



Opera Transcriptions: Love and Hate at the Piano

Lunchtime Concert in The Winter Garden
University of Southern Denmark at Odense

12:00 noon -1:00 p.m. Thursday, May 8, 2014

Giacomo di Tollo, Pianist

PROGRAM with NOTES

Paul Wittgenstein (1887-1961)

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

Johann Strauss (1825 -1899)

Francesco Masciangelo (1823-1906)

Giuseppe Martucci (1856 -1909)

Vincenzo De Meglio (1825-1883)

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

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Alberto Savinio (1891-1952)

'Coro a bocca chiusa' da *Madama Butterfly* di Giacomo Puccini
(per la mano sinistra sola)

Hexameron (variazione sulla Marcia de *I Puritani* di Vincenzo Bellini)

Melodien-Quadrille nach motiven von G.Verdi

Un regalo pel Santo Natale con perle di P. Mascagni

Fantasia su *La Forza del Destino* di Giuseppe Verdi

"Preghiera: Dal tuo stellato soglio" di Rossini trascritta e variata
per pianoforte

"Adieu" Polacca in si b minore op. postuma

Studio op.25 n.7

Les chants de la mi-mort

- L'homme chauve et l'homme jeune

- L'exécution du général

- Daisyssina

- Les anges tués

- Le roi affolé - la Phare

- Danses

During the 19th century (and the beginning of the twentieth century), a great number of melodies from Italian operas were transcribed for the piano. Among these were pieces from Rossini's *Barbiere di Siviglia*, Verdi's *Rigoletto*, and Bellini's *Norma*. Numerous composers have attempted to adapt operatic music for the piano, but only the work of a few has survived (such as Liszt, Thalberg and Raff). The majority of transcriptions and adaptations have been completely forgotten. This program aims to provide a broad perspective on this art form, which in its day spread worldwide and enabled households to sample the authentic flavor of Italian opera.

Frédéric Chopin, one of the best-known musicians of all time, seldom used music by other composers in his music. Italian opera, however, represents an exception: we have found no less than three compositions in which the Polish genius used music from the Italian operatic tradition: the posthumous "Polacca", in which he uses a piece from *La Gazza Ladra* by Rossini; the Étude op. 25 no. 7, in which he uses a fragment from Bellini's *Norma*; and the "Hexameron." The history of this last piece is interesting, since it is an *hommage* that a group of celebrated composers from the first half of the 19th century (led by Liszt himself) wanted to create for Bellini, by writing a set of variations (one by each composer) on the "Marcia" from *I Puritani*. Chopin accomplished this task by writing a small and genuine variation in which the typical mood of his *Nocturnes* is evident.

The other transcriptions on the program are obvious adaptations of celebrated operatic arias from the 19th century: all of them are very well known, and the celebrity of the composers who have transcribed them varies today from "unknown" to "celebrated", but during the 19th century, all of them were well known in Europe. A short explanation needs to be given for the choice of the left hand-only composition "'Coro a bocca chiusa' da *Madama Butterfly* di Giacomo Puccini". Piano literature is replete with left hand-only compositions. With this piece, however, I wanted to present something created by "necessity", since Paul Wittgenstein lost his right arm during WW1: it is a piece written a bit after the others in the program, and the piano instrumentation reflects this chronological difference.

I have included music by Francesco Masciangelo, a composer from Abruzzo – my home region – since Masciangelo cites melodies from Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Indeed, after the heyday of transcriptions in the 19th century, less and less attention has been paid to operatic transcriptions, and there are not many scores concerned with adaptations based on composers from the "Verismo" period (Mascagni, Leoncavallo, Puccini etc.). On the other hand, Masciangelo represents an interesting case, since his music also exemplifies the pedagogical concern of Italy-based composers from the 19th century: at that time, there were not very many chances to attend a full opera, especially in the rural areas. Hence, the composers would transcribe works from celebrated operas in order to acquaint their pupils with the new trends in music.

As a concluding composition, a piece from the Italian "Futurismo" has been chosen: at the beginning of the 20th century, this movement spread throughout Italy, and championed ideas associated with the modern world - progress, industrialization, speed - and saw the removal of opera and vocal chamber music from the musical scene. "Futuristic" composers campaigned against the vocal compositions of Francesco Paolo Tosti, the most eminent vocal chamber music composer of that period. (Tosti, incidentally, comes from my hometown.) This is just a sample in order to acquaint the listener with the two opposing forces that were influencing the Italian musical scene at the beginning of the previous century.

