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ANTONIONI - CARDI - SERINO

MUSIC FOR VIOLA & STRINGS

I SOLISTI AQUILANI · Vladimir Ashkenazy *conductor*

Dimitri Ashkenazy *clarinet* · Gianluca Saggini *viola*

Ada Meinich *viola* · Luca Sanzò *viola d'amore & viola*

Antonioni · Cardi · Serino
Music for Viola & Strings

Cristiano Serino b.1973

1. **Per Tutta la Durata
di un Arco** 23'21
(“For the entire duration
of a bow”)

Gianluca Saggini *viola*
Cristiano Serino *concertatore*

Francesco Antonioni b.1971

Lights, after the Thaw *concertante for
viola, clarinet
and strings* (2017)

2. Monologues and dialogues –
Andante tranquillo 7'14
3. “It was Thaw and Little by Little
Gold” – Allegro molto 5'38
4. Liebeslied – Andante 9'27
5. My River – Presto 5'00

Ada Meinich *viola*

Dimitri Ashkenazy *clarinet*
Vladimir Ashkenazy *conductor*

Mauro Cardi b.1955

La Follia *for viola (with viola d'amore)
and string orchestra* (2017)

6. Largo 7'05
7. Cadenza a 2 5'12
8. Allegro 4'33
9. Adagio calmo 0'47

Luca Sanzò *viola d'amore and viola*
Stefano Cardi *concertatore*

I SOLISTI AQUILANI

Violins: Daniele Orlando*, Marino Capulli, Federico Cardilli*,
Maria Teresa De Sanio°, Vanessa Di Cintio, Angelo Di Ianni°,
Nicola Marvulli°, Azusa Onishi, Francesco Peverini°,
Antonio Pirozzolo, Riccardo Zamuner♦

Violas: Gianluca Saggini*, Luana De Rubeis, Margherita Di Giovanni,
Luna Michele♦, Riccardo Savinelli°

Cellos: Giulio Ferretti*, Chiara Burattini°, Kyung Mi Lee°,
Francesco Sorrentino♦, Alessandro Muller♦, Emanuele Crucianelli♦

Double Basses: Alessandro Schillaci*♦, Gaspari Matteo*°

Vladimir Ashkenazy *conductor* °

* first parts

° “Lights, after the Thaw”

♦ “La follia” and “Per tutta la durata di un arco”

Recording: June 2017, Auditorium “Enrico Fermi”, Celano and September 2017, “Auditorium del Parco”,
L'Aquila, Italy

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Composers photos: © Cristiano Serino, © Francesco Antonioni, © Mauro Cardi

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About the project

The centre, that is, the equidistance between two extremes. The point of supreme equilibrium in geometry, in a social context, often takes on the connotations of fearfulness, uncertainty and a sort of grey (precisely) measuredness.

Perhaps for the same reason, the viola, which expresses the central range of the stringed instruments, has often been mistreated (and its interpreters good-naturedly derided) by the repertoire: it doesn't have – according to its detractors – the nobility of the violin, much less the deep vocality of the violoncello.

Morton Feldman – who, being American, had the capacity to rethink many conventional viewpoints – by contrast loved the viola, and considered it – precisely due to its middle position – an instrument that is symbolically more adapted to acoustically exhibiting the idea of a sonoral, spacial and spiritual center.

The viola is the instrumental protagonist of this recording, which brings together three expansive compositions where the part of the viola soloist displays its ambivalence: it is able to stand out from the others and also to be homogeneously with the others. In this poetry of the “with”, “medianity” absolutely does not rhyme with “mediocrity”.

The path to liberation from convention, from form, from structural practice, is made by trial and error. The “errors” of **Cristiano Serino's** score, *Per Tutta la Durata di un Arco*, are obviously deliberate expedients employed to tell the story of the instrument's ideal emancipation from its fundamental material limits (the attack and decay of sound entirely dependent upon the use of the bow), the exemption of a composition from textbook rules (the juxtaposition of episodes and sudden changes in character are preferred to a teleological idea of development), surrendering to the inevitable appeal to the “already heard” (the more or less voluntary examples of citing that always occur during the composing of a work), the mature acceptance of an esthetic – prevalent today – of harmonia mundi which alternates in an excellent

balance between dissonance and consonance.

This is one of those works that goes to the root of the meaning of composition, which – in its quest – goes back to the unavoidable naturalness of all things which, despite many efforts to alter them, show their invincible character of metaphysical immanence, where the viola incarnates that gravitational center in which everything tends to converge.

