

Musical Treasure Chest #1

Franck Violin Sonata in A Major

with Itzhak Perlman and Vladimir Ashkenazy

Beethoven Eroica Symphony

with NBC Symphony/Toscanini

My parents both enjoyed classical music; in fact my mother started out as a piano performance major in college and my father listened to the Texaco Metropolitan Opera broadcasts every Saturday. Music was a part of our household. They had a handful of classical recordings, including a number of orchestral pieces. As a child I would often play the records in the morning before I went to school, I just loved listening to them. One of my favorites was an LP of **Beethoven's Eroica Symphony**. My parents' recording from the early 1950s featured the NBC Symphony with Arturo Toscanini. I listened to it hundreds of times, embedding every nuance of the performance, every instrumental entrance, every harmony into my brain. Toscanini's majestic approach to the work, the brilliance of the playing (and it is brilliant even by today's standards), the pacing of the second movement gives me goosebumps (literally) every time I hear it. When I was in college I attended a wonderful summer music program in Graz, Austria. During my time there (aside from my incredulity at being in the land of so many of my beloved composers), conductor Karl Böhm passed away. A native of Graz, he was returned to the city for burial and memorial events were planned, including a concert by our orchestra. Our conductor (a German) selected the second movement (the funeral march) of the Eroica as part of the tribute. I can still feel the intensity of that performance and hear the utter silence of the audience as we finished. This piece remains one of my most special, every time I hear it I think of childhood mornings and the gift of playing for Böhm's memorial concert. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0lqjl7bkDBE>

The **Franck Violin Sonata** is truly one of the great romantic violin sonatas, actually it's one of the great romantic sonatas period (hence why flutists, violists, and

cellists play it too!). Every violinist waits for their chance to learn and perform the piece—it is beautiful, gorgeously crafted and immensely satisfying to play. In the early 1980s Todd Sisley asked me to play it with him as part of his master's degree recital. Todd and I first met when we were in high school, we were both part of a Capital Region student music group called Junior Etude. Todd is a great musical artist and a wonderful musical collaborator. We had a marvelous experience working on the program. In preparation for the concert I listened to recordings of the Franck, and I discovered a magical one by Itzhak Perlman and Vladimir Ashkenazy, their first recording together made in 1968. The playing is simply astounding, gorgeous, hair-raising. This became my go-to recording of the piece and still remains my favorite. The climax in the last movement is incredible, I never tire of listening to this. Through the miracle of technology not only can I share the recording with you, a filming of the recording session is also there. To see the synergistic collaboration and their amazing artistry is inspiring. They also both have wonderful senses of humor and are so entirely comfortable working with each other; it is a joy to watch.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_fMxYXhGYE <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqZO4KFPDqE>