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Schumann

COMPLETE MUSIC FOR
PIANO 4-HANDS

ROBERTO PLANO · PAOLA DEL NEGRO PIANO

Robert Schumann 1810-1856
Complete Music for Piano 4-hands

CD1 **64'32**

8 Polonaises for piano 4-hands Anh.G1

1.	Polonaise No.1	3'31
2.	Polonaise No.2	4'08
3.	Polonaise No.3	3'40
4.	Polonaise No.4	4'04
5.	Polonaise No.5	4'23
6.	Polonaise No.6	3'48
7.	Polonaise No.7	4'05
8.	Polonaise No.8	4'58

12 vierhändige Klavierstücke für kleine
 und große Kinder Op.85

9.	No.1 Geburtstagsmarsch	2'37
10.	No.2 Bärentanz	1'39
11.	No.3 Gartenmelodie	3'08
12.	No.4 Beim Kränzwinden	1'45
13.	No.5 Kroatenmarsch	2'31
14.	No.6 Trauer	2'17
15.	No.7 Turniermarsch	4'27
16.	No.8 Reigen	1'58
17.	No.9 Am Springbrunnen	2'54
18.	No.10 Verstecken's	1'26
19.	No.11 Gespenstermärchen	2'42
20.	No.12 Abendlied	3'03

21. Klavierstück zu vier Händen
 in C Op.85 Anh. (1849) 1'17

CD2 **64'40**

Bilder aus Osten Op.66

1.	I. Lebhaft	3'27
2.	II. Nicht schnell und sehr gesangvoll zu spielen	2'54
3.	III. Im Volkston	2'02
4.	IV. Nicht schnell	2'44
5.	V. Lebhaft	3'20
6.	VI. Reuig andächtig	4'29

Ball-Szenen Op.109

7.	No.1 Préambule	1'37
8.	No.2 Polonaise	4'01
9.	No.3 Walzer	2'14
10.	No.4 Ungarisch	2'43
11.	No.5 Française	2'32
12.	No.6 Mazurka	4'16
13.	No.7 Ecossaise	2'55
14.	No.8 Walzer	4'23
15.	No.9 Promenade	6'08

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Roberto Plano & Paola Del Negro *piano*

Robert Schumann really loved playing piano duets, which many considered to be the most intimate and delightful way of making music at home. During the course of his life he delved deep into this passion, continuing to play 4-hands even after he had hurt his right hand in an accident. He often used to play with Henriette Voigt or Albert Dietrich, but it was with Clara that he found the greatest enjoyment. His first complete work for piano duet was composed in the summer of 1828:

VIII Polonaises pour le Pianoforte à quatre mains, Anh. G1, which clearly express the young composer's admiration for Franz Schubert, for his works for piano 4-hands, and in particular for his Polonaises. Schubert died that very year, in 1828, two years after the publication of his 6 Polonaises Op.61 (D.824) and just one year after that of the 4 Polonaises Op.75 (D.599): the homage could hardly be more evident. And it is interesting to note that Schumann used material borrowed from the Polonaises Nos. 3, 4 and 7 for two Polonaise-style pieces in his *Op.2 Papillons* (No.5 in B-flat major and No.11 in D major). Without undergoing substantial change, the Trio of Polonaise No.7 was turned into No.5 of the *Papillons*, where No.11 is partially made up of elements from the Polonaises Nos. 3 and 4. At which point it is clear that Schumann had discarded the Schubert model in his efforts to establish one of his own: a distinctive style with recognizable choices of key, bold modulations, a tendency towards chromatic development and often also a more emphatic use of virtuoso technique in extreme registers, with cross-hands (for example in No.6) and almost orchestral effects (for instance, the tremolos in No.5 and No.6).

The 12 vierhändige Klavierstücke für kleine und große Kinder Op.85

These pieces were composed for a family occasion: on 6 September 1849 Schumann sent the first, the *Geburtstagsmarsch* (Birthday March) to Friederike Malinska, the mother and teacher of Marie and Elise, so that she could help the girls learn the piece for her 30th birthday, on 13 September. Unfortunately the March was too difficult for little Elise, so Schumann himself took her place, playing 4-hands with Marie.

