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BAZZINI

Complete Opera Transcriptions

Anca Vasile Caraman *violin* · Alessandro Trebeschi *piano*

Antonio Bazzini 1818-1897

CD1	65'09		
Bellini		4. Fantaisie de Concert (<i>Il pirata</i>) Op.27	15'08
Transcriptions et Paraphrases Op.17			
1. No.1 – Casta Diva (<i>Norma</i>)	7'59		
2. No.6 – Quartet from <i>I Puritani</i>	10'23	CD3	58'41
		Donizetti	
3. Adagio, Variazione e Finale sopra un tema di Bellini (<i>I Capuleti e Montecchi</i>)	16'30	1. Fantaisie dramatique sur l'air final de <i>Lucia di Lammeroor</i> Op.10	13'46
4. Souvenir de <i>Beatrice di Tenda</i> Op.11	16'11	Transcriptions et Paraphrases Op.17	
5. Fantaisia Op.40 (<i>La straniera</i>)	14'02	2. No.2 – Variations brillantes sur plusieurs motifs (<i>La figlia del reggimento</i>)	9'44
CD2	65'16	3. No.3 – Scène et romance (<i>Lucrezia Borgia</i>)	11'05
Bellini		4. No.4 – Fantaisie sur la romance et un choeur (<i>La favorita</i>)	9'02
1. Variations brillantes et Finale (<i>La sonnambula</i>) Op.3	15'37	5. Fantaisie sur des motifs d' <i>Anna Bolena</i> Op.24	15'00
2. Souvenir de <i>La sonnambula</i> Op.19	18'14		
3. Deuxième Fantaisie sur <i>La sonnambula</i> Op.26	16'13		

CD4	61'30	CD5	53'40
Mazzucato and Verdi		Weber and Pacini	
1. Fantaisie sur plusieurs thèmes de l'opéra de Mazzucato (<i>Esmeralda</i>) Op.8	15'01	Transcriptions et Paraphrases Op.17	
2. Fantasia (<i>La traviata</i>) Op.50	15'55	1. No.5 – Act 2 Finale of <i>Oberon</i> by Weber	7'20
3. Souvenir d' <i>Attila</i>	16'15	Tre fantasie sopra motivi della <i>Saffo</i> di Pacini	
4. Fantasia su temi tratti da <i>I Masnadieri</i>	14'16	2. No.1	11'34
		3. No.2	14'59
		4. No.3	19'43

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Anca Vasile plays a Ioannis Apostolou violin (2016) - www.iaviolins.com
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Centenary revival: Bazzini reconsidered

A century ago this year, Antonio Bazzini was born in the city of Brescia, in the Lombardy region of Italy. As both a virtuoso violinist and composer, he was a product of his time and place, working in a musical culture dominated by opera. He was hardly alone among Italian composers of his time in writing quartets, quintets, sonatas and symphonies, as well as the paraphrases and fantasias compiled within this set. Indeed, there is a distinguished tradition of instrumental-only music written contemporaneously with the great operas that swept across the world almost as soon as they had first been heard. Yet only in recent decades has this repertoire travelled beyond its native shores.

Bazzini was writing for several audiences of discrete tastes and expectations. There are the virtuoso pieces for which he gained renown, designed for his own performance in theatres and concert halls. Chamber music such as quartets was likely to be heard in more intimate contexts: cultural and educational academies, private gatherings in homes of the well to do. Local quartet societies flourished throughout the infant nation of Italy, and with them wider musical appreciation developed from bravura treatments of well-known themes (whether folk or operatic in origin) to chamber pieces and symphonies of supposedly 'abstract' form and inspiration.

Bazzini beyond Brescia

'For years, no virtuoso has given me such intimate joy and so pleasant and happy moments, like Antonio Bazzini. It seems to me that he is too little known.'

So wrote Robert Schumann, having heard Bazzini play in Leipzig. The Italian composer had moved there for a pivotal four years of performance and study in 1843. The technical foundation for his gifts as a performer had been laid back in Brescia, under the tutelage of Faustino Camisani. For good measure, Schumann added that Bazzini 'would make a good impression among the renowned celebrities of Italian composers. [His music] is Italian in everything, in the best sense; he seems to come

not from a land of this earth, but from a country of song, from an unknown, eternally serene country.'

Poeticised hyperbole and Schumann were not unknown to each other. Nonetheless he hit upon the valuable observation, expounded by this album, that for all its non-vocal disposition there is something both profoundly lyric and almost instinctively sympathetic about these transcriptions of almost exclusively Italian opera. At the same time, the fruit of Bazzini's studies in Leipzig, his absorption of Bach and Beethoven, may be appreciated in the Violin Concerto that impressed Schumann for its 'balanced construction, melodic and harmonic fascination': qualities that hardly distinguish the more thoroughgoing examinations of violin technique in the five concertante works by Paganini.

And yet, for all that Paganini is Bazzini's obvious forerunner as a supreme-violinist composer, we would do well to look both farther back and nearer to his own time to a pair of more striking models for his career, its international success and its subsequent falling from view. The first of these was another Brescian violinist-composer, Biagio Marini. Two centuries earlier he had originated and popularized the idea of concerted instrumental music in the early 1600s, at a time when vocal art reigned in Italy just as securely as it did in the high noon of bel canto. The second model is Franz Liszt, whose refined gift for transcription takes his solo-piano fantasies far beyond literal fidelity to the notes of *Norma* or *Il trovatore*, towards an expressive fidelity to the original dramas themselves.

Furthermore, at the height of his performing career, Bazzini declined a lucrative tour of the United States and effectively retired from international fame and adulation just as Liszt had done, choosing instead to compose more of the 'aristocratic' chamber and concert music described above, and becoming a professor at the Milan Conservatoire in 1873, before becoming its director nine years later.

