

## 'Flame'

**Debussy** Violin Sonata. Beau soir (arr Heifetz)

**Fauré** Après un rêve, Op 7 No 1 (arr Birtel)

**Messiaen** Thème et variations **Ravel** Violin Sonata No 2 **Stravinsky** The Firebird - Berceuse (arr Dushkin) **Szymanowski** King Roger - Chant de Roxane (arr Kochanski)

**Gwendolyn Masin** *vn* **Simon Bucher** *pf*

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It must be said that both the title and cover artwork of 'Flame' are of a

decidedly 'we're giving you no clues here' variety. However, if your tastes are in any way inclined towards the chamber music of early-20th-century France, then Masin and Bucher's programme will be of interest.

The disc opens with Claude Debussy's Violin Sonata, to which Masin brings some lovely shaping as well as a distinctive grainy tone, and the courage to bite in and even

bring a bit of rough when the moment feels apt.

The disc's final work is the Ravel Sonata, and there's much to enjoy here. Take the second movement, where Masin's strumming has a fabulous easy swing within its control, and her arco jazz wails are direct in tone and seductively shaped.

Then, while the five works that lie between may be *morceaux*-size, they sit here as a sophisticatedly perfumed set thanks to the way in which Masin and Bucher make them flow from one to the next as a series of little emotional and stylistic dovetails. Faure's 'Après un rêve' is unexpectedly affecting, Bussine's original stanzas feeling so present in Masin's playing that it truly does feel like a song without words. The inclusion of Szymanowski's 'Chant de Roxane' is also nice, reminding us that France wasn't the only place where composers were being influenced by Oriental sounds.

All in all, an expertly cohesive programme full of charms. **Charlotte Gardner**



Gwendolyn Masin and Simon Bucher with a cohesive, mostly French programme full of charms