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# A TRIBUTE TO Teresa de Rogatis

BRILLIANT  
CLASSICS



*Cinzia Milani guitar*

## A Tribute to Teresa de Rogatis 1893-1979

1. Soirée Madrilène	3'55	<b>Sonatina</b>	
2. Divertimento	2'06	14. I. Andantino	5'28
3. L' Oasi Incantata	3'46	15. II. Largo	5'32
4. Fuochi Fatui	2'07	16. III. Tempo di Minuetto	1'25
5. Mormorio della Foresta	4'34	17. IV. A Capriccio	1'37
6. Tarantella Diabolica	2'36		
7. Balletto	6'12		
8. Fantasia Araba	3'01		
9. Studio per la mano sinistra	1'34		
10. Alba sul mare	2'26		
11. Recuerdos de España	2'58		
12. Bagdad	1'53		
13. Studio sul Tremolo	1'54		

Cinzia Milani *guitar*

Although a tribute to an artist is always a great responsibility, it is also a way of breathing new life into feelings, thoughts, life and art, in this case by focusing on the importance of a particular chapter of guitar history.

Getting to know Teresa de Rogatis through her manuscripts has been a fascinating form of time travel. The period in which she lived and the places she experienced have come newly alive with the study of the notes that accompany her scores. In some cases these documents even indicate the day and time of composition: for example, in “Bagdad” we read “Teresa de Rogatis, 22 February Thursday 1968 5.30 pm”.

My musical interpretation aims at expressing the compositional refinement typical of Teresa de Rogatis, the way she reconciled brilliant virtuoso flair with an elegantly feminine touch, even when the overall tone is jocular or ironic. The decision to record these pieces on a distinctly modern instrument is simply part of the imaginary dialogue between different periods and the changes they heralded: like glancing backwards while walking towards the future.

I am especially grateful to Angelo Gilardino for his invaluable collaboration on this project.

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Un “Tributo” ad un artista è sempre una grande responsabilità, ma anche un desiderio di far rivivere emozioni, pensieri, vita, arte, oltre a voler ridare luce ed importanza ad una parte di storia chitarristica.

Poter scoprire la personalità di Teresa De Rogatis attraverso i suoi manoscritti è stato come fare un viaggio nel tempo e nei luoghi in cui lei ha vissuto. Ogni partitura reca appunti che raccontano la sua vita e arrivano a noi come un fermoimmagine; a volte nei manoscritti indica addirittura anche il giorno e l'ora di composizione, come ad esempio in “Bagdad” : - Teresa De Rogatis , il 22 Febbraio Giovedì 1968 ore 17½.

La mia interpretazione musicale vuole esprimere la raffinatezza compositiva di Teresa de Rogatis, la sua elegante femminilità unita ad un brillante virtuosismo

chitarristico, a volte anche scherzoso ed ironico. La scelta di incidere queste musiche con uno strumento decisamente contemporaneo completa un immaginario incontro tra le epoche ed i cambiamenti, uno sguardo al passato camminando verso il futuro.

Ringrazio in particolar modo Angelo Gilardino per la preziosa collaborazione al progetto.

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The history of guitar music owes a great deal to a number of people who, for different reasons, have been largely forgotten, though through no fault of their own. One of these is Teresa de Rogatis (Naples, 15 October 1893 - 9 January 1979), who now emerges from the relatively recent past in all her exceptional significance. This recording of her compositions hopes to help rescue her from unwarranted oblivion, restoring her to the historical perspective and prestige she deserves.

During the early decades of the 19th century, in the main cities of Europe the guitar was a favourite instrument among amateur musicians belonging to the well-to-do elite. In Paris it became a widespread passion that gave rise to the neologism *guitaromanie*, and elsewhere it was also extremely popular in worldly circles. This explains the enormous acclaim that surrounded virtuoso guitarists such as the Italians Mauro Giuliani, Ferdinando Carulli, Matteo Carcassi and Luigi Legnani, and the Spaniards Fernando Sor and Dionisio Aguado. In later years, the guitar fad waned as the romantic piano began to occupy the limelight. Eminent composer guitarists such as Giulio Regondi, Napoléon Coste and Johann Kaspar Mertz met with lukewarm receptions, finding themselves relegated to the byways of musical life as pianists were acclaimed as kings, heroes and prophets. The situation only changed for the better towards the end of the century, when the intimate atmosphere of the guitar regained ground and popularity. By the early 1930s the absolute mastery of Andrés Segovia was enchanting music lovers as that of his predecessors had a century earlier, and all

this led to what came to be known as the “guitar renaissance”.