- Giacomo di Tollo, April 2014

Giacomo di Tollo was born in Ortona, Italy. He obtained his Diploma with honors at the Pescara Conservatory, subsequently studying chamber music at the well-known *Accademia Pianistica Incontri col Maestro* in Imola, Italy with Piernarciso Masi and piano with Leslie Howard (London, UK), Luciano Cerroni (Roma, Italy) and Sebastien Risler (Geneva, Switzerland). Giacomo has performed as a soloist and in duos in various concerts arranged in Italy, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Denmark, Luxembourg, Belgium, Poland, France and Germany.

Giacomo has collaborated with the National Tosti Institute, with the Tosti Ensemble, with Spanish tenor Joaquin Pixan, with the M&M Orchestra and the Bacau Philharmonia Orchestra (Romania). He was the recipient of the prestigious Logos Honorary Award (2010). The film *Swarmanoid, The Movie*, for which Giacomo has written the soundtrack, received the AAAI Best Video Award in 2011.

Furthermore, he obtained a PhD Europaeus in Computer Science in 2009 at G. D'Annunzio University (Chieti, Italy), and he is currently working at LAGIS- École Centrale de Lille, Lille, France.

It is a pleasure for

- the personnel in Cafeteria 4
- SDU's Service Department
- the research program *The Performances of Everyday Living - The Aesthetics of Music and Sound* at the Institute for the Study of Culture (IKV) at SDU www.soundmusicresearch.org
- M*U*S*I*C – Music Union for Student Interaction and Creativity <http://www.facebook.com/groups/sdu.music>.
- NordForsk-supported NNIMIPA: Nordic Network for the Integration of Music Informatics, Performance and Aesthetics www.nnimipa.org

to present this Lunchtime Concert with *Etagen Under*. Today's Lunchtime Concert is the 37th Lunchtime Concert since the series began in April 2010. It is just one of the many activities related to music research involving practicing musicians from Odense, Esbjerg, Aarhus and Copenhagen - as well as from abroad - and researchers and students from SDU, which have been under the sponsorship of NTSMB: *Netværk for Tværvideenskabelige Studier af Musik og Betydning/Network for Cross-Disciplinary Studies of Music and Meaning* www.ntsmb.dk; NNIMIPA; and the SDU-IKV research initiative *The Aesthetics of Music and Sound* - currently through its research program *The Performances of Everyday Living*.

We hope that you enjoy today's concert and that you will watch www.soundmusicresearch.org/Events.html for news, details and updates regarding upcoming concerts and seminars during the fall semester of 2014.

Jane Bonne and Carsten Sjødahl on behalf of the personnel in Cafeteria 4

Leif Jensen on behalf of SDU's Service Department

Cynthia M. Grund on behalf of *The Aesthetics of Music and Sound* www.soundmusicresearch.org and NNIMIPA: *Nordic Network for the Integration of Music Informatics, Performance and Aesthetics* www.nnimipa.org.

Marielouise Klose on behalf of M*U*S*I*C – Music Union for Student Interaction and Creativity.

Seminar Series Topics in the Aesthetics of Music and Sound

Thursday, May 8, 2014, 3:15-5 p.m. in U73



Organizing the Half Tones and Working with Dissonance


Giacomo di Tollo, PhD. LAGIS - École Centrale de Lille, Lille, France

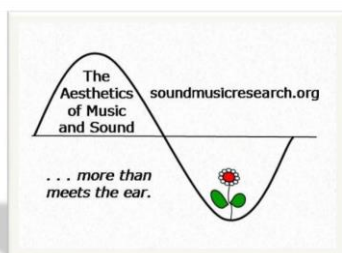
Abstract: Some scholars claim that contemporary music was conventionally born when Schoenberg wrote Six Little Piano Pieces op. 19, a work that explores the possibilities provided by dissonance as such. After this, some composers have preferred to deal with a free treatment of dissonance; others have developed ways of organizing the twelve tones that make up the *totale cromatico*. During the seminar, I will present some approaches for dealing with dissonance that stem from research methods in



artificial intelligence. These are based on the theories of block designs (Tom Johnson), cycles and kaleidocycles (Luigi Verdi), and magic stars (Sergei Zagny). These, together with the notion of stochasticity (for instance, John Cage) and brute force (again, Tom Johnson), can provide

frameworks for help composers and practitioners' to deal with the task of working with dissonance.

All are welcome - also via Skype 



- Cross-Disciplinary Interplay between the Humanities, Technology and Musical Practice
- Backdrop for the SDU-IKV Research Program