Bärentanz (The Bears' Dance) and *Gartenmelodie* (Garden Melody), composed the day before, would also seem to have been presented as part of the birthday festivities. The other nine pieces were finished by 1 October 1849, and the collection was published by Schubert of Hamburg in August 1850, with the following preface: *Over the past 20 years there has been increasing awareness of the lack of short and substantial works originally composed for piano 4-hands. This most recent work by our brilliant Schumann will thus prove to be doubly welcome. We are convinced that this new album for piano 4-hands, made up of 12 ingenious pieces of the greatest originality, will meet with the same widespread public acclaim that still surrounds its predecessor, the Album for the Young for piano 2 hands.*

In actual fact Op.85 did not elicit the expected reaction, to the extent that it received practically no reviews. Despite this, however, every single piece in the collection became very well-known, especially the last of the series, *Abendlied* (Evening Song) for 3 hands. During the 19th century it turned out to be one of Schumann's most famous pieces, giving rise to innumerable arrangements, including Joseph Joachim's for violin and orchestra of 1861 and the young Ferruccio Busoni's for clarinet and string quartet. No.9, *Am Springbrunnen* (At the Well) was another particularly successful piece from the same collection: although it was not intended for a concert hall, Clara Schumann and her pupil Nanette Falk played it in a concert, along with *Gespenstermärchen* (Ghost Stories) on 13 March 1851 in Düsseldorf, with Schumann himself in the audience. Another interesting piece in Op.85 is *Bärentanz* (The Bears' Dance), which was developed from an idea for a piece for piano solo with the same name, originally intended for inclusion in the *Album for the Young* but ultimately never published. *Bärentanz* is also the only item in Op.85 that appealed to the composer's grouchy father-in-law, Friedrich Wieck.

In December 1848 Schumann returned to the piano 4 hands repertoire, writing a number of absolute masterpieces. For Christmas he surprised his wife with 6 fascinating compositions for 4 hands: the *Bilder aus Osten*, *6 Impromptus für das*

Pianoforte zu vier Händen Op.66, which Clara greatly appreciated. The “East” of the title owes much to the Maqāmāt by the great Arab poet Al-Hariri of Basra (1053-1122), which had been translated by Friedrich Rückert. Schumann devoted considerable time and effort to deciding on the title of the work (Pictures from the East) and the design of the cover, which reveals how important Op.66 was for him. It is also significant that he dedicated it to the wife of a painter (Mrs Lida Bendemann), in whose home the work was played on two occasions. In choosing the title Schumann may have been inspired by two vocal works by Heirich Marschner (the song *Bilder des Ostens* Op.90 and *Klänge aus Osten* Op.109), both of which he had mentioned years earlier in his *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. That said, however, it is also true that Schumann had been interested in the world of eastern poetry and spirituality for some time, not least because it had already begun to influence European literature. Goethe’s *West-Östlicher Divan* is a case in point. At all events, the structure of Op.66 is perfect in its clarity, with an alternation of vigorous and meditative moods that culminates in No.6, where the two coexist. The choices of key are also impeccable (B flat minor/B flat major, D flat major, D flat major, B flat minor, F minor, B flat minor/B flat major), as indeed is the way the composer creates links between the individual pieces. Likewise flawless is his handling of No.2 as a quasi string quartet, of No.6 that resembles a work for the organ, and of the orchestral intensity of Nos. 3, 5 and 6.

Although the original title for Op.109 was *Kinderball*, in autumn 1853 it came out with the definitive title: *Ball-Szenen, 9 charakteristische Tonstücke* (Scenes from a Ball, 9 characteristic compositions). Schumann described the work as a masked ball with 9 somewhat melancholy dances, and decided to change the title when he realized that most of the pieces were quite complex and difficult. So the title *Kinderball* was used for the later Op.130, which is shorter and musically considerably simpler. *Ball-Szenen* features an alternation of baroque dance forms (*Polonaise*, *Française*), “modern” dances (*Waltz*, *Ecossaise*) and other folk elements from different parts of

Europe (*Hungarian*, *Mazurka*), preceded by a *Préambule* leading into the first dance. Once again, the work is remarkable not only for its originality and variety, but also for the meticulous handling of the key sequence articulated around D major.