Born the same year as Segovia (1893), Teresa de Rogatis could easily have been part of this renewal. Her musical background and training took place in a considerably more favourable ambience than that of Segovia, who liked to describe himself as self-taught. Born into an eminent Neapolitan family that had fallen on hard times, she began studying the guitar under her father Tommaso, a keen guitarist and demanding teacher who saw his daughter's artistic potential as way of redeeming the family name and circumstances. He was an enlightened despot who was not content with turning his daughter into an enfant prodige who made her debut in public at the age of nine. He also urged her to get involved in highly demanding musical studies. As the pupil of Florestano Rossomandi, Teresa thus became part of the great Neapolitan piano school, also obtaining a diploma in composition under Camillo De Nardis. In this she was unique among the guitar virtuosi of the period. With her talent, however, she could have gone much further, making a name for herself as a conductor as well. But at the turn of the first decade of the century, the Naples of Martucci and Wagner was not ready for such a subversion of the established order. Despite this limitation, however, she made a huge impression on Italian musical circles by performing as both a pianist and a guitarist in the same concert. Teresa de Rogatis soared way above the myriad amateur guitarists of her time, and one cannot help wondering what she would have achieved had fate not decreed differently.

In 1921, while on a concert tour in Egypt, she fell deeply in love with Paolo Feninger, a Swiss gentleman living in Cairo. They were soon married, and this marked the end of her career as a concert performer and the beginning of her work as a teacher. They settled in Cairo, where she taught the piano and the guitar for over forty years, not only to the scions of the prosperous Italian community, but also to young Greek musicians and numerous Egyptians for whom it was a precious opportunity for getting to know the European musical tradition. She also had two sons, Mario and Claude, the former becoming an excellent pianist. Following her widowhood, and the

departure of her sons to make their own life elsewhere, Teresa decided to return to Italy. In 1963 she took up residence in a small house at San Filippo a Chiaia, in her native Naples, where she lived quietly through to her death in 1979. She continued to teach, attracting a host of devoted pupils. One of them was Clara Campese, who made the first ever recording of her beloved teacher's compositions.

Teresa was a particularly inspired and inspiring teacher. When her son Mario asked her why she had abandoned such a promising career as a performer in favour of teaching, she replied: *«If teaching hundreds of young people about the poetry and beauty of music, instead of composing works and symphonies, means giving one's life up, then that's what I've done. But if some of these young people, who are now adults, can understand a Beethoven symphony or sonata and find in it solace and a guide for their own lives, then I will live in their memories just as I would have done in my works, and my life will have been equally useful».*

Giving up composing symphonies did not stop her from writing a considerable number of pieces for the guitar, however. Within the overall context of the late Romantic repertoire for the instrument, these works stand out for their formal elegance, their easy musical flow, and for the refined interweaving of melody and harmony. In this sense they are worlds apart from the well crafted but also somewhat pedestrian output of certain of her guitarist contemporaries. If anything, she has more in common with Italian composers such as Castelnuovo-Tedesco, and to some extent also with Margola, Viozzi, Barbieri, Rosetta, Mortari, Pizzini and others who represented tradition, maintaining links with tonal music and keeping their distance from the Viennese school. In other words, her music for the guitar should not be compared with that of the guitarists who also composed for the instrument, but with the works of "real" composers.

All this comes clearly to the fore in Cinzia Milani's recital, which includes much of Teresa de Rogatis's oeuvre. Proceeding in chronological order, the first piece was certainly written well before 1928, when it was published in Milan by Vizzari. The

distinctly Wagnerian title – *Mormorio della foresta* (Murmur of the Forest) – could be misleading, since it consists of a study for the guitar based on a flowing arpeggio in semiquavers reminiscent in structure of a pleasantly evocative Lied. Bucolic in tone, it features a *Stornello* central section that clearly refers to folk music.

The *Studio per la mano sinistra* (Study for the Left Hand) dates back to 1924, and focuses on the use of *legatura* in the left hand as both an exercise and a sound effect. Although it clearly has something in common with the central section of the *Studio No.10* (Study No.10) by Heitor Villa-Lobos, this is entirely a coincidence, since Teresa could not have known the piece, which was probably still unwritten and was certainly unpublished at that date. Teresa's *Studio* is light and airy in mood, requiring great virtuosic skill on the part of the guitarist, yet without ever coming across as showy.

*Fantasia araba* (Arabian Fantasy) was written in 1924 and is a homage to the composer's newly adopted country. It recalls the exoticism of works by other European composers who sought in the east a means of escape from the incipient inquietude of larger cities.

Teresa spent the war years in Cairo, in a state of constant worry about the fate of her family back in Naples. She nevertheless managed to write some of her finest works during this period, including the *Balletto* of 1942, *Tarantella diabolica* of 1943, and the *Sonatina* that is undated, but comprises a note written at the end of the second movement that reads "during the war".

*Balletto* is essentially choreutic, though it takes the shape of a waltz in which the various sections relate to each other thematically. The composer makes use of the guitar's harmonic potential and the way it allows for articulation of the bichords, triads and quadriads, as well as including brilliant combinations of *bariolage* (in the second section). The harmonic sounds that make up entire musical phrases are wonderfully transparent.

