

95811

BRILLIANT  
CLASSICS

# LUCHESI

## SONATAS OP. 1

Roberto Plano *piano*



**Andrea Luca Luchesi 1741-1801**  
**Sonatas Op.1**

<b>No.1 in G</b>		<b>No.4 in F</b>	
1. I. Allegro	4'35	10. I. Andante	5'41
2. II. Andante	6'10	11. II. Allegro molto	3'41
3. III. Presto	2'48	12. III. Allegro assai	2'30
<b>No.2 in C</b>		<b>No.5 in C</b>	
4. I. Allegro molto	2'56	13. I. L'Harmonique	7'27
5. II. Andante	5'39	14. II. Menuetto/Trio	4'04
6. III. Allegro molto	1'10	15. III. Rondeau (Allegro)	2'35
<b>No.3 in A</b>		<b>No.6 in D</b>	
7. I. Allegro	4'58	16. I. Allegro molto	3'42
8. II. Menuetto/Trio	2'40	17. II. Andante	5'37
9. III. Allegro molto	2'48	18. III. Menuetto con Variazione	5'22

Roberto Plano *piano*

**Posthumous Fame**

*A composer rescued from oblivion. A life similar to that of many Italian musicians of the second half of the 18th century. A story full of mystery and intrigue involving names such as Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart.*

In the history of music there aren't many examples of composers who have enjoyed such enormous posthumous fame. The case of Andrea Luchesi (or Lucchesi – the spelling varies in period documents) is something special. He was born on 23 May 1741 at Motta di Livenza, in those days an outpost of Friuli, and died in Bonn in a state of abject misery on 21 March 1801.

During the course of his life Luchesi experienced events and realities that were typical for Italian musicians of his time. Today scholars are inclined to agree that from around 1740 a huge number of musicians left Italy, for reasons that are still largely unknown. As Reinhard Strohm has pointed out, during the previous century, Italian opera had made a name for itself that spread well beyond the country itself, which explains why many Italian composers were offered well-paid jobs in foreign courts. Within the space of a couple of decades, however, what had started as prestigious relocation turned into a general stampede, especially in the case of instrumentalists, virtuoso performers and composers of instrumental music. Although Andrea Luchesi wrote well-received operas practically throughout his life, he was especially admired for his Sonatas and sacred compositions, which circulated throughout Europe. Yet his initial claim to posthumous fame is due to the fact that, along with Christian Gottlob Neefe, he was one of Ludwig van Beethoven's first teachers.

**Apprenticeship in Venice**

In time Neefe became Luchesi's first biographer, describing how he received his early musical training at home, and then at the age of sixteen moved to Venice, where

he studied composition, organ and counterpoint under the guidance of Gioacchino Cocchi at the Ospedale degli Incurabili. His teachers included Father Giuseppe Paolucci, author of a famous and controversial treatise on counterpoint, and Giacomo Saratelli, chapel master at St. Mark's. At least partly thanks to the good offices of Count Giordano Riccati, Luchesi managed to have an opera of his staged, which was quite an accomplishment in the Venice of the period. Based on a libretto by Giuseppe Bertati, *L'Isola della Fortuna* was fairly well received, and two years later Luchesi was ready with *Le donne sempre donne* on a libretto by Pietro Chiari, an opera that met with widespread success even abroad, thus creating the basis for the composer's future fortune. Apart from his work as a composer, Luchesi was also a virtuoso keyboard player, widely appreciated as a harpsichordist, organist and fortepiano player who performed as a soloist in various European countries. But the journey that proved to be most significant for later developments was the one he undertook in 1771, visiting Germany as part of a Venetian opera company.

#### **At the court in Bonn**

We know little about the specific circumstances surrounding Luchesi's arrival in Bonn, except that the earlier production of *Le donne sempre donne* had met with acclaim. He worked as *maestro concertatore* at the court of Prince Elector Max Friedrich, and shortly afterwards, on 26 May 1774, was formally appointed *maestro di cappella*, taking over from Beethoven's grandfather. This position involved paying particular attention to sacred music in Bonn, a catholic city that in those years showed specific interest in the Italian repertoire and culture.

In 1775 he married the daughter of an important court dignitary, thus achieving considerable stability in his newfound home. That said, he did occasionally still travel, one instance being a trip to Motta di Livenza to direct a production of a new opera of his *Ademira*, which greatly pleased both the audience and the critics.

