

Douglas Gordon WEILAND

CHAMBER MUSIC, VOLUME ONE: WORKS FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO

PHANTASY MINUET: TO A BUTTERFLY, OP. 23

HOMAGE FANTASIA, OP. 72, NO. 2

VIOLIN SONATA NO. 1, OP. 26

VIOLIN SONATA NO. 2, OP. 28

VIOLIN SONATA NO. 3, OP. 29

CAPRICCIO, OP. 11

Markiyan Melnychenko, violin
Rhodri Clarke, piano

DISCOVERING DOUGLAS WEILAND

by Markiyán Melnychenko

My introduction to the music of Douglas Weiland (born in 1954 in Malvern, Worcestershire) came in 2017 when I was invited by the Australian violinist William Hennessy, founder of the Australian String Quartet in Adelaide and a champion of Weiland's music for some decades, to take part in a recording project of Weiland's Fourth and Fifth String Quartets.¹ Initially, my respect for Hennessy's musicianship meant that I came to the project with an open but positively inclined mind about a composer whose music I had never heard before. Reinforcing this attitude were Weiland's professional accolades, some of which included being the late Sir Neville Marriner's most frequently commissioned composer, with three major orchestral works (a *Divertimento* for strings in 1992, Clarinet Concerto in 2002 and Triple Concerto for piano, violin and cello in 2006), having his complete works housed by Claus-Christian Schuster (the pianist of the Altenberg Trio in Vienna, for whom Weiland wrote two piano trios) in the Brahms Museum at Mürzzuschlag in Austria, and working between 1999 and 2006 as Composer-in-Residence for Norfolk and Norwich Chamber Music (formerly the Norfolk and Norwich Music Club), for which organisation he produced five of his finest chamber works. I was also made aware of Weiland's background, discovering that he had been a freelance violinist in London, including seven years a core player with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, and for five years he, too, had been one of the founder members of the Australian Quartet, before returning to the UK in 1990 to earn his crust as a full-time composer, very soon producing a substantial body of work, with orchestral, chamber and vocal works to the fore. What I learned about Weiland intrigued me, but soon after the rehearsal process began and the music of those string quartets began to reveal itself,

¹ Performed by the Melbourne Quartet and released in 2020 on Naxos 8.574028.

it was no longer necessary for external elements to influence my appreciation for his compositions: the music spoke for itself.

It seems to me that among the important achievements of a composer is to be able to say something which is profound and personal, is presented in a new way and yet speaks to everyone. This confluence of attributes ties together the universal concepts of the human experience, shared throughout the ages by mankind, irrespective of geography, culture or time, and the unique nature of all human beings, expressing these concepts in their own special way, within the contemporary landscapes that they find themselves in. Taken in isolation, these criteria will rarely produce great music that will stand the test of time: something profound or personal to which others can't relate will not resonate as deeply; something that communicates with everyone but lacks identity will be lost in the crowd; and novelty by itself or for its own sake fades quickly. What has always impressed and moved me in Weiland's music is that he manages to combine all these elements, presenting a highly intelligent and developed compositional craft with a unique voice that speaks of profound matters sincerely, from the heart.

The universality of the stories told by great music means that those composers who are successful in creating it inevitably share a common language, though they express it in their own peculiar dialect. This language incorporates the rhetoric, rhythm and emotions of common human expression and, through it, composers seem to be interacting with one another through the boundaries of space and time. Weiland taps into this conversation, making his contributions in his own personal way, and someone who listens to his music can hear how he connects with those who came before him, subtly and without ever losing his own identity. As such, he carries forward the great traditions of music from the past and presents them in a re-imagined way for the listener of today. It is undoubtedly 'new' and 'modern' music but with an 'old' heart, and it stands as a refreshing and inspiring reminder of the power of music to make that which is ancient relevant to any age.

Rhodri Clarke and I presented the three violin sonatas on this album in concert at the Melbourne Recital Centre in early 2026, as a public conclusion to a period required for the extensive preparation and recording sessions of the repertoire heard

here. Since Weiland was a violinist himself, the violin-writing in his string compositions successfully harnesses the strengths and capabilities of the instrument. He doesn't spare the violinist but, thoroughly versed in the idioms of violin-playing, he is comfortable exploring the possibilities of what the instrument can do, inventively stretching but always aware of its limitations. Nonetheless, one never feels that pushing the boundaries of the instrument is the main priority for Weiland; rather, it is the wholehearted artistic pursuit of inspired musical creation, at the service of which his violinistic knowledge is so effectively employed.

