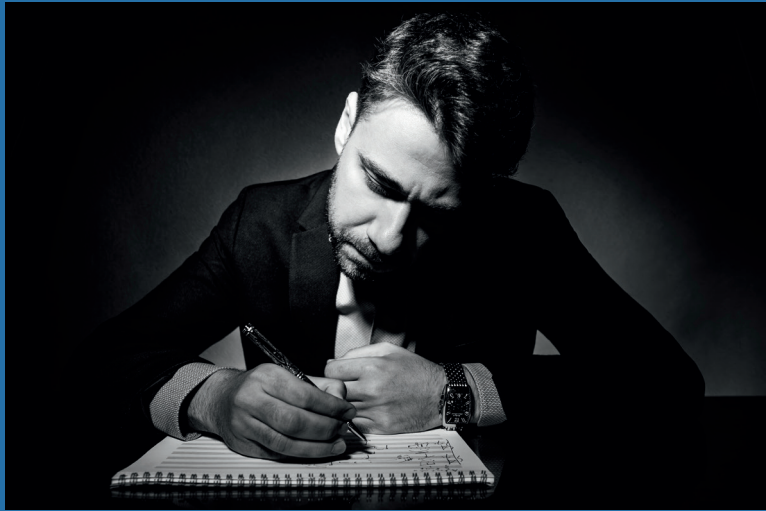


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Giovanni Albini b.1982

String Quartet No.1 Op.1 (2003)		10. String Quartet No.5 Op.19 (2009)	
1. I.	3'42		4'22
2. II.	2'08		
		11. String Quartet No.6 Op.24 (2010)	5'01
String Quartet No.2 Op.3 (2005)			
3. I.	2'19		
4. II.	2'41	12. String Quartet No.7 Op.25 (2010)	9'47
5. III.	1'10		
		String Quartet No.8 Op.39 (2013)	
String Quartet No.3 Op.7 (2006)		13. I.	2'15
6. I.	3'11	14. II.	0'16
7. II.	1'31	15. III.	3'05
8. III.	2'11	16. IV.	3'15
9. String Quartet No.4 Op.15 (2008)	4'18	17. String Quartet No.9 Op.57 (2018)	9'26

Quartetto Indaco

Eleonora Matsuno *violin I* · Jamiang Santi *violin II*

Francesca Turcato *viola* · Cosimo Carovani *cello*

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A musica monumentalis:

Giovanni Albini's string quartets

It is hard to summarize what the word *quartet* could define in Giovanni Albini's (b.1982) production. Nine string quartets are scattered throughout fifteen years – from 2003 to 2018 – and they act as a seismograph of his compositional activity. For him the word *quartet* primarily indicates the most Western traditional string formation – which of course attracts him with the relevance of its historical meaning. However, not its precise form. Even if they could be roughly gathered in two main groups, Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 8 consisting of multiple movements, and Nos. 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9 consisting of only one single movement, these two characteristics do not correspond to a more or less evident interplay with the quartet tradition. Quite the opposite, the composer always explores, exploits, but also deceives the weight of musical history in a mindful way that relies on strong poetical statements.

There is always an intense relationship among methods, musical materials and resulting forms in Albini's music. On an intellectual level, to him composing means to approach abstract musical materials in a deeply mathematical-geometrical way. But there is no place for any kind of Structuralist nostalgia in his often 'automated' compositional processes, nor a desire for objectiveness. Almost provocatively, Albini works with rigid schemes or numeric devices to magnify how his musical world could



thus be personal and *subjective*. And how marvelous could it be, since the result can easily be unexpected or only *unconsciously* desired. In his hands the sound is like the stone for an ancient architect: as concrete in his physical evidence as abstract in its conventionality, it is the tool that makes a complex idea a concrete place to finally be experienced (i.e. to be performed and listened). And like in many old buildings, there is no need to reveal the structure in order to enjoy their features. A symbolic level, disclosed thanks to analytical tools, is certainly a valuable inner meaning but does not correspond to an inner *value*. The structural organization *per se* is barely a primary discovery for the composer, even if an intriguing and often difficult one. But he will refuse to strictly predict or control the sounding ‘effect’ of his structure. Like an architect, again, he works with pencil and ruler but cannot say how beautiful it will be to ascend a staircase or see what is hidden behind a door. All his efforts are better devoted to establish enough premises in which beauty could take place. A beauty that deals with mathematics in a different way, totally human, anything but ‘cold’, and based on choices and affections.