The last of the series of works for 4 hands is *Kinderball, Sechs leichte Tanzstücke zu vier Händen für das Pianoforte* (Children’s ball, 6 easy dance pieces for piano four hands) Op.130 of 1853. Although these compositions enjoyed considerable popularity during the 19th century, as the various arrangements for solo piano or violin and piano go to show, they were later largely forgotten as the main focus became Schumann’s encroaching mental illness. Yet *Kinderball* is a suite that reveals a deliberate handling of key in which charmingly archaic dance forms (especially in the *Menuett* and the *Française*) compete with a tonal language typical of the romantic period. With the exception of the third piece, *Menuett*, written in 1850, *Kinderball* was composed in September 1853. On 24 September of that same year Clara Schumann wrote in her diary: “Robert has finished a delightful *Kinderball* for 4 hands”, and on 7 October added with enthusiasm: “This evening I played the new *Kinderball* with Robert...”.

It is clear that Schumann was particularly fond of the compositions for 4 hands, as indeed was his wife Clara. All the more reason for providing new opportunities for listening to small or great masterpieces that have, alas, largely been forgotten.

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Translated by Kate Singleton

Suonare a 4 mani era per Robert Schumann un immenso piacere. Durante il corso della sua vita il compositore tedesco coltivò ed approfondì questa sua passione, considerata da molti l'espressione perfetta della musica fatta in casa, la più intima e naturale. Addirittura anche dopo l'incidente alla sua mano destra Schumann continuò a suonare a 4 mani; con Henriette Voigt o con Albert Dietrich, per esempio, ma particolarmente e soprattutto con Clara... Il primo lavoro completo a 4 mani fu composto nell'estate del 1828; si tratta delle **VIII Polonaises pour le Pianoforte à quatre mains**, Anh. G1. Esse rappresentano chiaramente l'ammirazione del giovane Schumann per Franz Schubert, per le sue composizioni per pianoforte a 4 mani ed in particolare per le sue Polonaises. Schubert morì proprio nel 1828, due anni dopo la pubblicazione delle sue 6 Polonaises Op.61 (D.824) e un anno dopo la pubblicazione delle 4 Polonaises Op.75 (D.599). Risulta chiaro l'omaggio al tanto ammirato Franz. Interessante notare che Schumann usò materiale tratto dalle Polonaises Nos. 3, 4 e 7 per due brani in stile polonaise nella sua Op.2 *Papillons* (No.5 in B Si bemolle maggiore e No.11 in Re maggiore). Senza grandi cambiamenti nella sostanza, il Trio della Polonaise No.7 venne trasformato nel No.5 di *Papillons*, il cui brano No.11 è parzialmente composto da passaggi delle Polonaises No.3 e No.4. Risulta qui chiaro sin da subito che Schumann ha già abbandonato il modello schubertiano per creare un proprio, unico stile, riconoscibile nella scelta delle tonalità, nelle audaci modulazioni con un'inclinazione verso il cromatismo, e nel maggiore virtuosismo tecnico con l'uso di registri estremi, mani incrociate (ad esempio nella No.6), effetti quasi orchestrali (ne sono un esempio i tremoli nella No.5 e nella No.7).

I 12 *vierhändige Klavierstücke für kleine und große Kinder* Op.85 furono composti per un evento di famiglia: il 6 settembre del 1849 Schumann inviò il primo brano, *Geburtstagsmarsch* (Birthday March) a Friederike Malinska, madre ed insegnante di Marie e Elise, in modo che potesse aiutare le bambine ad imparare il brano per il suo 30esimo compleanno, il 13 settembre. Purtroppo la Marcia era troppo difficile per la piccola Elise e così Schumann stesso prese il suo posto