The release of this album follows the official launch by William Hennessy, in February 2026, of 'The Weiland Project', the principal aim of which is to bring about a number of orchestral recordings under the composer's direction. Amongst other works to be issued on Toccata Classics, plans include recordings of the three works commissioned by Neville Marriner, conducted by the composer. And we shall, of course, be paying due attention to Weiland's generous crop of chamber music. It is pleasing to see that awareness of Weiland's music continues elsewhere, such as the 2026 performance by Roderick Williams and Iain Burnside of Weiland's *Cycle of Six Songs to Poems by the 'Dymock Poets'* (Weiland's Op. 69) as part of their recital at the Gloucester Three Choirs Festival in England. With time and further exposure, it is hoped that his music will begin to attract the audience it deserves.

MY MUSIC FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO

by Douglas Gordon Weiland

These widely differing works come close to covering the full span of my career as a composer: from 1990 (*Capriccio*) to 2025 (*Homage Fantasia*). The three major works here, the three sonatas, fit into my 'early to middling' period and are within themselves highly contrasted, in style, approach to tonality, structure and atmosphere, and yet each one comes from the same source, has the same 'voice'. The *Phantasy Minuet: To a Butterfly* (1996) holds a two-fold association for me, being first the wedding gift

for one of England's finest pianists, an occasion for which I resurrected my violin and attempted to perform at the wedding; and coinciding with the precious early parenting days my wife and I experienced with our longed-for child (now a baritone and lawyer!).

The Sonatas were written in close chronological proximity (1999 and 2000), the Third completed in January 2001, shortly before embarking on my second commission from Neville Marriner, a clarinet concerto. These works were, as with all my music, heavily influenced by my close friendship with members of the Kendall family, Philip, Arlette and their daughter, the aforementioned pianist, Marie-Noëlle Kendall. Marie-Noëlle and I made archive recordings of the First and Second Sonatas – another brief outing from violin-playing retirement. The Third Sonata took on an entirely new direction that I put down to the advent of another important influence, the Austrian pianist Claus-Christian Schuster, responsible for a number of my works in one way or another; this Third Sonata was inspired by him. Whether or not this association explains the nature of tonal freedom that pervades the work is unclear to me. But I don't believe in coincidences....

Of course, when I refer to 'tonal freedom', it will no doubt come across differently depending on one's points of reference: to some it might seem as if the First Sonata exudes this freedom, rather than the Third. It is therefore a very particular phenomenon to which I refer; if you like, a coming to terms with Schoenberg in the same way Nielsen does, by carrying forward Mozart and Brahms while having at the same time made that fundamental transition – like squaring a circle, or doing the impossible. But isn't that what the art of music is always about – a glorious breaking-out into the impossible?

Violin Sonata No. 1, *In memory of Gracia Lezama*, Op. 26 (1999)

The Argentine Lezama sisters – Gracia, María-Luz, Constanza, María-Pia and Karolina – and their family became my dear friends, the consequence of a tour to Buenos Aires in 1980. Years later, barely into her fourth decade, Gracia was in the midst of life in London when she lost hers through an unspeakable act of violence and passion. In 1997 she left her husband, who, eight years later, was finally convicted of manslaughter; the location of her body remains unknown. My First Violin Sonata was a response to the devastating

phone-call from her sister. As if in defiant contrast, the work makes use of one of the most beautiful and enduringly relevant tools the art of music possesses to this day: sonata form, both in and around which this sonata is written. Immediate and written at pace, it is intended to shine light on a beautiful, vivacious person, and to stand as a gift to the Lezama family, in particular to Gracia's sister María-Luz, to whom it is dedicated.

At once fragile, passionate, intricate, delicate, weighty, the first movement, *Allegro amabile* [5], proceeds within a tight framework with a somewhat condensed exposition. The movement conveys, I think, an inherent truth, that it was conceived and written 'in an instant'. One is helpless, useless, in such a rare moment of the sharing of the grief of someone close to you. What can one do...? As time, apparently ruthlessly, passes, the question for me remains: did this music, in the light of cold reality, accomplish anything of any value at all? My hope is: a warmth, a little human comfort; and perhaps, through more time a pointing toward a far deeper comfort and assurance – that neither Gracia nor the rest of us are left abandoned.