Although Albini’s poetics have been emerging in a constantly progressive way, it is interesting to see how some of his most distinctive stylistic features were already present since his earlier quartets. A first glance at his *Quartetto No.1 Op.1* (2003, rev. 2018) already reveals a very cohesive form (roughly ABA’ for the first movement), but particularly a full palindromic structure for the second. This technique will be subsequently employed at different levels, from the non-retro gradable rhythms that sparsely appear in the last movement of *Quartetto No.2 Op.3* (2005), to the palindromic forms of the whole *Quartetto No.6 Op.24 No.1* (2010) and *Quartetto No.9 Op.57* (2018, dedicated to Quartetto Indaco).

The subtitle of *Quartetto No.6, solo per grado congiunto [only by melodic step]*, introduces another musical material frequently preferred by the composer, namely the scalar structures or passages. If this quartet is totally based on this unique material, descending scales appear also in the B section (b. 24) of *Quartetto No.5 Op.19*

(2009), in the first movement of *Quartetto No.8 Op.39* (2013) and in the whole *Quartetto No.7 Op.25* (2010) – a piece that deals with relentless ascending and descending motion is presented in a thriving formal variety and extended also into quarter-tone steps.

This latter aspect links this work to the *Quartetto No.5* (especially bb. 1-11), but with a significant difference that shows another *Letimotiv* among Albini’s quartets. In fact, if he defines the latter «a monument to G», the couple of *Quartetto No.6* and *No.7* could be a monument to A. These two ‘tonal spaces’ – the first being particularly interesting for the numerous resonances among the open strings of the instruments – are thoroughly explored as hyper-materials, i.e. beyond the various way they are parceled out. This should not surprise us if we consider that Neo-Riemannian theories and mathematical approaches to harmony are among the composer’s biggest interests in music theory. Similarly, we can explain his attention to the Renaissance master Carlo Gesualdo da Venosa whom the *Quartetto No.8* – bearing the subtitle *Il Principe [The Prince]* – is dedicated to. Composed in the 400th anniversary of his death (2013), this four-movements quartet is based on the first five bars of his famous madrigal *Moro, lasso, al mio duolo [I die, alas, in my suffering]*, which clearly appears in the aphorismatic second movement. A complete transcription of the marvelous chromatic madrigal finally appears in the last movement, while the third consists of another of Albini’s typical attitudes in musical writing: a meditative and more lyric section, characterized by long values, a slow movement, and a frequent four-part writing in which every voice has its own horizontal autonomy and is based on the melodic material of the aforesaid madrigal.

It is hard to find a quartet where this attitude does not appear, from the ending section of *Quartetto No.7* (clearly entitled *Corale #7*) to the second movements of the two earliest quartets. However, *Quartetto No.4 Op.15* (2008) is the only one to be essentially based on a tonal chorale of ten dramatic bars subsequently transposed along the whole piece. On the contrary, the *glissandi* together with the tremolos and

the *spazzolato* technique tend to disturb or to ‘negate’ this material, thus enhancing the mournful character expressed by the subtitle *Lamento* [*Lament*]. A complete transfiguration occurs in the ending section, played all in harmonics that make the whole quartet sounding like a strange, sorrowful mouth organ.

