

# *Wolf-Ferrari*

## 3 Violin Sonatas



Daive Alogna  
*violin*

Costantino Catena  
*piano*



## Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari 1876-1948

### 3 Violin Sonatas

#### Sonata No.1 Op.1 in G minor

1. Sostenuto – Allegro appassionato  
quasi presto 11'26
2. Lento senza tempo 6'22
3. Sostenuto – Allegro ma non  
troppo e con spirito 8'54

#### Sonata No.3 Op.27 in E

6. Allegro moderato 6'34
7. Andantino con innocenza 4'07
8. Agitato con passione 7'37
9. Allegro molto con fuoco piu  
allegro del primo tempo 8'21

#### Sonata No.2 Op.10 in A minor

4. Appassionato 10'00
5. Recitativo – Sostenuto con  
amore, semplicemente 9'50

Davide Alogna *violin*

Violin: Carlo Testore “ex Wilhelmji”, 1715

Costantino Catena *piano*

Piano: Steinway & Sons, mod. B, by Alfonsi Pianoforti (Roma)

**Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari** was born in Venice in 1876 with the name of Hermann Friedrich Wolf. Son of the German painter August Wolf, expert in the reproduction of ancient Italian paintings, who during a business trip in Italy fell in love with the Venetian noblewoman Emilia Ferrari, he was undecided until he was sixteen between being a musician or a painter, being talented in both arts. In 1888 he attended Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and the following year he made a trip to Bayreuth, where he had the opportunity to listen to Wagner's main works. In the same years he continued to paint: in 1891 he attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome, and in 1892 the one in Munich, his father's hometown, where, however, the predominant passion for music led him to abandon his painting studies. Unlike his brother Teodoro Wolf-Ferrari, who became a painter like his father, he took the admission exam to the Munich Academy of Music, where he was accepted into the class of the famous contrapuntist Joseph Rheinberger. During the years of the Academy, he also had the opportunity to study conducting with Ludwig Abel, who was so impressed by his Serenade that he sent it to the publisher Steingraber, who published it. The rigorous contrapuntal training deriving from the Rheinberger school, together with the distinctly Italian melodic sensitivity, constitute a very personal mix that leads him to decide for this first publication to combine the German surname with the Italian one, thus making it more exclusive, considering the widespread use of the surnames Wolf and Ferrari. After completing his Munich's studies, in 1896 he returned to Italy, between Venice and Milan, where he met Lorenzo Perosi, Arrigo Boito and Giuseppe Verdi. In 1897 in Milan, Count Lurani offered him to direct a German choral society, and in the same period he watched a representation of Rossini's *Cenerentola*, so he decided to make his own version of it. Unfortunately, in 1900 the failure of his *Cenerentola*, in the program at La Fenice, led him to return to Munich where, on the contrary, both his works *La Cenerentola* and the Cantata *La vita nova* achieved great success. Thanks to his success in Germany, in 1903 in Venice it will be offered to him the position of Director of the Benedetto Marcello Conservatory, that he will maintain until 1909. On the occasion of this appointment Arrigo Boito, with a

letter dated 17 January 1903, introduces him to the President of the Conservatory, with a judgment that perfectly describes it: “Wolf-Ferrari is, to put it in an inelegant but clear formula, a born musician. Such a nature so richly endowed for music, he made it even more fertile with study and tireless work. His musical culture is equal to that of every accomplished Maestro. His artistic tendencies are as they should be, markedly modern, but without crazy excesses of modernity. His artistic nature is nobly impetuous, passionate and poetic “. As an opera worker he established himself in those years (*Le donne curiose, I quattro rusteghi*) becoming - together with Puccini and Richard Strauss - the most performed author in the world in the first 20 years of the century. It will be the First World War to stop Wolf-Ferrari’s activity as a composer, who between 1915 and 1922 was not able to write something: he will take refuge in Zurich, torn by the conflict between his two homelands. The years after the war will still be harbingers of creativity and success, until Second World War. He returned to Venice in 1946, where he lived the last two years of his life in poverty.

Wolf-Ferrari’s poetics can be summed up in the word “beauty”. Far from the avant-garde and even from realism, he sought an ideal of timeless beauty, independent from the artistic movements of the moment, and for this reason he was often inspired in his works by eighteenth-century grace. However, he was not a conservative, rather he intended to renounce any abstractionism in favour of a naturalness that he believed lost in his contemporary composers. “Many Italian musicians today, as long as they sang for the need to sing, inspired by what he dictates inside, produced authentic works of art. Now that they rack their brain too much, they do mathematics, if anything, but not music”. Its isolation makes it unique in its time, with a very personal and recognizable language, but precisely for this reason he was marginalized by the Darmstadt School, which disavowed composers linked to a tonal and “traditional” language. If his plays have continued to be performed, however, his instrumental music has been completely put aside, and only in recent years does it seem that there has been a renewed interest in this production.

The **Sonata for violin and piano in G minor Op.1**, composed at the end of his

studies at the Munich Academy (1895), is imbued with German romanticism.

The Schumannian and Brahmsian atmospheres combine with a lyricism that will distinguish all Wolf-Ferrari’s music. The first movement with an impetuous character (*Allegro appassionato*) is followed by a second one in the form of recitative (*Lento, senza tempo*) which continuously alternates the two instruments, and in its lyricism, combined with moments of solemnity, makes us catch a glimpse of what will be some of the main characteristics of the composer’s music. In the third movement (*Allegro ma non troppo e con spirito*) the contrasts and fractures evoke a theatricality that will also be typical of all Wolf-Ferrari’s music.