*Tarantella diabolica*, which bears the subtitle *Studio in 6/8*, is a deep-felt evocation of the composer's distant homeland with an added annotation: "8th October 1943/

Friday 10 o'clock/Cairo in Egypt/but with my mind/entirely focused/on my family...". Evidently Teresa had heard radio reports of the air raids afflicting Naples and felt the need to create a sort of musical exorcism. The piece reveals the ineluctable influence of Neapolitan folk music, with the Pulcinella-like mood imbued with grief that invests the dance with a sense of desperate panic.

Although there is no documentary evidence to support the hypothesis, I believe there could be some truth in the suggestion that Teresa de Rogatis had Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco's much earlier *Sonata "Omaggio a Boccherini"* in mind when she was writing the *Sonatina* during the war years. The two composers certainly shared a similar approach to form, and both liked to handle their thematic material and its brief but intense developments in a melodic vein that was characteristically Italian and far removed from the Viennese take on the sonata. Like Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Teresa also divided her Sonata into four movements, inserting a Minuet between the mellow strain of the second section and the impetus of the last one. Granted, her piece is less sweeping than his, but the proportions are similar, with the exception of the finale, where Castelnuovo-Tedesco gives way to eloquence and irony, while de Rogatis makes do with a cursory *Capriccio*. The *Sonatina* also reflects the Neapolitan school, with its eloquent first movement, contrasting moods, and moments of flair and languor. Every bar exudes Naples and its traditions, especially the distinctly Vesuvian song that threads its way through the second movement. The *Minuetto* reflects the somewhat truculent aspect of the city's "negative" masks, while the finale seems to evoke the dances that took place in the grand dwellings of the upper echelons of society.

Following her return to Italy, Teresa de Rogatis was less involved in teaching, and thus found the time for writing a Guitar Method published by Curci, and a certain number of pieces, most of them dedicated to her pupils.

Her first homage to Naples was *Alba sul mare* (Dawn on the Sea) of 1963, an evocative piece built around a conventional arpeggio with a double melody imbued with quiet melancholy.

Reminiscent of Spanish piano music (Granados in particular) and salon music of the Belle Époque, *Soirée Madrilène* was written in 1967, the French title clearly alluding to Debussy's *Soirée dans Grenade*.

The starry firmament of Cairo clearly had made Teresa nostalgic for Naples, and now that she was back there, living in the little house at San Filippo a Chiaia, she evidently felt the call of Egypt and the east that she had come into contact with during the Cairo years. This explains the composition in 1967 of *L'oasi incantata (Impressioni d'Egitto)* – The enchanted Oasis (Impressions of Egypt) – that is arguably her freest and most audacious work. She seems to write with less constraint and greater awareness of colour, evoking the magic of the desert rather than the busy urban reality of Cairo. Such were the visions that had fascinated European painters, poets and pilgrims. And she took this dream-like evocation one step further in 1968 with the piece entitled *Bagdad*, a city she never actually visited, except in her imagination.

The undated composition *Ricuerdos de España* also belongs to the period following her return to Italy, at least to judge by the musical writing. It's a choral piece with a vocalized introduction followed by a sort of enthusiastic *jota* and an almost obsequious minuet: postcards from Spain of the sort dear to Falla and Velazquez...

*Fuochi fatui* (Will-o'-the-Wisp) of 1967 is study of octaves that in no way tries to imitate the famous piece by Liszt. Instead it reveals a distinctive style that comprises the *glissé* guitar technique between octaves, used so that each "real" octave is preceded by an octave acting as a grace note. The effect is mischievously mordant.

The last two pieces were also written once Teresa was back in Naples. *Divertimento (Scherzo)* is undated, whereas *Studio sul tremolo* was written in 1972. The former is a brief, shimmering fantasia, while the latter is deliberately didactic, a teaching tool for a pupil named Gregory that focuses on the mastery of playing repeated notes.

Before concluding I would also like to express my admiration for Cinzia Milani's courageous devotion to a cause that deserves the widest possible acclaim.

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Translation by Kate Singleton



Cinzia Milani described by international press:

*Cinzia has great musicianship along with a healthy, strong and brilliant technique. She has a good sound, big. Listening to her play, you are aware that she is a unique young musician. She is serious and thoroughly engrossed in the music and her performance. You have the feeling that she loves playing even more than merely performing.*

**Guitar International**

*Miss Milani is something more than the usual talented youngster with flying fingers, having a world of expression, musicianship, a feeling for her instrument, all combined with a lovely and powerful tone, so rare even in older and more experienced players.*

**Classical Guitar**

*She has a confident and polished technique, a sensible sense of expression, and a very sensitive approach to the music.*

**South Texas Classical Guitar**

*She took the audience on an emotional wonder ride; that it seems rare to find artists like Milani with her intuition for the guitar; floated onto stage to captivate the smaller than usual audience without playing one note. And when she did, she took them to a realm where only well-played classical guitar music has the key to.*

**The Announcer**

*She is considered among the best young classical guitarists of her time*  
**Grocott's Mail**

[www.cinziamilani.com](http://www.cinziamilani.com)



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Photo of Teresa de Rogatis, courtesy of Berben Editions

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