The second movement, *Adagio molto* [6], passionate and tender, intense and questioning, doesn't altogether keep at bay a lurking anger. In total, this is devotional music of the heart. The *Presto* finale [7] tries primarily to convey an attractive vivaciousness that is an abiding memory I have of Gracia's personality. Above so much else, she was beautiful and gay. Of course, music, the artform, is rarely, if ever, so simplistic. The thematic content here is multi-dimensional, hints of something here, a leaning towards something there. Exactly like being human. Gracia Lezama was born in Buenos Aires on 10 April 1957. She died somewhere in England on 12 November 1997.

The first performance was given by the well-known violinist Peter Thomas (Gracia's brother-in-law) and pianist Philip Fisher on 9 January 2000 at the Barber Institute, Birmingham University. The first broadcast performance was given by William Hennessy (violin) and Sean Hennessy-Brose (piano) on 5 January 2007 on ABC FM.

Violin Sonata No. 2, Op. 28 (2000)

My Second Violin Sonata was commissioned in February 2000 (completed on 4 April) and written for violin and harpsichord; the first performance was given by Miranda

Fulleylove (violin) and Maggie Cole (harpsichord) on 8 July 2000 in Norwich (UK). It was not performed with piano until Markiyany Melnychenko and Rhodri Clarke included it in their recital of the Three at Melbourne Recital Centre on 22 February 2026. The commissioning body, King of Hearts Arts in Norwich, brought together a number of composers in England, of which I was one, each asked to produce a piece that in some way referenced the opening bars of the sarabande from Bach's D minor Cello Suite, BWV 1008. I cannot say I especially warmed to the idea, it not being a starting point to which I would naturally be inclined; perhaps I didn't understand well enough what was meant. Anyway, this sonata was my contribution. The brief quotation – the opening phrase from Bach's sarabande – is almost stumbled upon, rather than reached by a process of logic, or destiny. But for me the challenge was to see in it some sign of destiny. The difficulty is not hard to grasp: one is referencing another composer's work. Long story short, I was soon happy to indulge this conceit on the basis of the brevity of the quotation, and recognised that to have quibbled further would have been precious and indulgent.

The work is structured around a fantasy that both opens and concludes the sonata, thus acting as bookends to the whole [4]; and the quasi-sarabande, a more focused reality, is contained within, interspersed by a compound allegro that has a developmental mind of its own. The lay-out of the work as a whole is *Adagio molto, ad libitum – Allegro molto – Quasi Sarabande – Allegro molto – Quasi Sarabande – Allegro molto – Come prima, ad libitum*. Tonality is explorative, even shifting episodically.

The sonata is dedicated to my dear violin teacher in London for many years, Leonard Smith, and his wife, the musicologist Felicity Young. This couple were an important part of the very fabric of my life as an adolescent and as a young man. Felicity was the closest thing I ever had to a composition teacher. As with England's greatest composer, Edward Elgar, I learnt – and continue to learn, from Mozart, Schubert and Brahms especially – from the scores of the masters. Felicity Smith imparted to me important grounding in beautiful matters of theory, harmony and counterpoint, from which, through Bartók and mindful of Schoenberg, I eventually found my way forward onto my own path.

Violin Sonata No. 3, Op. 29 (2001)

The Third Violin Sonata is the most substantial of the three in terms of density of material; as a consequence, it also places the most demands on the performers. It is an intensely personal journey, the writing of music. By this period, the early 2000s, I had long been engaged in an inner dialogue as to the nature of tonality generally, and my own in particular. No surprises, really. How could it be otherwise? From the word go, growing up as a music student in a political establishment largely dominated by the avant-garde, we were told day-in day-out that Schubert was done and dusted, and that the History of Music had only recently begun, with Karlheinz Stockhausen. Later, while still a young man, when I had already tasted what inner freedom might be – in artistic terms, from the breaking down of barriers, from seeing new horizons – it was important to me to treat this view of music history with respect; more, I should be able to recognise that respect in my work, even though the view held for me no recognisable value. Hence my early chamber works in particular. In sharp contrast to the avant-gardists, it was especially Béla Bartók, Sergei Prokofiev, Carl Nielsen, Jean Sibelius, each in his own unique way, who demonstrated in magnificent style a modernist-classical journey that was not only possible, but utterly triumphant in the face of classical defeatism. This is how I saw it. But their music is the outward manifestation of an inner state. In writing my Third Sonata I gave vent to a fluctuation of tonality as an intrinsic characteristic in and of itself, a feeling that it had in a sense found a home in me. It was, artistically speaking, a joyful moment of inner freedom. This freedom, of course, is an unspoken characteristic of every work of art, but in the writing of this sonata it was for me especially liberating. Nielsen's Fifth Symphony is a hundred-plus years old and still a glorious example of how to think 'modern' and at the same time carry forward in one's stride what has gone before. The Third Sonata is dedicated to a towering musical figure, the Viennese musicologist, pianist, friend, Claus-Christian Schuster: the inspiration behind this work. The first performance was given by Erica Kennedy (violin) and Grace Kim (piano) on 19 December 2001 in the Melba Hall, Melbourne, and broadcast by ABC FM. The three movements are: *Allegro molto/Meno allegro* [1], *Elegy*, marked *Adagio* [2] and *Allegro, molto vivace* [3].

