

## Ensemble Jackalope I

**Charlotte Spruit** violin

**Edgar Francis** viola

**Hugh Mackay** cello

**Junyan Chen** piano

**George Enescu** (1881–1955)

Piano Quartet No.2 in D minor, Op.30 (1943–4) 28'

- i. Allegretto moderato
- ii. Andante penseroso ed espressivo
- iii. Con moto moderato – Allegro agitato

**Gabriel Fauré** (1845–1924)

Piano Quartet No.1 in C minor, Op.15

(1876–9, rev. 1883)

37'

- i. Allegro molto moderato
- ii. Scherzo, Allegro vivo
- iii. Adagio
- iv. Allegro molto

**Ensemble Jackalope** is a Britten Pears

Young Artist for 2025/26, here for a two-week residency on the Chamber Music in Residence course.

Following their residency, Ensemble Jackalope will perform at the Leeds International Chamber Music Festival, where Junyan Chen is serving as guest artistic director, before embarking on a concert tour of Scotland.

Violinist Charlotte Spruit is a passionate chamber musician and soloist. In 2023, she won the Young Classical Artists Trust International Auditions held at Wigmore Hall.

Welsh violist Edgar Francis won first prize in the 2021 Cecil Aronowitz International Competition. His debut album will be released on the Champs Hill label.

Scottish cellist Hugh Mackay was a finalist and Special Prize winner at the 2025 Royal Overseas League Strings Competition, and is a chamber music scholar in Germany.

Junyan Chen won Second Prize at the 2024 Leeds International Piano Competition, along with the chamber music prize and the award for a work by a woman composer.

Ensemble Jackalope is supported by The Barbara Whatmore Charitable Trust.

## George Enescu: Piano Quartet No.2

Described by Pablo Casals as ‘the greatest musical phenomenon since Mozart’, the Romanian George Enescu was one of the towering musicians of the 20th century. While he thought of himself primarily as a composer, he struggled to become accepted as such: to others, he was first and foremost a virtuoso violinist. He also excelled as a conductor and teacher, and his piano technique was judged by the great Alfred Cortot to be better than his own. Equally prodigious was his musical memory, allegedly enabling him to recall – in detail – the complete works of Beethoven as well as most of those by Mozart, Brahms and Bach.

Enescu was seven when he became the youngest student ever to be admitted to the Vienna Conservatoire. The rules dictated a minimum age of 14 but by then he had long since graduated and was continuing his studies in Paris with – among others – Gabriel Fauré. It was in Paris that he produced his first piano quartet, a student work that he seems later to have withdrawn. It was to be more than three decades before he tackled the genre again. This second quartet was completed in 1944 in memory of his most influential teacher – ‘my master Fauré’ – to mark the 20th anniversary of his death.

Enescu spent the worst of the war years in Bucharest and some of this turbulent background is evident in the music. The dark, brooding opening creates a subtle but distinct sense of unease although the mood is never overtly sinister. The Andante feels less unsettling and contains some of the most tranquil music Enescu ever wrote, its luxurious harmonies suggesting the influence of Fauré. The boisterous rhythms and melodies of the spirited finale acknowledge some of the Romanian folk traditions that in childhood had provided his first musical inspiration.

## Gabriel Fauré: Piano Quartet No.1

Fauré was in his early thirties when he began work on the C minor piano quartet. It is now – along with the first violin sonata and the Ballade in F sharp (for piano and orchestra), which appeared at the same time – considered one of the three great masterpieces of his early career. He had recently been introduced by his teacher Saint-Saëns to fashionable Paris society and was soon mixing in the most exclusive cultural circles. Fauré was known to be particularly attractive to women and – according to a biographer – ‘his conquests were legion in the Paris salons’. He was invited to all the sophisticated soirées, including those at the home of the famous contralto Pauline Viardot. Here, not only did he find himself rubbing shoulders with musical and literary giants such as Bizet, Turgenev and Georges Sand, he also encountered Mme Viardot’s daughter Marianne and had soon fallen deeply in love. She was less keen: it took Fauré five years to persuade her to agree to marry him but she instantly regretted the decision and ended the engagement a few weeks later.

It was during the latter stages of this frustrating relationship that Fauré composed this quartet. Although the opening Allegro provides an inkling of his troubled state of mind, fluctuating between fierce passion and a gentler, sunny optimism, there is no overall sense of tragedy and the movement gives way to a light-hearted, almost skittish scherzo. Only the Adagio – judged to be one of Fauré’s finest slow movements – has a more contemplative feel but even here the emotion is restrained. The energetic finale – which he later rewrote in its entirety – ends with a C major flourish that can best be described as triumphant. We can only speculate on mood of the original ending, believed to have been destroyed by the composer in the weeks before his death.

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