On unveiling. Thus, a conversation which begins affectionately, delicately, from a distance, tackles a topic (perhaps the Topic) of a sage – especially in the treatment of volume – the exchange of acoustic information between the viola and the clarinet, which are the two principal voices, with the rest of the orchestra. The four movements of *Lights, after the Thaw*, are a process, an excursion of revelation (the title of the second movement is emblematic: “It was thaw and little by little gold”), which unfolds in increasing melodic, harmonic and rhythmical interaction, holding fast the character – that is, the timbre – of each speaker. The distended expressions, a few breaks (the various sforzati that alternate with the pianissimi), the solitary counterbalance to the strings – that is, the clarinet itself, like the viola, in the middle range is capable of singing (and therefore, of saying) practically everything... The carefully studied choice of the behavior of the strings is translated into a handbook on musical ethics: often, in the tacit assertion, “now, I'm going to speak”, the threshold of attention is represented by a held note, the listener's drone.

The linguistic overturning of dialogue and monologue, that is, of speech, is perfectly incarnated in the choice of using the human voice – feminine, in **Francesco Antonioni's** composition – which is prevalently a-semantic, that is, vocalized (only at one point she pronounces: “if you look at me...”, but then, almost incomprehensible, it becomes confused with the clarinet, as if the verbal body dissolves – precisely – in a vaster and primitive womb of pure sonority), and leaves the expression of more profound meanings to that which can effectively emit only sound.

Therefore, in the finale, the encounter becomes more evident that the purpose: “my river runs toward you”, the poetic incipit which inspires the entire movement, a river-like flow, at this point leveling the path toward a brilliant light, out in the open, with the propulsive force of comprehension.

It is interesting, conceptually miraculous, the composer’s choice of employing the median range instrument, that which is “in the norm” because it is measured and in the middle ground, to give voice to the folly. “*La Follia*”, that famous theme which passes through centuries of music history and which never ceases to demonstrate its undying generative energy, is at the base of **Mauro Cardi**’s composition.

And how else is it possible to approach madness in music if not by trusting this madness to a similarly schizophrenic voice? Cardi’s score – a piece once again entitled *La Follia* – is inhabited by elements which are at first fundamental to the general temperament, then formal, functioning as expedients: in addition to the classic tuning of the viola d’amore, two of the sympathetic strings are tuned (unconventionally) to B-flat and E-flat, creating apparently imperceptible factors of “genetic” disturbance and the violin notes which often visit the high tessitura represent the shrieking of a strangled mind, its thoughts being taken to the limit of tolerance. In the initial *Largo*, the viola always moves in cells of two notes, more or less contiguous, the spacing of which demonstrates the dimension of the via to be taken in attempting to remedy the folly with continuity, which the fanning of glissati and arpeggi try to reestablish. The tremolo is the trembling neurological disturbance of an intimate folly that doesn’t cry out, but is rather interior to the subject, as if it meditates upon itself; in a few moments it breaks away, manifesting with agitation, first in a cadenza in confrontation with the violins, then in an *Allegro* in which both soloist and ensemble communicate in small groups of notes, before returning to the initial situation.

In all of this, the “*Follia*” theme is concealed, while in certain moments it manifests itself in a recognizable way. This is – paradoxically and insanely – the moment of

lucidity: the “*Follia*” displays itself in the quietest and most regular moments, putting into question the concept of normality and its inevitable relativity.

In this way, the viola d’amore is both cure and unveiling: the sweet-sounding and balanced instrument tells us that the madman loves and is to be loved (he is the other to be met), also because in his nonconformity, he represents that which comes closest to the truth...Which here, it appears, is to be found exactly in the middle.

© *Federico Capitoni*

Per Tutta la Durata di un Arco (For the entire duration of a bow), 2017

This work for viola and strings, which I composed for Gianluca Saggini and I Solisti Aquilani, extends for the duration of about thirty minutes, without any internal subdivision: there are no concessions to a formal dialectic beyond the casual or the chaotic, similar to the succession of events that take place in a day or in a lifetime. To avoid falling into the trap of musical form, I initially evoked numerous musical figures and archetypes to then reassemble them as in the making of a motion picture film. Although the viola soloist behaves somewhat like a character in a film, the camera often lingers on her; hers is the first point of view of the world- the 16 “orchestra players” are actually called upon to be soloists themselves: at first they all play in unison while struggling to free themselves of this almost military-like conformism, each continuing on their own path, for the entire duration of the piece, without respite. There is a precise gesture, like a freeze frame, which is a sort of keystone of the concert: it’s a both a symbolic, but also a technical, instrumental, gesture; it’s the maximum pressure point applied to the bow in order to put into motion the expressive vibration of the strings. The maximum point of pressure on the strings freezes the sound in a single, resolute gesture of restrained silence, to prevent an explosion. As soon as the pressure is eased, the strings produce a scratching sound. The cry is louder than fortissimo, beyond which there is the plastic gesture of the

potential cry, of the cry a moment before it's emitted. I thought that in that lump of potential density, an entire world of sonorous objects could materialize and meet, attracted and drawn toward the finale of the piece: with an expressive and ever growing amplification, the sound becomes continually and more tensely dramatic until it "shrivels" in a horrendous implosion, full of both vacuity and anticipation. This black hole that suddenly swallows up everything is actually the moment in which the piece is over, but also the same point at which it evidently begins, in a strange ring-like form, a timeless bubble in which one is destined to remain trapped.