Homage Fantasia: Moon amongst the Heavens, Op. 72, No. 2 (2025)

The *Homage Fantasia* [8] – written for, dedicated to and premiered by Markiyan Melnychenko, with Rhodri Clarke, on 22 February 2026, in the Primrose Potter Salon, Melbourne Recital Centre – is an outcome of a special association that has developed over recent years. As part of his Ph.D., Markiyan produced a series of Ukrainian folksong arrangements for violin and piano,¹ a project for which I acted as consultant. Markiyan's introduction to these beautiful, haunting national songs meant the request to write something in the form of a Ukraine-tribute came as a special honour. I was particularly drawn to the folksong incorporated into the title as, indeed, early on a *Homage* began to emerge. As if the folksong had already been heard and was still echoing, the piece thus begins: fragments and phrases of 'Moon amongst the Heavens' to appear in one form or another throughout, with a refusal to reveal itself fully clothed until the closing bars; and even here there is still a lingering, a longing...

Out of interest, the Op. 72, No. 1, I produced a few days before the *Homage is Prayer for Our Country*, an unusual Concert Introit piece for clarinet and strings, written for William Hennessy and dedicated to the country of Australia, with special reference to the peoples of the First Nations and the life and reconciliatory work of the writer and broadcaster Stan Grant.

Capriccio Op. 11 (1990) for solo violin

My *Capriccio* was commissioned in 1990 by Ian Carrig of Adelaide and dedicated to his daughter, Lucy. Lucy was a student of mine in Adelaide in the late 1980s. Right at the end of the five years my wife Hilary and I lived in Eden Hills, South Australia, her father commissioned the work as a 21st-birthday present. Lucy can have had no idea of the joy that awaited her (the *Capriccio* is demanding to play). It was first performed by William Hennessy on 25 July 1997 in the Melba Hall, Melbourne. The European premieres followed from Amiram Ganz, on 23 and 24 September 2003, both in Austria: in the Schloss Frauental in Deutschlandsberg in Styria and in the Schloss Pötsleinsdorf in Vienna.

¹ Recorded on *Postcards from Ukraine*, Volume Three: Folk Dialogues, Toccata Next TOCN 0047.

The work is in three movements. The first, 'Geschwind' [9], bears the opening tempo marking *Allegro*, later *Allegro assai*. 'Geschwind' means 'swift(ly)', or, as I like to translate it, 'goes like the wind'; and rapid, explosive; that's mostly what the first movement does. The second, 'Quasi-sarabande' [10] looks to both J. S. Bach and to Béla Bartók in matters of phrasing and chord distribution on the violin. 'Nachdenken (Caprice)' [11] makes use of the idiom of a violin caprice as a vehicle for something more nostalgic than the purely virtuosic.

Phantasy Minuet: To a Butterfly Op. 23, No. 1 (1996) for solo violin

The *Phantasy Minuet* [12] was written for my dearest friend, Marie-Noëlle Kendall, whom I regard as a great pianist (and I use the term advisedly), to celebrate her wedding to Philip Woodland. It was inspired by Wordsworth's poem 'To a Butterfly', the one that begins:

I've watched you now a full half-hour;
Self-poised upon that yellow flower;
And, little Butterfly! Indeed
I know not if you sleep or feed

I gave the first performance myself, at the wedding, on 25 August 1996, in the Taplow House Hotel, Berkshire, England.

The Ukrainian-Australian violinist **Markiy Melnychenko** has been described as 'a master violinist [...] combining his extraordinary bravura technique with elegance' (*Stringendo*) and hailed for his 'freakishly good' playing (*Limelight*). He has served as Principal First Violin with the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra and Lecturer in Violin at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music.

