

# *Flute* VOCALISE

*Beloved concert classics*

*Kenneth Smith & Paul Rhodes*

A tribute to Paul Taffanel

# flute VOCALISE

1	<b>Concertino, Op. 107</b> <i>Cecile Chaminade (1857-1944)</i>	8.19
2	<b>Variations on a Theme by Rossini</b> <i>Fryderyk Chopin (1810-1849)</i>	6.41
3	<b>Le Cygne (The Swan)</b> from 'Carnival of the Animals' <i>Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921), arr. Kenneth Smith</i>	2.25
	<b>Suite de Trois Morceaux, Op. 116</b> <i>Benjamin Godard (1849-1895)</i>	10.33
4	I. <i>Allegretto</i>	1.59
5	II. <i>Idylle</i>	4.09
6	III. <i>Valse</i>	4.25
7	<b>Méditation</b> from 'Thaïs' <i>Jules Massenet (1842-1912), arr. John Madden</i>	4.39
8	<b>En Bateau</b> from 'Petite Suite' <i>Claude Debussy (1862-1918), arr. Smith/Rhodes</i>	3.49
9	<b>Il Carnevale di Venezia, Op. 77</b> <i>Giulio Briccialdi (1818-1881)</i>	6.54
10	<b>Vocalise, Op. 34 No. 14</b> <i>Sergei Rachmaninov, arr. Kenneth Smith</i>	4.26
	<b>Nocturne et Allegro Scherzando</b> <i>Philippe Gaubert (1879-1941)</i>	6.18
11	I. <i>Nocturne</i>	3.35
12	II. <i>Allegro Scherzando</i>	2.43
13	<b>Berceuse, Op. 16</b> <i>Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)</i>	3.49
14	<b>Fantaisie Brillante sur 'Carmen'</b> <i>François Borne (1862-1929)</i>	12.04
	<b>Total CD duration</b>	70.44

Kenneth Smith flute Paul Rhodes piano



# A tribute to Paul Taffanel

This tribute to Paul Taffanel is a companion volume to 'A Song Without Words', a set of three compact discs devoted to the Legacy of Paul Taffanel (Divine Art dda 21371). Its three volumes 'Vision', 'Dedication' and 'Imagination' outline the numerous ways in which Taffanel's life and work influenced the future of flute playing, the development of the instrument, the music that was written for it and the way we teach and play the flute today. 'Flute Vocalise' compliments this set with colourful concert repertoire that has significant links to Taffanel and his ideals.

Paul Taffanel (1844-1908) was appointed 'Professeur de Flute' at the Paris Conservatoire in 1883 on the retirement of Henri Altes. Many things were to change. He championed the use of the Boehm system flute (unlike Altes) and gradually changed the teaching repertoire, moving away from technical display pieces, to works and even studies of more musical depth and variety of content. His teaching style was less dogmatic and more flexible than had prevailed over the previous 25 years, placing sound quality, colour and phrasing equal in importance to finger dexterity and virtuosity. He also carefully chose the music to suit the students and their development as musical personalities.

His teaching included works by Demersseman, Briccialdi, Kuhlau and Andersen for technical discipline with short lyrical passages and later moved on to the music of Bach, Mozart, Schubert and Reinecke. For examinations he persuaded the Conservatoire authorities to commission new music for all instruments from the finest composers of the time: Fauré, Saint-Saëns, Andersen, Enescu and others. Those written for the flute he meticulously scrutinized and revised, suggesting phrasing and breathing places which not only made them suitable for examination purposes but also ensured a steady development of the flute repertoire with an enduring catalogue of good music that suited the instrument. Many of the works played and studied today bear the hand of Taffanel.

## 1. Cécile Chaminade (1857-1944): Concertino for Flute and Orchestra/Piano, Op. 107

Cécile Chaminade was the first female composer to provide a work for the Paris Conservatoire Concours. She had studied with Godard, Bizet and Saint-Saëns and became one of the first female French composers to gain international recognition, regularly performing her own works in France, England and particularly the U.S.A. where Chaminade societies were springing up in profusion in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The *Concertino* commissioned by Taffanel for the 1902 Concours is now probably her only work that is regularly performed.

## 2. Fryderyk Chopin (1810-1849): Variations on a theme by Rossini for Flute and Piano

Opera and vocal music was a passion for Paul Taffanel and especially the singing of the soprano Adelina Patti. Her 'sound production and limpid tone' he adored and was possibly a further influence on his own vocal style of playing. Critic Guy de Charnace likened the quality of her voice to the 'clearest spring water' and Saint-Saëns thought it was a 'voice of gold'. Reviews of her singing contained several superlatives that paralleled reviews of Taffanel's flute playing.