Living in a city well disposed towards international cultural exchange and contacts

with neighbouring centres of musical excellence, Luchesi was able to keep his repertoire fully up to date. This proved to be an advantage for Ludwig van Beethoven too, since, according to Neefe, he was not only a pupil of Luchesi's but also his assistant in the Prince's chapel. Today scholars still debate whether Beethoven owed more to Luchesi, or to Neefe, or indeed J. Reicha with whom he also studied.

Recent studies have shown that the relationship between the Italian composer and the talented young German musician calls for further analysis, not least on account of the far-reaching studies of counterpoint that left their mark on Beethoven, especially in his last works.

With the arrival of the Napoleonic troops in 1794, Luchesi was allowed to keep the title of "court counsellor" that he had received in 1787, but was ousted from his job, along with all the chapel musicians. The years that followed were very trying, since he would seem to have lost all the international support that he had enjoyed for so long. Within a relatively short space of time his name was forgotten, and his musicianship relegated to a state of oblivion that has only recently been dispersed thanks to musicological research.

#### **Famous in life...**

Luchesi was much admired by his contemporaries, and was a regular point of reference in books on musical theory. Charles Burney makes this quite clear in his account of *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Provinces*, first published in 1773. During his travels he noted how in Bonn most of the musicians, all of them Italian, were at the Spa. They included the chapel master Luchesi, whom he described as a fine composer. Some time earlier, Burney had heard a lovely motet by Luchesi sung by Manzuoli in a church near Florence.

The various critics and theorists who wrote favourably about Luchesi are largely unknown names today. For instance, there was an anonymous profile of him in the *Musikalische Real-Zeitung* of 1789 that listed all his main works, and then went

on to describe him as a «light, pleasant and courageous» artist who had written a particularly fine and «learned» Requiem. Cramer provided a more detailed description, and in the *Magazin der Musik*, which published lively discussions of the art, there are other interesting details regarding music at the chapel of the Prince Elector of Bonn: «His compositions are much clearer than those of many of his countrymen», even if in his sacred music he «does not always keep strictly to the rules, which means that his music is written for enthusiasts». Cramer thus seems to reject the idea that Luchesi stuck blindly to the style he had learnt from Paolucci. Moreover, he underlines the virtuoso skill of the composer in playing the organ: «He is a good organist and has handled the instrument excellently in Italy».

Luchesi's strict musical training and style, which leant more towards the instrumental than to the sacred repertoire, may have undermined later appreciation of his relationship with Beethoven. Certain writers have even claimed that it resembled the Salieri-Mozart association, which is completely misleading. Luchesi proved to be very useful to the later Beethoven, when he returned to counterpoint and the *stile osservato*: for instance in the *Sonata Op.106*, the *Quartet Op.132* and the *Missa solennis*. Over and above questions of opinion, Andrea Luchesi was a skilled professional musician, a composer in keeping with the times and well attuned to the evolution of the contemporary repertoire. He thus played an essential role in Beethoven's training and development.

#### **Ghost writer, whodunits and international intrigue.**

In 1994, the publication of Giorgio Taboga's *L'ora della verità (The Hour of Truth)* introduced some heated discussion into the world of music criticism, with effects that have still not entirely subsided. Detractors claim that Taboga's reconstruction is unbalanced and obsessive, a collection of conjectures and hypotheses lacking in proof, a sandcastle that has been washed away by a sea of facts. However, there are also supporters convinced that Taboga's arguments deserve due attention.

The facts are as follows: a manuscript in Parma would seem to prove that certain of Mozart's famous symphonies, including the *K550* and *551*, were actually written by Luchesi, who in those years was commissioned and paid to act as a ghost writer for Mozart. And this is not all. Again according to Taboga, when Mozart suddenly died and was hastily buried, it was to conceal the fact that a considerable number of his compositions were in fact written by Luchesi. There are all the right elements for a thriller here: betrayal (with Frau Hofdemel), murder (her husband), and a body that goes missing so as to avoid compromising the name of the Habsburg monarchy. There are plenty of details concerning Mozart's death that have yet to be clarified. In Taboga's famous book of 1997, *L'assassinio di Mozart (Mozart's Murder)*, everything seems to come together with daunting lucidity.