suonando a 4 mani con Marie come secondo. Pare che anche i brani *Bärentanz* (Danza degli orsi) e *Gartenmelodie* (Melodia del giardino), composti il giorno precedente, siano stati presentati durante la celebrazione di questo compleanno. Gli altri nove brani furono terminati entro l'1 ottobre 1849. L'editore Schuberth di Amburgo presentò questo nuovo album nell'agosto del 1850, dichiarando: *La mancanza di brevi e sostanziali opere originariamente composte per pianoforte a 4 mani è stata avvertita con forza soprattutto negli ultimi 20 anni; questa ultima opera del nostro brillante Schumann sarà quindi doppiamente benvenuta. Non abbiamo dubbi che questo nuovo album per pianoforte a 4 mani, composto da 12 geniali brani di altissima originalità, incontrerà lo stesso grande consenso di pubblico che ancora viene accordato al suo predecessore, l'Album per la Gioventù per pianoforte a 2 mani.* In realtà l'Op.85 non venne accolta secondo tali aspettative (per esempio, non ricevette praticamente alcuna recensione) ma è importante sottolineare che singoli brani di quest'opera divennero molto conosciuti; uno su tutti proprio l'ultimo della serie, *Abendlied* (Canzone della sera) per 3 mani. Nel XIX secolo esso divenne uno dei brani più celebri di Schumann e quello più arrangiato (Joseph Joachim, per esempio, lo arrangiò per violino e orchestra nel 1861 e il giovane Ferruccio Busoni per clarinetto e quartetto d'archi). Un altro brano della stessa opera che ebbe particolarmente successo fu il No.9, *Am Springbrunnen* (Alla fontana); sebbene non fosse inteso per una sala da concerto, Clara Schumann e il suo allievo Nanette Falk lo eseguirono in concerto, insieme a *Gespenstermärchen* (Storia di un fantasma), il 13 marzo del 1851 a Düsseldorf alla presenza dell'autore stesso. Un altro brano interessante dell'Op.85 è *Bärentanz* (Danza degli orsi); esso nasce da un'originaria idea per piano solo che con lo stesso titolo avrebbe dovuto far parte dell'*Album per la Gioventù* ma che poi in realtà non venne mai pubblicato. *Bärentanz* è anche l'unico brano dell'Op.85 che suo suocero, il burbero Friedrich Wieck, approvò.

Nel dicembre del 1848 Schumann focalizzò nuovamente la sua attenzione verso il repertorio per pianoforte a 4 mani, creando capolavori d'avanguardia in

quest'ambito. A Natale Robert sorprese sua moglie con 6 affascinanti brani per 4 mani - *Bilder aus Osten, 6 Impromptus für das Pianoforte zu vier Händen* Op.66 - che furono molto apprezzati da Clara; evidente la connessione con il Makamat del grande poeta arabo Hariri (1053-1122), tradotto da Friedrich Rückert. L'attenzione e l'energia con cui Schumann decise il titolo finale dell'opera (Scene dall'Est) dopo vari ripensamenti e la scelta accurata della copertina, rivelano l'importanza dell'Op.66 per il compositore tedesco. La dedica di un lavoro dal titolo Pictures alla moglie di un pittore (Mrs. Lida Bendemann) nella cui abitazione l'opera venne eseguita due volte, non può essere qualcosa di casuale. Schumann potrebbe essere stato ispirato nella scelta del titolo da due lavori per voce di Heinrich Marschner (i lieder *Bilder des Ostens* Op.90 e *Klänge aus Osten* Op.109), composizioni di cui aveva parlato anni prima nel suo *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. Non dobbiamo dimenticare tuttavia che Schumann era già entrato più volte in contatto con il mondo della poesia e spiritualità orientale che stava influenzando anche la letteratura europea (si pensi, per esempio, al *West-Östlicher Divan* di Goethe). La struttura dell'Op.66 risulta perfetta nella sua chiarezza, con la sua alternanza di carattere vigoroso e spirituale che culmina nel No.6 in cui li ritroviamo entrambi; perfetta anche nella scelta delle tonalità (B flat minor/B flat major, D flat major, D flat major, B flat minor, F minor, B flat minor/B flat major), nella scelta originale di creare legami fra i singoli brani, o di far risultare uno di essi quasi un quartetto d'archi (No.2), un altro quasi un brano organistico (No.6) e altri di un'intensità orchestrale (No.3 e No.5, per esempio, ma anche lo stesso No.6).