And yet, just as Liszt is only slowly recovering his reputation, at least among non-pianists, after a century of neglect, so Bazzini has long occupied a place on the

fringe of the violin repertoire. Literally so, for what virtuoso recital is quite complete without our hero (or heroine) emerging to unwearied applause one more time and cracking their knuckles over *Le rondes des lutins*? In this ‘Goblins’ Round Dance’ lies the essence of the 19th-century display vehicle, from the manic opening staccato theme, the quivering double-stops followed by a staccato run, to the harmonics, glissandi and pizzicati which bring the dance to a breathless conclusion and wring one final burst of acclaim from the audience.

Bazzini and Bellini

Thus, for all its superficial similarities, Bazzini’s violin technique may be traced back only in part to Paganini; it is more intertwined with Tartini’s and Locatelli’s, and is close to that of Wieniawski. The Opus 1 included in this album, Bazzini’s variations on a theme of *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* by Bellini, dates from 1833, when Bazzini was just 16 years old. The violin is the undisputed star, and the technical difficulties are considerable, yet the structure is both Classical in form, and Romantic in its continuous expressivity and touching melody.

The three fantasias on themes from *La sonnambula* reach a climax of their art in the *Souvenir* Op.26: tapped and ricochet bow strokes, staccato-legato contrasts, wide intervals, double chords, triplet sequences and scales in thirds. The piano gains importance through the course of the three works. The Bellini imprint is such that the violin replaces the voice. It cannot be a coincidence that Op.3 was dedicated to a violinist of the calibre of Ferdinand David, for whom Mendelssohn wrote his Violin Concerto, and with whom Bazzini often played in a quartet.

Even for Bazzini, the fantasia on themes of *Il pirata* is of unusual difficulty, demanding as it does scordatura technique from the second variation onwards, when the violinist must ‘de-tune’ their instrument. The variations on the quartet from *I Puritani* begin on harmonics and insist on the use of only three strings at certain points. They are so challenging that the score bears the composer’s ‘facilitations’ (he had very broad hands).

Bazzini and his contemporaries

Several of the many operas by his friend Donizetti, whom Bazzini met in 1840 at an academy gathering at the Branca house in Milan, were the departure point for several fantasies. *Lucia di Lammermoor* inspired *Fantaisie dramatique sur l’air final* (the wonderful *Tu che a Dio spiegasti l’ali*), written in 1841 in Padova. Bazzini strove to underline not only the piercing intensity of the music, but also the dramatic and passionate context: the melody is mingled with the accompaniment, with very few flourishes of the kind to be expected from a display piece. The outcome is a sort of elegy with variations.

More intimidating examples of Bazzini’s art in performance are the variations based on *La Fille du régiment* (respecting its opéra-comique character), the cantabile-focused Scene and Romance after *Lucrezia Borgia*, and the fantasy based on *La favorita*. This latter is taxing, in its use of harmonies, long chromatic cadences, octaves and double chords. Still more arduous is Bazzini’s treatment of motifs from *Anna Bolena*: the violin is engaged in sequences of appoggiaturas, double- and triple-stops, while the pianist, initially confined to an accompanimental role, gradually takes on a more complex part.

If his *Esmeralda* Fantasy, originally performed in Leipzig in 1844, is a brilliant piece of pure technique, dedicated boldly to the Polish violinist Karol Lipiński, Bazzini pursued a more ‘symphonic’ idiom in his transcription of the Act 2 finale of Weber’s *Oberon*, despite the eddying virtuosity he demanded from the violin (such as double chords with pizzicato accompaniment).

Having taken a cold attitude towards the young Verdi, Bazzini was later won over by the genius of *La traviata* and *Il trovatore*, at a time when he no longer performed or wrote fantasias. Thus his ties with Verdi’s operas are limited to the *Souvenir* of *Attila*, the fantasy on *I masnadieri* (where the violin and piano, defined as ‘concertante’, play equal roles) and to his masterful elaboration of themes from *La traviata*. In this fantasy, published in 1866, Bazzini focused on the opera’s fourth

act: the violin replaces the voice in 'Addio del passato' and the orchestra in 'Amami Alfredo' from Act 2.

Bazzini also worked as an adapter for the Ricordi publishing house in his youth, and the three fantasias on themes from Pacini's *Saffo* belong to this period. They are beautiful adaptations of the opera (only the third, the longest, is more varied), the style is Lisztian again and the intent is unquestionably chamber-like.

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Anca Vasile Caraman was born in 1979 in Tulcea, Romania. Having studied the violin from the age of four, she attended the George Enescu Conservatoire and the National University of Music in Bucharest, graduating in 2005. The following year she undertook further study under Domenico Nordio at the Accademia della Santa Cecilia in Rome. Her competition successes include the 2010 Rovere d'Oro competition; she has also participated in the Queen Elizabeth Competition in Brussels and the Violin Masters event in Monaco.

Her solo appearances include concerts with the Bucharest Wind Orchestra, Lyceum Strings, National University of Music Orchestra in Bucharest, and orchestras in Ramnicu Valcea, Galati and elsewhere. Since 2012 she has undertaken teaching duties at the conservatoires of Brescia and Darfo. Her recordings include an album of the Italian composer Alberto Bonera. This is her debut album on Brilliant Classics.



Alessandro Trebeschi was born in 1980. He studied the piano with Giacomo Bellini, Rinaldo Rossi, Cristiano Burato and Piernarciso Masi, and has given concerts throughout Europe and in Japan. He is also an experienced répétiteur who has worked with the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, the Teatro Grande in Brescia and the Donizetti Festival in Bergamo. He presently works as an accompanist at the conservatoires in Milan and Mantova.

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