Processes and materials react in Albini’s music like a chain of chemical experiments, where new formulas are applied to old component and vice versa. As we have seen, this happens not only in the whole *corpus* of his quartets – not to mention all the other relationships with works not included in this CD – but also into the same piece. In fact, if it is possible to trace recurring stylistic features among these nine compositions, it is true as well that every one of them deals with a more specific idea, be that the delicate border between sound and noise in *Quartetto No.2* or the totally interrelated structure of parameters (duration, pitch, intensity, etc.) in the last quartet. Particularly, this last work is based on two further assumptions. Firstly, to present a specific material in every of its possibilities – i.e. every diatonic trichord in an octave range. Secondly, to consider the more or less idiomatic writing for each instruments that derives from this ‘catalogue’ as a musical parameter itself.

If such a mature work proves to be the most recent output of a strict, reflective and well-grounded poetics, there is only a quartet that apparently exceeds this long and compact series. It is not by chance that *Snowing L.A.* parades its evocative title before the more common subtitle *Quartetto No.3 Op.7* (2006). The three movements are even more cheeky: *Hollywood Kitsch*, *Ice on the Sea* and *Snow, not too Slow*. The harsh Greenberg’s quotation at the beginning give an explanation to the work: «All kitsch is academic, and conversely, all that is academic is kitsch». In his severe research, the composer does not deny the opportunity to explore in every detail a paradoxical situation: the lack of every idea, where the void routine of poorest craftsmanship sadly becomes the only lodestar. Almost mathematically, the exactness on an (aesthetic) theorem is proved via its negation, an ironic *divertissement* that elegantly reinforces its corollary.

Giovanni Albini’s music is like a clear symbol but shaped in a cohesive form that is also authentically significant in its structure. Each one of his works invites us to think of itself as a pure sounding idea. So every piece is a monument to sounding ideas, and his music – in the deep humanistic spirit of this composer-mathematician – a *musica monumentalis*.

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In his vast catalogue of scores **Giovanni Albini** (b.1982) has deepened the use of mathematical models in music, developing a personal and unique mathematically informed aesthetics. He also devoted himself with special interest to soundtracks and sound designs for interactive media, algorithmic music and non linear composition systems, programming several interactive multimedia artworks, music software and musical video games and researching their aesthetical framework. He has given several lectures on these topics at many universities and conservatories all around the world. He studied Composition at the Conservatory “Giuseppe Verdi” of Milan, at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome and at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre in Tallinn, Mathematics at the University of Pavia and Classical Guitar at the Conservatory “Franco Vittadini” of Pavia. He is professor of Music Theory in Italian conservatoires, academic member of the Istituto di Studi Superiori dell’Insubria “Gerolamo Cardano” and the founding Artistic Director of the highSCORE Festival.



The **Quartetto Indaco** – Eleonora Matsuno (First Violin), Jamiang Santi (Second Violin), Francesca Turcato (Viola) and Cosimo Carovani (Cello) – was formed at the Scuola di Musica di Fiesole in 2007, and pursued a Master's degree in Chamber Music at the Hochschule für Musik, Theater und Medien Hannover. Their performances have been described as «compact, full of polish and exuberance, a real revelation» (Il Giornale di Vicenza), and «like a stupefying show of fireworks, so brilliant that the walls could hardly contain it» (TTELA, Sweden). The quartet has received numerous awards in music competitions, including the 53rd Festival Nuova Consonanza (Premio Giuseppe Scotese as the best young performers), the 11th International String Quartet Competition “Premio Paolo Borciani” (“Jeunesses Musicales” special prize), the International Chamber Music Competition “Premio Guido Papini” and the Premio “Enrica Cremonesi”. The quartet appeared in many festivals and concert series across Europe, including Aosta Classica, Festival dei Due Mondi (Spoleto), Paesaggi Musicali Toscani (San Quirico d'Orcia), Podium Festival (Essen) and Società del Quartetto di Milano. A concert they gave at the Quirinale Palace in Rome has been broadcast live by RAI Radio 3. The quartet performed with many illustrious international artists, including Bruno Canino, Carlo Balzaretto, Davide Formisano, Paolo Beltramini and Valentin Erben.