L'Op.109 fu inizialmente composta con il titolo *Kinderball* ma nell'autunno del 1853 apparve finalmente il suo titolo corretto: *Ball-Szenen, 9 charakteristische Tondstücke* (Scene da un ballo, 9 composizioni caratteristiche). Schumann descrisse il lavoro come un ballo in maschera con 9 danze piuttosto malinconiche e decise di cambiarne il titolo quando comprese che la maggior parte dei brani era di una difficoltà complessa. Fu così che il titolo *Kinderball* passò invece alla successiva Op.130, più breve e musicalmente più semplice. *Ball-Szenen* si caratterizza per

un'alternanza di danze in forma barocca (*Polonaise, Francaise*), danze 'moderne' (*Waltz, Ecossaise*) ed elementi 'folk' provenienti da diverse parti d'Europa (*Hungarian, Mazurka*) precedute da un'introduzione (*Préambule*) che conduce alla prima danza. L'originalità e la varietà dell'opera si aggiungono ancora una volta ad una grande attenzione per la sequenza delle tonalità, costruita intorno a Re maggiore.

Terminiamo la serie delle opere a 4 mani con *Kinderball, Sechs leichte Tanzstücke zu vier Händen für das Pianoforte* (Ballo di bambini, 6 facili brani danzanti per pianoforte a quattro mani) Op.130 del 1853. Sebbene, come testimoniano gli arrangiamenti, *Kinderball* abbia avuto periodi di popolarità durante il XIX secolo (si pensi per esempio agli arrangiamenti per pianoforte solo o per violino e pianoforte), quest'opera è stata successivamente quasi completamente dimenticata; l'attenzione nei confronti dello Schumann di questo periodo si rivolge in genere per lo più verso la sua imminente malattia mentale. Con *Kinderball* Schumann crea una suite che segue un sistematico piano di tonalità in cui il delizioso arcaismo di antichi modelli di danza (particolarmente chiari in *Menuett* e *Francaise*, per esempio) compete con il linguaggio tonale del periodo romantico. Ad eccezione del terzo brano, *Menuett*, scritto nel 1850, *Kinderball* fu composto nel settembre del 1853. Proprio il 24 settembre di quello stesso anno Clara Schumann scrisse sul suo diario: "Robert ha terminato un affascinante *Kinderball* per 4 mani" e il 7 ottobre aggiunse entusiasta: "Questa sera ho suonato il nuovo *Kinderball* con Robert..."

Pare evidente che le composizioni a 4 mani occupassero un posto speciale nella vita di Robert Schumann e, evidentemente, anche in quella della moglie Clara. Ci sembra quindi importante offrire il nostro contributo nella divulgazione di piccoli o grandi capolavori purtroppo in gran parte dimenticati.

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Defined by Chicago radio commentator Paul Harvey as the heir to Rubinstein and Horowitz, Italian native **Roberto Plano** performs regularly throughout North America and Europe – notably at the Lincoln Center, Sala Verdi, Salle Cortot, Wigmore Hall and the Herkulessaal. He has appeared with orchestras in Italy, Germany, Spain, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Switzerland, UK, Japan and USA under the direction of renowned conductors such as Sir Neville Marriner, James Conlon, Pinchas Zuckerman, Miguel Harth-Bedoya. He has been a featured recitalist at the internationally acclaimed Newport Festival, PianoSummer Festival at SUNY, the Portland Piano Festival, Ravinia Festival and the Gilmore International Keyboard

Festival, the Chopin Festival, the Encuentro de Musica y Accademia de Santander, the Bologna Festival - Great Soloists (Italy), and many others. He has played with String Quartets such as Takacs, Cremona, St. Petersburg, Fine Arts as well as many soloists, including Ilya Grubert, Enrico Bronzi and Giovanni Scaglione and in duo with his wife Paola Del Negro.

In addition to winning 15 First Prizes in National Competitions in Italy, Mr. Plano was the First Prize Winner at the 2001 Cleveland International Piano Competition, Prize Winner at the Honens, Dublin, Sendai, Geza Anda and Valencia Competitions and Finalist at the 2005 Van Cliburn and the Busoni Competitions.

Mr. Plano's engaging personality has made him a favorite guest on radio programs such as NPR's Performance Today. As a result of his success at the 2005 Van Cliburn Competition, he appeared in the film documentaries "In the Heart of Music" and "Encores". In 2006, Plano was chosen to participate in the DVD recording filmed in Paris by ARTE at Salle Cortot; and together with Philippe Entremont, a second video project about the music of Mozart, broadcast by NHK in Japan.