Chopin's variations were, it is thought, written towards the end of 1824 during his first year at the Warsaw Conservatoire. He was fourteen years of age. The melody that forms the basis of this work had been used by Rossini in two operas: the Count's aria in Act II of *The Barber of Seville* 'Ah, il più lieto, il più felice' and Cinderella's final aria in *La Cenerentola*, 'Non più mesta'. In both cases the sentiment is a happy one with coloratura vocal decoration. The source of Chopin's inspiration is not clear but the melody is ideal material for extemporisation and the variations form a short and popular concert showpiece.

### **3. Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921): 'Le Cygne'**

Taffanel and Saint-Saëns were two influential masters of late 19<sup>th</sup> century music and often performed together. *The Swan* was first performed in 1884 at the Golden Wedding celebrations of Taffanel's first main teacher, Louis Dorus. The occasion was also the première of the 'Grande Fantaisie Zoologique' or 'Carnival of the Animals'. It was written for friends and for entertainment at private gatherings rather than for public performance. 'Volière' was of course written for Taffanel. *The Swan* was the only movement that Saint-Saëns allowed to be published during his lifetime. Taffanel was adept at making arrangements of good music that he knew would sound well on the flute and he added *The Swan* to a collection of 17 of his transcriptions which were published in 1888.

### **4-6. Benjamin Godard (1849-1895): Suite de Trois Morceaux for Flute and Orchestra/Piano**

1890 was a good year for Paul Taffanel as a virtuoso flute soloist. He gave several international concert performances beginning in February that year in Leipzig with the Gewandhaus Orchestra conducted by Carl Reinecke. There he performed Mozart's *G major Concerto* and Godard's three movement suite in two separate concerts. The suite was published later that year with a dedication to Paul Taffanel.

Originally a violinist, Godard's composing abilities became more dominant and his music was popularly received. However, his varied output of symphonies, choral works and chamber music has become almost forgotten with just the Berceuse from his opera 'Jocelyn' and this *Suite* for Flute and Piano remaining his best known works.

### **7. Jules Massenet (1842-1912): 'Méditation' from 'Thaïs'**

This famous violin solo comes from Massenet's best known opera 'Thaïs'. The story concerns a notorious courtesan of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, Alexandria Thaïs, and a monk who tries to convert her to Christianity. This entr'acte is played during a moment when Thaïs finally accepts her spiritual cleansing and rejects her past profanity for a new felicitous life of Christianity.

Paul Taffanel was appointed conductor of The Paris Opera in 1890 and conducted the première of Massenet's opera in March 1894. Recognizing the power and potential of this entr'acte he made a transcription for flute and piano which was published that same year.

## 8. Claude Debussy (1862-1918) 'En Bateau' from Petite Suite

Debussy wrote his four movement piano duet 'Petite Suite' in 1888. The titles of the first two movements can be found in Verlaine's volume of poems 'Fêtes Galantes' from which Debussy had taken several texts for his songs. It is therefore possible that the music of the first movement, 'En Bateau', was intended to portray a small boat 'gliding merrily over the dreaming water'.

Debussy's suite is most often heard in the orchestral version of 1907 by Henri Busser from which this transcription was made. It was Busser whom Taffanel had asked to write a piece for the Conservatoire examinations of 1908. The result was his *Prélude et Scherzo* which he dedicated to Taffanel. Henri Busser was a fine orchestrator and would have been well familiar with the qualities of Taffanel's flute playing. It is surely no coincidence that the flute features prominently throughout his orchestration of the suite but most especially in the opening movement: 'En Bateau'.

## 9. Giulio Briccialdi (1818-1881): Il Carnevale di Venezia Op. 77

The Italian flute virtuoso Giulio Briccialdi was well known all over Europe in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. Taffanel would have known of him and certainly knew his music since two of his earliest concert performances contained operatic fantasies by Briccialdi (on Bellini's *Norma* in 1857 and Donizetti's *La Fille du Regiment* in 1865) performed in his home town of Bordeaux. Throughout his professorship at the Conservatoire (1893-1908) concertos and caprices by Briccialdi featured regularly as examination pieces.

The melody commonly known as 'Carnival in Venice' was a popular Venetian song - 'O Mamma Mia'. The violin virtuoso Paganini popularised the melody in a set of variations with which he demonstrated his prodigious virtuosity in concert halls all over Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Briccialdi's variations are particularly well written for the flute providing a daring and entertaining concert piece.