In many public events, Giorgio Taboga has done his best to persuade the audience that many of Beethoven's most famous works owe more to Luchesi than mere thematic material. Indeed, he argues that Luchesi himself may have written them, and may also have been persuaded to do the same for Haydn. Although history, biology and criticism tend to undermine such conjectures, Taboga's imaginative hypotheses not only reveal his true passion for Luchesi, but have also reawakened interest in a long-forgotten composer who played an important role in the remarkable phenomenon of the diaspora of Italian instrumentalists during the second half of the 1700s.

© Giacomo Fornari

Translation by Kate Singleton

*The Sonatas Op.1 by Luchesi were published in Bonn in 1772 as “Sonate per il cembalo con l’accompagnamento di violino”. At the time it was common to write pieces for the keyboard with an optional violin “ad libitum” accompaniment, a practice also adopted by Johann Christian Bach and Mozart himself. With Luchesi the role of the violin is distinctly marginal, a mere accompaniment, which is why I decided to record for the first time ever the Sonatas Op.1 for solo piano, removing what was superfluous and restoring the form that I believe to be closer to the composer’s original inspiration.*

© Roberto Plano



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 Lincoln Center, Sala Verdi, Salle Cortot, Wigmore Hall and the Herkulesaal. He has appeared with orchestras in Italy (Milan Symphony Orchestra “Verdi”, Rome Symphony), Germany (Rheinland-Pfalz Symphony, Strings of the Berliner Philharmoniker), Spain (Valencia Symphony), Czech Republic (Marienbad Symphony), Slovakia (Kosice State Symphony), Romania (Oradea, Sibiu, Targu Mures Symphonies), Switzerland (Festival Strings, Lucerne), the UK (Young Symphony Orchestra), Japan (Sendai Symphony), USA symphony orchestras (Houston, Fort Worth, Spokane, Akron, Illinois S.O., and others) 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 (USA), Chopin Festival (Poland), the Encuentro de Musica y Accademia de Santander (Spain), the Bologna Festival - Great Soloists (Italy), and many others. He played with String Quartets such as the Takacs, Cremona, St. Petersburg, Fine Arts as well as soloists such as Ilya Grubert, Enrico Bronzi and Giovanni Scaglione.

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, in addition to having won 15 First Prizes in National Competitions in Italy.

Mr. Plano's engaging personality has made him a favorite guest on radio programs such as NPR's Performance Today, and on TV shows for PBS and Japan's NHK; he also appeared twice on the cover of the most important music magazine in Italy, Amadeus. He has recorded CDs for Brilliant, Sipario, Azica, Arktos, and he recently released a World Première CD on the Concerto label with music by Andrea Luchesi (1741-1801) that received a 5 star review in the music magazine "Musica". 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, which had not been recorded by Decca since the 60's.

Recent events include soloist appearances with Kremerata Baltica at the Portogruaro International Festival in Italy, with the Royal Camerata at the Athenaeum Theater in Bucarest (Romania) and with the Boston Civic Symphony at Regis College, and recitals and chamber music concerts at the Stellenbosh Symposium, Sudafrica, at the Yamaha Center, Taiwan, at Vivace Vilnius Festival in Lituania, Gijon International Piano Festival in Spain and at the Boston Athenaeum in USA.

Mr. Plano studied at the Verdi Conservatory in Milan, the Ecole Normale "Cortot" in Paris and the Lake Como Academy. He is Founder and Director of the Music Association "Alfred Cortot" which he chairs, with the purpose of spreading the joy of classical music in all its aspects and giving priority to the musical education of children. 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. NY Times music critic Anthony Tommasini has written: "This Italian pianist showed artistic maturity beyond his years... there was a wonderful clarity and control of inner voices in his performances..."

In September 2016 he joined the Faculty of Boston University, and in January 2018 the American Prize Competition announced that Mr. Plano won 1st Prize in the solo professional division.

In August 2018 Mr. Plano was appointed Associate Professor of Piano at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music in Bloomington.

**BartokStudio**  
registrazioni discografiche

Recording: 21-22 November 2012, BartokStudio, Bernareggio (MI), Italy

Producer: Raffaele Cacciola, BartokStudio

Artists' photograph: PDN Piano Studio

Cover: A view of the Anatomy theatre and University buildings, Bonn, Germany.

Line engraving by E. Grünwald after B. Kundeshagen, Wellcome Collection, London

© & © 2019 Brilliant Classics