He has appeared twice on the cover of the most important music magazine in Italy, Amadeus. He has recorded CDs for Brilliant Classics, Sipario, Azica, Arktos, and he recently released a World Première CD on the Concerto label with music by Andrea Luchesi. In February 2013, Mr. Plano gave the world premiere of two Luchesi piano concertos with the Busoni Chamber Orchestra in Trieste, Italy; the US premiere took place with the Toledo Symphony in March 2015, under the baton of Stefan Sanderling. In March 2016 Mr. Plano's debut recording with DECCA Classics was released, featuring the "Harmonies Poétiques et Religieuses" by Liszt. Recent events include soloist appearances with Kremerata Baltica, the Royal Camerata at the Athenaeum Theater and with the Boston Civic Symphony at Regis College, and recitals and chamber music concerts at the Stellenbosch Symposium, the Yamaha Center, Vivace Vilnius Festival, Gijon International Piano Festival and at the Boston Athenaeum.

Mr. Plano studied at the Verdi Conservatoire in Milan, the Ecole Normale "Cortot" in Paris and the Lake Como Academy. His master classes, taught at his own music academy and worldwide, are in high demand. Mr. Plano has been described by The Chronicle in Glens Falls, NY, as the "Pavarotti of the Piano" for his lyricism. In the words of NY Times music critic Anthony Tommasini, "This Italian pianist showed artistic maturity beyond his years... there was a wonderful clarity and control of inner voices in his performances..." After joining the Faculty of Boston University in 2016 he was recently appointed Associate Professor of Piano at Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. In January 2018 he won the American Prize in the solo professional division.

Born in Italy in 1979, pianist **Paola Del Negro Plano** made her debut at the Teatro Juvarra in Turin at the age of nine, taking part in a performance of the complete Piano Sonatas by Beethoven. A few months later she joined the piano school of Maria Golia, with whom she studied for over a decade. In 2001 she obtained a Master's diploma in piano performance from the N. Rota Conservatoire in Italy. She then attended several master classes organized in collaboration with the Ecole Normale de Musique "A. Cortot" in Paris, studying with pianists of the caliber of Nelson Delle Vigne-Fabbri, Boaz Sharon, Einar Steen-Nokleberg and Ian Hobson. She has won First Prize in over twenty national and international piano competitions, including the Mozart Prize in Paularo (Udine), the ACADA - ENDAS prize in Genoa, the City of Alassio prize, the City of Albenga National Competition, the Dasinamov Competition in Lurisia, the European Music Competition in Moncalieri, the City of Casarza Ligure International Competition, the City of Villar Perosa National Competition, the Teleribalta International Competition in Borgosesia , the Camillo Togni Gussago International Competition, the International Gran Paradiso Piano Competition in Locana, the Euterpe National Music Competition in Corato ...

She is regularly involved in chamber music, working with clarinetists Paolo Montagna and Emanuele Morazzoni, and the pianist Alberto Miodini. With Roberto Plano, she was invited to play in a series of concerts for 4 hands held on the Haapag-Lloyd cruise ship MV Europe as part of an Asian tour.

Since 2011 she has been Vice President of the Alfred Cortot Musical Association, devoted to expanding awareness and access to all aspects of classical music, especially among young people. For a decade through to 2016 she was also Artistic Director of the Accademia Musicale Varesina, the concert series "The Schubertiades of the Lake" and "Note di Lago" and the Caraglio International Piano Competition. Her students have won around 200 top prizes in National and International Music Competitions in Italy and abroad.

In recent years Paola also devised music projects for the magazine 'Modern Italian School', the oldest school magazine dedicated to primary education. In 2012 and 2013 she toured with "Chou-Chou", the show she wrote for children as a tribute to the composer Claude Debussy and the fantastical world of the very young.

She has performed in Belgium, France and Italy, as well as debuting in the United States and Canada. She has also worked as artistic director and music critic for several recording companies, including Decca (Liszt, "Harmonies Poétiques et Religieuses", 481-2479 – Artistic Director) and Brilliant Classics (Smetana, 94788 – liner notes author).

Paola lives in Bloomington, IN, with her husband, the pianist Roberto Plano, and their three daughters Elisa, Anna and Sofia.

Currently Paola is Adjunct Lecturer in Piano at Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, Bloomington, and Founder and Director of PDN Piano Studio.

The Plano-Del Negro duo is part of the Donatori di Musica project, an organization that brings classical music to cancer hospitals.