## 10. Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943): Vocalise Op. 34 No. 14

Rachmaninov's *Vocalise* is the last of a set of fourteen songs written in 1912. Having no text has made it ripe for transcription for numerous instruments. The serenity of its seamless vocal line would have rendered it a gift for the expressive voice of Taffanel's flute.

## 11-12. Philippe Gaubert (1879-1941): Nocturne and Allegro Scherzando

Philippe Gaubert gained his Premier Prix in 1894 at the age of fifteen. Taffanel became his friend and mentor as well as his teacher just as Louis Dorus had been to Taffanel. He was a gifted all-round musician and at Taffanel's request he wrote the *Nocturne and Allegro Scherzando* for the summer public examinations at the Paris Conservatoire in 1906.

Its format is typical of that which Taffanel deemed appropriate for those occasions - a lyrical opening section to test the student's quality of sound and musical imagination followed by a scherzo of suitable difficulty testing technique and proficiency of finger dexterity and articulation. It usually contained a broad melody, perhaps developed from the opening section and an energetic and spectacular finale. Gaubert's piece had all of that and a newcomer to Taffanel's classes, Marcel Moyse, gained his Premier Prix that year playing this piece.

Prior to studying a new work Taffanel would introduce it to his students by playing it to them himself. In Edward Blakeman's fascinating account of 'Taffanel - Genius of the Flute' (O.U.P. 2005) he relates how Moyse recalled that Philippe Gaubert arrived at Taffanel's class and played his Nocturne and Allegro accompanied by Taffanel on the piano. The young student Moyse, almost seventeen years old, therefore had the good fortune not only of hearing Gaubert, Taffanel's favourite pupil and a previous Premier Prix, play his own composition but also of studying the work over the following months with other students in Taffanel's classes and observing its preparation for performance through the window of Taffanel's own unique insight and perspective.

In a similar way Kenneth Smith had the good fortune to study this piece and Gaubert's *Fantaisie* with Marcel Moyse some 65 years later.

### **13. Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924): Berceuse Op. 16**

Originally written for the violin, this captivating little piece is little more than a simple lullaby written by one of France's best loved melodists. It received its première on St. Valentine's Day 1880 and like other beautiful melodies it has that irresistible quality that lingers in the memory.

### **14. François Borne (1840-1920): 'Fantaisie Brillante' on themes from Bizet's Carmen**

As noted earlier, Taffanel loved opera and from his earliest playing days included 'fantaisies' on operatic themes in his recitals. He was to write five 'fantaisies' of his own which he played frequently. Those on *Mignon* and *Le Freyschutz* were his favourites.

François Borne was a flute player and composer who taught at the Toulouse Conservatoire. Few details are known about his life and even his dates have not been positively verified. It is known that he wrote several works for the flute most notably the *Fantaisies* on Bizet's *Carmen* (1880) and on Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine* (1885), and the *Ballade et Danse de Lutins* (1886) (recorded on Divine Art dda21371) which was dedicated to Taffanel. The *Fantaisie on Carmen*, his most frequently played work, contains several well-known themes from the opera. The *Habanera* is decorated with two very exciting coloratura variations and a brilliant 'Toreador's Song' provides an exciting finale.

# Paul Taffanel

c.1890







## Kenneth Smith

Principal Flute of the Philharmonia Orchestra London for over twenty seven years, **Kenneth Smith** is an established and familiar guest principal flute with many of the major orchestras in Britain.

He can be heard on countless recordings of the orchestral and operatic repertoire with several leading orchestras. With the Philharmonia alone he has made over 500 recordings including symphonic cycles, concertos, overtures and orchestral showpieces, ballets, film scores and over 40 operas. His individual sound and imaginative playing on disc and on the concert platform continue to draw glowing reviews and win admirers around the world.

Kenneth Smith's solo recordings include Mozart's *Concerto for Flute and Harp* under Sinopoli for Deutsche Grammophon, Vivaldi concertos with the London Musici and Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No. 2* with Maurice André and the Philharmonia under Muti for EMI. Chamber music recordings include works by Janacek, Mercadante and Messiaen.

Kenneth Smith's collaboration with pianist Paul Rhodes during the last twenty six years has produced twelve albums of music for flute and piano, five of them being devoted to music by British composers whilst a 3 CD set entitled 'A Song Without Words' gives an insight into the life and influence of French flutist Paul Taffanel. The others embrace many of the major works in the flute repertoire along with several virtuoso showpieces, some neglected gems and a selection of these artist's own colourful and frequently broadcast arrangements of classical favourites.