© *Cristiano Serino*

Lights, after the Thaw, 2017 is a Concertante for viola, clarinet and string orchestra. The timbric affinities of the two solo instruments combine with the refractions and interjections of the orchestral ensemble in forming a kind of Triple Concerto, structured in four movements and divided into two uninterrupted sonoric streams. The soloists alternate instrumental monologues and dialogues, with the orchestra simultaneously providing the harmonic base, reflections and comments to the musical excursion.

The first movement, entitled Monologues and dialogues, is an exposition of musical material that will be developed in the following movements. The themes originate from a Norwegian folk song, often performed on the Hardingfele, a traditional bowed instrument. The viola soloist is accompanied by the four orchestral violas, which project shadows on the excursion, while the subsequent entrance of the clarinet lightens the harmonic color.

The second movement owes its title to a poetic verse, "It was thaw and little by little gold". This movement articulates the energy accumulated in the previous movement by conveying the alternating chiaroscuro of the first movement in search of the stability provided by rarified and luminous colors. A poetic verse is also the basis of the third movement, almost a duet in which the proximity of the viola's range



with and that of the clarinet is reflected in the slight hint of a song: "And if you truly look at me and then you see me?". Following a structured cadenza for both soloists, the fourth movement, which also takes its title from a poetic incipit: "My River comes to Thee", completes the harmonic and melodic implications and again lightens the color of the instrumental ranges.

© *Francesco Antonioni*

La Follia, for viola (with viola d'amore) and string orchestra), 2017

La Follia is one of those themes whose origins go back to time immemorable, taking us back at the least to fifteenth century Portugal, up to modern times, after having spanned all of music history, in hundreds of versions and variations on the theme. In my piece I refer mainly to the versions of La Follia from the Variations "Le Folies d'Espagne" by Marin Marais and the Sarabanda from the D minor Suite by Georg Freidrich Handel. The theme of La Follia provides the supporting columns over which

several elements span, sustaining the piece: eight bar structures, or multiples, in which often a fragment becomes material that develops vertically, arresting the melodic-harmonic flow, freezing it in clusters, diatonics, or creating trails of sonorities which prolong the thematic memory and which slowly conduct the listener elsewhere, while evoking an illusory Kaleidoscopic stasis. According to my experience, it becomes gradually more and more difficult to free oneself from La Follia. Indeed, there is an obsessive form in the theme that spans the entire piece; a lucid folly, alienating and hypnotic, in its continual whirling around itself. Nomen omen.

The viola d'amore is tuned traditionally (A-D-A-D-F-A-D), while the seven sympathetic strings contain two eccentric notes, E-flat and B-flat.

© Mauro Cardi

Translations: Laura Paolini



Cristiano Serino, (Rome 1973) violinist, composer and orchestra director, he has been intensely involved in teaching and research in the field of theoretical and compositional disciplines for 20 years and actively as an event organizer playing and directing music of our time. He plays in prestigious ensembles, orchestras and chamber groups also in the field of early music. His compositions are performed in prestigious venues in Italy and abroad. He has taught theoretical and compositional disciplines and has actively participated in ensemble and orchestral music projects by founding projects and experimental groups in the conservatories of Ferrara, Cosenza, Castelfranco Veneto, Latina, Salerno, Benevento and Frosinone where he currently holds his courses.



Francesco Antonioni (Teramo 1971) has been described as “a composer who knows exactly what he wants and how to achieve it” (*The Guardian*). Taking its roots from classical music, Francesco Antonioni’s unique style draws from several genres and musical languages, in quest for similarities and correspondences across them, conveying “a great sense of freedom from the dogmas of both the avantgarde and the anti-avantgarde” (*Classic Voice*). Francesco’s compositions originate from intellectual curiosity and cultural investigation, blending the complex rhythms of post-minimalism into melodies with Mediterranean roots and provenance. With its rhythmical drive and lyrical character, his music is also in high demand among choreographers and dancers. Initially trained as

concert pianist, Francesco is also active as freelance presenter of music on radio and television and has established himself as a major cultural commentator. His works have been commissioned and played by major orchestras and music festivals, such as the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia (Rome), Ensemble Modern (Frankfurt), Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (UK), MiTo Settembre Musica (Turin and Milan), the Biennale di Venezia (2001, 2010, 2016), and Albany Symphony Orchestra (USA). His music has been performed by Antonio Pappano, George Benjamin, Evelyn Glennie, Yuri Bashmet, Beatrice Rana, and since 2009 has been represented and published by Ricordi.