The very original **Sonata for violin and piano in A minor Op.10**, dated 1901, is in only two movements. It dates back to the second period in Munich, when after the Venetian failure of *Cenerentola* Wolf-Ferrari returned to the German city, and is contemporary of the Dante cantata for soprano, baritone, choir, orchestra, organ and piano *La vita nova* Op.9. As in the latter, severe, austere, almost religious atmospheres are breathed, in which Franck’s echo is heard. The first half, *Appassionato*, is of unusually modern writing for Wolf-Ferrari. He seems to be experimenting with new solutions, looking for new languages, going beyond the typically late romantic writing that characterizes the first sonata. The second half (*Recitativo. Adagio*), while maintaining an almost sacred character, reaches peaks of great lyricism, once again combining the German character with the Italian one, and concludes this interesting and restless composition serene and calmly.

Further away from the first two, both temporally and musically, appears the third **Sonata for violin and piano in E major Op.27**. Composed in 1943, it is in four stages, very thematically related, and has a less passionate, more casual and sparkling character than the first two. The *Allegro moderato* is a time in which Wolf-Ferrari’s predilection for singing and theater is perceived: pervaded by countability, it reveals many surprises, such as *fugati* or orchestral effects. In the tender *Andantino*, the naïve

elegance and delicacy of Wolf-Ferrari clearly emerge, “a late nephew of Mozart and Cimarosa” (Giannotto Bastianelli); while the third movement (Agitato), in minor key, has a character once again passionate, as in the most youthful sonatas. The latest movement, Allegro molto con fuoco, uses the same varied theme as the first, and is also full of twists. In it, energetic and impetuous moments, fugati, recitatives, moments of reflection, alternate. It is as if Wolf-Ferrari wanted to make a synthesis of all its most typical characteristics, passion, lyricism, irony, tenderness, and theater.

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Translation: Claire Montagna and Daniela Roma



**Davide Alogna** has had an eclectic and international music education.

He graduated both in violin and piano with honour at Conservatorio “G. Verdi” in Como and he obtained his master diploma in soloist violin and chambre music at the Conservatoire Supérieur de Paris with a “Premier Prix à l’Unanimité”.

He also studied composition and graduated with a special mention at Accademia Chigiana of Siena with Giuliano Carmignola that describes him as “an amazing talent”.

In 2017, Davide was invited by La Scala Orchestra to play concerts as guest soloist in Europe and on the 29th of October debuted at the Teatro Alla Scala of Milan with the La Scala Chamber Orchestra.

He has already debuted in many important halls such as Carnegie Hall (Stern Hall), Teatro alla Scala, Berliner Philharmonie, Suntory Hall of Tokyo, Smetana Hall of Prague, Grand Theatre of Shanghai, Salle Cortot of Paris, Gasteig and Herkulesalle in Germany, Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City, Mahidol Hall of Bangkok and the Verdi Auditorium of Milan.

He has been accompanied by some of the world's leading orchestras, including La Scala Chamber Orchestra, Arturo Toscanini Philharmonic, Orchestra da Camera di Mantova, Filarmonica Italiana, Orchestra della Toscana, Sanremo Symphony, Thailand Philharmonic Orchestra, Munich Kammerphilharmonie, Northern Czech Philharmonic, Chamber Orchestra of New York, Mexico State Symphony Orchestra.

Davide Alogna is one of the most active musicians for the study, rediscovery and diffusion of the Italian twentieth century repertoire.

He has recorded for different labels including Warner Classics, Brilliant Classics, Naxos, Amadeus, Suonare News.

Davide Alogna is Professor of Violin at the 'F. Cilea' Conservatory of Music in Reggio Calabria.



“A pianist rare in his generation, in him shining above all in the art of singing on the keyboard with an inventiveness of phrasing that demonstrates his exquisite musical intelligence”: **Costantino Catena** was defined in these words by Carlo Vitali in the magazine *Amadeus*. He has performed in Europe, Australia, U.S.A., Russia and Japan at the invitation of important musical and cultural associations and institutes, including the Philharmonia “D. D. Šostakovič” of St Petersburg, the Accademia Filarmonica of Bologna, the Kennedy Center and Georgetown University of Washington, Amici del Teatro Regio of Torino, the Gasteig of Munich, the Auditorium Parco della Musica of Rome, the Teatro dell’Arte della Triennale of Milano, the Ravello International Festival, the Filarmonica De Stat Transilvania of Cluj-Napoca, the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory, the Kusatsu International Festival, the Ohrid Summer Festival.



Costantino Catena has an intense recording activity, mainly with the Japanese label Camerata Tokyo. For Brilliant Classics was recently released the album “Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari: Piano works”, which includes the piano music of the Italian-German composer. Often broadcasted in Italy and abroad (RAI Radiotelevisione Italiana, NHK Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai, RSI Radio della Svizzera Italiana, MR Magyar Rádió), his recordings have many times been awarded by leading magazines.

After graduating from the “G. Martucci” Salerno State Conservatoire with top marks and cum laude under the guidance of Luigi D’Ascoli, Costantino Catena continued and completed his piano studies with Konstantin Bogino, Bruno Mezzena, Aldo Ciccolini and Boris Bechtereov. Costantino Catena is Professor of Piano at the Salerno State Conservatoire and in 2016 he was named official Yamaha Artist.



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