As an escape from a busy worldwide schedule he returns to his home in Dorset and the tranquillity of Thomas Hardy's Wessex.



# Paul Rhodes

**Paul Rhodes** was born in Ireland and studied piano in Belfast with Wight Henderson.

After reading music at Edinburgh University he went on to study piano with Marjorie Hazlehurst at the Birmingham Conservatoire and with Hamish Milne in London.

Paul lives in Luxembourg where he pursues an active career as a teacher and pianist. In addition to his music-making with Kenneth Smith, he regularly performs as a song accompanist and as an instrumentalist with musicians from Belgium, France and Germany.



Recorded at St. Mary's Church, Burghfield, Berkshire:

Tracks 3, 7 & 14 in July 1992; Tracks 4-6, 8, 11-13 in August 1994; Tracks 1-2, 9-10 in April 1996

Previously released on ASV

Recording engineer: Geoffrey Addis

Producer (tracks 1-2, 4-6, 8-13): Kenneth Smith (tracks 3, 7, 14): Antony Hodgson

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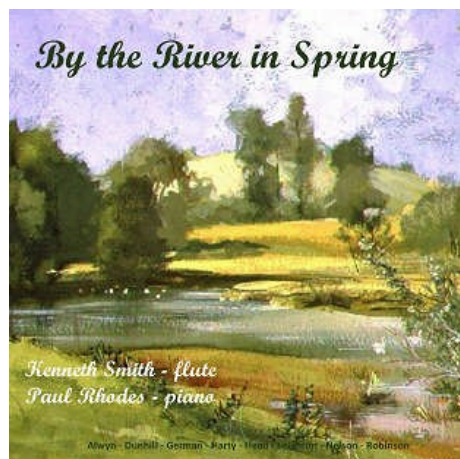
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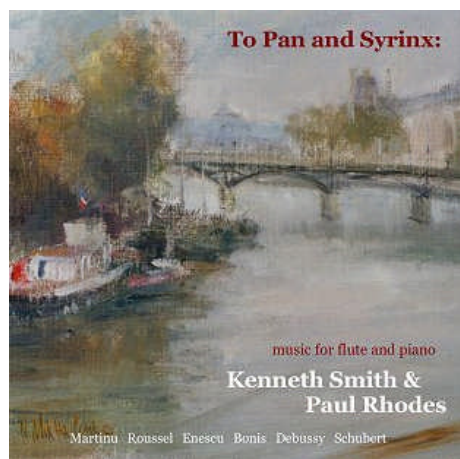
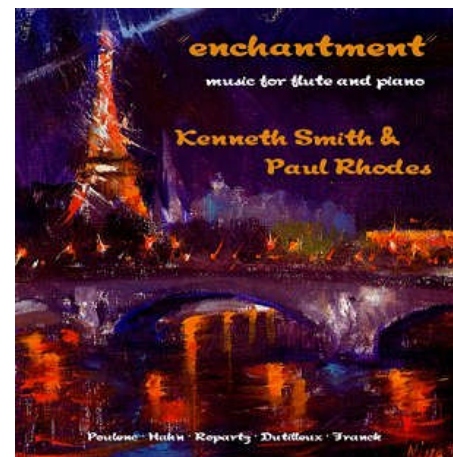
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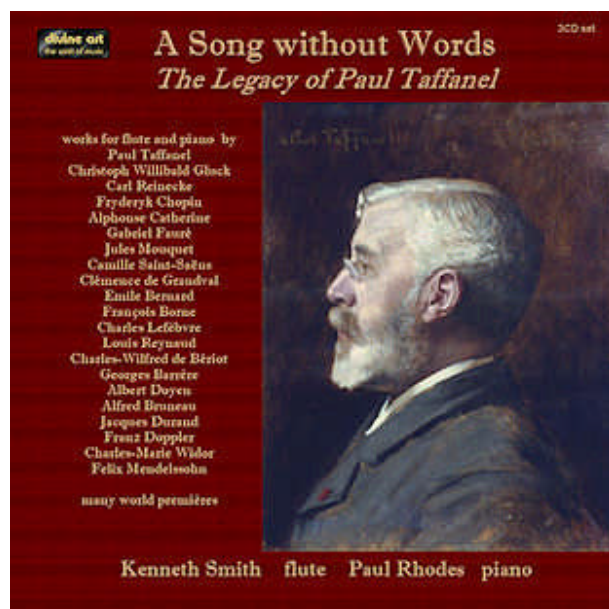
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Paul Taffanel in 1894