Mauro Cardi (Rome 1955) received his musical education at the Santa Cecilia Rome Conservatoire, under Gino Marinuzzi jr., Guido Turchi and Irma Ravinale. He continued his studies with Franco Donatoni at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena and at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia. In 1984 he attended the Ferienkürse in Darmstadt. He won many International Composition prizes, among them the “Valentino Bucchi”, the “Gaudeamus”, the “International Gian Francesco Malipiero”. In 1987 was chosen by RAI to represent Italy at the “International Composers’ Tribune” organised by UNESCO. He composed radio operas commissioned by RAI and in 1995 it was performed the opera *Nessuna coincidenza* commissioned by the Accademia Filarmonica Romana. He has received commissions from the Accademia Nazionale Santa Cecilia, Rome and Naples RAI Symphony Orchestras, Gaudeamus Foundation, City of Geneva, Biennale di Venezia, Ravenna Festival, Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Nuova Consonanza, Festival Pontino... Since 1990 he has been involved in computer music. In 1995 he has been selected by IRCAM for its international stage and he won several international competitions (among them Bourges and the ICMC). With Edison Studio he composed the soundtracks of some silent movies, *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* and *Inferno* have been published in DVD by the Cineteca di Bologna. President of Nuova Consonanza from 1999 to 2001, co-founder of the “Scuola di Musica di Testaccio”, he teaches Composition at the Conservatory “Alfredo Casella” in L’Aquila; he has taught and lectured about his music, beyond that in Italy, in different countries. His works are published and recorded in CD, among others, by Casa Ricordi, RAI Trade, RCA, BMG, Curci, Edipan, Adda Records, Happy New Ears, Il manifesto, CNI, Ut Orpheus, Semar, Sconfinarate, Taucay.



I SOLISTI AQUILANI came into being in 1968. The ensemble comprises high-calibre musicians who have interchangeable roles within the organisation, enabling them to perform extremely demanding and virtuosic works. Their repertoire embraces a wide range of musical epochs, from the pre-Baroque to the contemporary. It focuses on Italian composers and at the same time does just homage to operatic pieces. Owing to their excellent performance level, the high number of concerts they have given, the fact that they have played in such widespread locations and have won both public and critical acclaim, I Solisti Aquilani have established themselves to be one of the most prestigious chamber orchestras in Italy. As well as being billed at the most important national musical events and have made numerous highly-praised tours in Europe, the Middle and Far East, Africa and America. They have played in the best concert halls in Central and South America, Austria, Malta, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, USA, Yugoslavia, Estonia, Lithuania, Vietnam, Singapore, Kazakhstan. I Solisti Aquilani had been invited to play on numerous occasions at international festivals in Berne, Bonn, Cannes, Helsinki, Lucerne, Ludwigsburg, Menton, Miami, Montreux-Vévey, Passau, Puebla, S. Sebastian, Toronto and Zurich, and at Italian festivals at Bologna, Fiesole, Porto Cervo, Ravello and Stresa. The ensemble normally performs with other internationally acclaimed musicians, including Maurice André, Felix Ayo, Paul Badura Skoda, Hermann Baumann, Renato Bruson, Michele Campanella, Cecilia Gasdia, Severino Gazzelloni, David Geringas, Ilya Gruber, Stefan Milenkovic, Massimo Quarta, Flavio Emilio Scogna, Quartetto d'Archi della Scala, Jean Pierre Rampal, Uto Ughi, Fabrizio Bosso, Danilo Rea, Roberto Prosseda, Francesco Fiore, Federico Mondelci, Ramin Bahrami, D. D. Bridgewater, Giuseppe Albanese, Piergiorgio Odifreddi, Bruno Canino, Salvatore Accardo, Umberto Clerici, Krzysztof Penderecki, Peter Eötvös, Luis Bacalov, Sonig Tchakerian, Andrea Griminelli, Giovanni Sollima, Alessandro Carbonare, Alessio Allegrini, Evelyn Glennie, Mischa Maisky, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Sergei Nakariakov, Marco Angius,

Mario Brunello, Anna Tifu, Shlomo Mintz, Egberto Gismonti, Richard Galliano, Manuel Barrueco, Marco Rizzi, Andrea Lucchesini, Edicson Ruiz whose prestigious collaborations have added to its fame. In 2009 I Solisti Aquilani have performed a concert in New York at the Dag Hammarskjöld Library Auditorium inside the ONU building. I Solisti Aquilani have made a large number of records and radio and television recordings in Italy, Central and South America, Germany, Spain, Switzerland, USA, Japan.

Since 2014, Daniele Orlando is the Konzertmeister of I Solisti Aquilani chamber orchestra.

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