He has so far performed in seventeen countries, with solo performances in New York (Alice Tully Hall) and Washington, D.C. (Kennedy Center), and has made a number of solo appearances with orchestras, including performances with the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra, Corpus Medicorum, Canberra



Symphony Orchestra, Zelman Symphony Orchestra and Orchestra Victoria in Australia, the Lviv Philharmonic Orchestra and Ukrainian Festival Orchestra in Ukraine and the Kobe City Chamber Orchestra in Japan. He has been broadcast on ABC Classic FM, 3MBS FM and Radio NZ, and has released recordings on the Tall Poppies (2019) and Naxos (2020) labels. A three-volume series of his *Postcards from Ukraine* appeared from Toccata Next in 2025–26, to warm reviews.

In 2013 he was selected to perform in a quartet at the US Capitol for the Inaugural Luncheon at Barack Obama's Presidential Inauguration. He is a multiple first-prize winner in national and international competitions, including the Melbourne Recital Centre National 'Great Romantics' competition and the Oleh Krysa International Violin Competition in Ukraine. He was also awarded the 'Australian Development Prize' from the Michael Hill International Violin Competition in 2013. In 2019 he was awarded the Dr Iain C. Medgett Churchill Fellowship.

He obtained his Bachelor and Master of Music at the Eastman School of Music under the tutelage of Oleh Krysa. He was additionally awarded Eastman's Performer's certificate and the prestigious Artist Certificate, being the first violinist to receive this award in over 50 years. He completed his Ph.D. focusing on Ukrainian violin music at the University of Melbourne. Additional studies have been at the Australian National Academy of Music with Alice Waten and William Hennessy, and also with Cyrus Forough.
markiyanmelnychenko.com

The pianist **Rhodri Clarke** has always been fascinated by the collaborative potential of the piano across many instrumental groups and combinations. He began his musical journey in the early 1990s in (old) South Wales, where he had the opportunity of becoming a church organist and choral accompanist. This interest led him to study at the Royal College of Music with Roger Vignoles and develop his interest in both vocal and instrumental accompaniment, as well as chamber music. As a member of the chamber ensemble Bolivar Soloists, he cultivated a love of Latin American music, culminating in albums with Deutsche Grammophon and Costa Records. Through his instrumental and vocal collaborations, he has performed with soloists such as Bryn Terfel, Edicson Ruiz, Rolando Villazon and David Helfgott



in many of the world's leading concert halls, including the Berliner Philharmonie, Vienna Musikverein, Barbican Centre, Carnegie Hall and Sydney Opera House.

Now making his home in Melbourne, he is in demand as a collaborative pianist and chamber musician. He is a founding member of the horn trio Quercus, which has recently released its debut album, *Australian Horn Trios*, on ABC Classic. He is a regular staff pianist at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, with Opera Scholars Australia and for Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Chorus.



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More information on Douglas Weiland can be found at www.douglasweiland.com.

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DOUGLAS GORDON WEILAND Chamber Music, Volume One

Violin Sonata No. 3, Op. 29 (2000)	22:07
1 I <i>Allegro molto/Meno allegro</i>	9:56
2 II <i>Elegy: Adagio</i>	4:46
3 III <i>Allegro, molto vivace</i>	7:25
Violin Sonata No. 2, Op. 28 (2000)	12:59
4 <i>Adagio molto, ad libitum – Allegro molto – Quasi Sarabande – Allegro molto – Quasi Sarabande – Allegro molto – Come prima, ad libitum</i>	
Violin Sonata No. 1, Op. 26 (1999)	14:20
5 I <i>Allegro amabile</i>	5:08
6 II <i>Adagio molto</i>	5:07
7 III <i>Presto</i>	4:05
8 <i>Homage Fantasia</i> for violin and piano, Op. 72, No. 2 (2025)	5:10
<i>Capriccio</i> for solo violin, Op. 11 (1990)	11:55
9 I <i>Geschwind. Allegro – Allegro assai</i>	5:04
10 II <i>Quasi-sarabande</i>	4:01
11 III <i>Nachdenken (Caprice)</i>	2:50
12 <i>Phantasy Minuet: To a Butterfly</i> for solo violin, Op. 23 (1996)	6:58
Markiyon Melnychenko, violin	
Rhodri Clarke, piano	

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FIRST RECORDINGS