microphones for all the music on this recording except for the Schönberg duets, where I used an AKG C-24 stereo microphone, with the original brass surround CK12 tube. For the Schönberg we used Yarlung-Records-designed interconnects with a flat silver ribbon suspended in air for the dielectric. For all the other tracks, where we recorded violin and piano, we used the Gearworks Neumann U-47 microphones with their original VF14M tubes, which are metal-clad pentode tubes configured as triodes. These microphones may be the most famous microphones in the world, and Neumann made many of them, but it is a special privilege to use a pair with the original tubes in good condition. With the Neumanns, we selected short (five feet) stranded silver interconnects designed by Yarlung Records. We made no equalization curve adjustments on this album. We made all “EQ adjustments” with microphone placement at the start. It is always our goal to record this way, and we succeeded similarly with *Orion*, *Evening Conversations*, *David Howard*, *Ryan MacEvoy McCullough in Concert*, *Joanne Pearce Martin: Barefoot*, *Dialoghi*, and *Inner World*. For all of these albums we used our customized vacuum tube microphone preamplifiers, no mixer, and recorded directly to two tracks sampled at 176,400 samples per second at 24 bit depth.

I wanted to share a personal anecdote about the Bach partita on this album. Jim Valentine served many years as head carpenter for Walt Disney Concert Hall and for the Los Angeles Philharmonic in the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion until his retirement shortly after our sessions in June of 2008. Jim helped with our recording, and supervised construction of the special Itzhak Perlman conductor’s podium on which Martin stood for the Poulenc, Ravel, Stravinsky and Bach. Jim heard a few minutes of Martin’s offstage warm-up for his orchestra audition through which he became Principal Concertmaster in 1995. Jim told me during a recording break that it was obvious, even to him as a non-violinist, that Martin deserved the position. In appreciation, Martin and Joanne invited Jim to attend a “private concert” of the Bach partita in his honor. This performance is the live take included on our album.

Martin and I wish to say a special thank you to Terri & Jerry Kohl and to Silvia & Kevin Dretzka, whose generosity and enthusiasm made this album possible. Jerry and Terri gave us financial support for this recording and gave us the use of their magnificent violin. Kevin and Silvia told me previously that they would like to fund a “very special project.” They did, and we are so grateful. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

*--Bob Attiyeh, producer*



**MARTIN CHALIFOUR in Walt Disney Concert Hall**  
*Trésors Ensevelis, Hidden Treasures*

- |       |   |  |
|-------|---|--|
| 1-3   | <b>Poulenc</b> Sonata for Flute and Piano arranged for violin and piano by Martin Chalifour<br><i>Allegro malinconico</i><br><i>Cantilena</i><br><i>Presto giocoso</i><br>with Joanne Pearce Martin, piano<br>Martin plays the Milstein Stradivarius                                  | <b>12:07</b><br>04:42<br>04:02<br>03:23          |
| 4-6   | <b>Schönberg</b> Duets for two violins<br><i>So wie du</i><br><i>Fiakerlied</i><br><i>Sonnenschein</i><br>with Maia Jasper, violin<br>Martin plays a Michael Fischer, Maia plays her Lavazza  | <b>04:30</b><br>01:41<br>00:54<br>01:55          |
| 7     | <b>Debussy</b> La Plus que Lente, arranged by Leon Roques<br>with Joanne Pearce Martin, piano<br>Martin plays the "Jack Benny" Stradivarius   | <b>04:29</b>                                     |
| 8-10  | <b>Ravel</b> Sonata for Violin and Piano in G Major<br>I, <i>Allegretto</i><br>II, <i>Blues</i><br>III, <i>Perpetuum mobile</i><br>with Joanne Pearce Martin, piano<br>Martin plays the Milstein Stradivarius   | <b>18:17</b><br>08:01<br>05:57<br>04:13          |
| 11-13 | <b>Stravinsky</b> Three Ballet Exerpts, arranged by Stravinsky and Samuel Dushkin<br><i>Danse Russe</i> (from <i>Petrushka</i> )<br><i>Berceuse</i> (from <i>Firebird</i> )<br><i>Scherzo</i> (from <i>Firebird</i> )<br>with Bryan Pezzone, piano<br>Martin plays his Guarneri       | <b>08:37</b><br>02:40<br>03:15<br>02:42          |
| 14-17 | <b>J. S. Bach</b> Partita No.1 in B Minor, BWV 1002, arranged by Schumann<br><i>Allemande et Double</i><br><i>Courante et Double</i><br><i>Sarabande et Double</i><br><i>Tempo di Bourrée et Double</i><br>with Joanne Pearce Martin, piano<br>Martin plays the Milstein Stradivarius | <b>15:16</b><br>04:10<br>03:29<br>03:23<br>04:14 |



# Martin Chalifour

## in Walt Disney Concert Hall

*Trésors Ensevelis, Hidden Treasures*

- 1-3 **Poulenc**  
*Sonata for Flute and Piano*
- 4-6 **Schönberg**  
*Duets for two violins*
- 7 **Debussy**  
*La Plus que Lente*
- 8-10 **Ravel**  
*Sonata for Violin and Piano in G Major*
- 11-13 **Stravinsky**  
*Ballet Exerpts from Petrushka and Firebird*
- 14-17 **J. S. Bach**  
*Partita No.1 in B Minor, BWV 1002\**

\*Live Performance

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**Kevin & Silvia Dretzka**  
**Jerry & Terri Kohl**

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