



AMERICAN CLASSICS



Larry
LIPKIS

Pierrot and Friends **Four Commedia Concerti**

Mykhailo Sosnovsky, Flute • Andriy Tkachuk, Bassoon
Oksana Hretchyn, Violin • Luke Sieve, Bass Trombone
Lviv National Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra
Theodore Kuchar



Larry Lipkis (b. 1951)

Pierrot and Friends

A native of Los Angeles, California, Larry Lipkis attended UCLA as an undergraduate from 1969 to 1973, where he studied composition with professors Paul Reale and Alden Ashforth. He received a Master's degree in 1975 at the University of Pennsylvania, where he studied with George Rochberg and Ralph Shapey, and a Ph.D. from the University of California at Santa Barbara in 1984, where he studied with Edward Applebaum.

Dr. Lipkis is Composer-in-Residence and the Bertha Mae Starner '27 and Jay F. Starner Professor of Music at Moravian University in Bethlehem, PA. He has written over 100 compositions for a variety of vocal and instrumental ensembles, including five concerti based on *commedia dell'arte* characters, four of which – *Harlequin*, *Columbina*, *Innamorata*, and *Pierrot* – appear on this recording. The fifth concerto, *Scaramouche*, for cello and orchestra, appears on the Koch International Classics label. *Harlequin* and *Pierrot* were premiered by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Houston Symphony, respectively. Lipkis's two chamber operas, *Peronelle* and *Simonetta*, are based on the lives and loves of two medieval/Renaissance artistic luminaries: Guillaume de Machaut and Sandro Botticelli. *Simonetta* was premiered in New York City in September 2022 by the American Chamber Opera Company, to rave reviews.

Lipkis's love of *commedia dell'arte* stems from his career as a performer of Renaissance music, beginning in his undergraduate years at UCLA. He has been a member of The Baltimore Consort, an internationally acclaimed Early Music ensemble specializing in popular music from the time of Shakespeare, since 1984. The group has made 17 recordings on the Dorian and Sono Luminus labels, and maintains an active national and international touring schedule. Lipkis has served on the faculty of various Early Music festivals, including the Amherst Early Music Festival and the Viola da Gamba Society of America conclave. He is on the board of managers of The Bach Choir of Bethlehem, where he directs the Chaconne Project and other youth compositional activities. He has lectured on the topics of "Bach and Rhetoric" and "Bach and Baroque Dance" at the NEH Summer Scholars Institute in Leipzig, Germany, as well as in Bethlehem, PA. Lipkis is also a music director of the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival and The Unitarian Universalist Church of the Lehigh Valley.

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Pierrot and Friends – Four Commedia Concerti

The four concertos in this collection are musical depictions of stock characters in the *commedia dell'arte* – a type of semi-improvisatory street theater that began in 16th-century Italy and remained popular in Europe through the 18th century. Even in today's world, the names Harlequin and Pierrot resonate with music, art, literature, and theater lovers, who might encounter these comedic characters and their colleagues in modern-day depictions.

Pierrot

Bassoon Concerto

Pierrot was the most winsome of the stock characters that populated the *commedia* stage. He was typically attired in a loose-fitting white costume with baggy sleeves, and was originally played as a loyal, comic valet. He had an engaging simplicity about him and none of the coarseness and over-the-top drama of some of his fellow comedians. When he fell in love, he did so passionately but also shyly. His love was often unrequited; other times he would be foiled at the last moment by a rival. His amorous conquests, when they occurred, were always poignant and sweet, but usually ephemeral.

The Pierrot of my bassoon concerto was inspired by works of art. In composing the first movement, *In the Dancing Master's Palace*, I was influenced by the fanciful *commedia* portraits adorning the walls of the Masquerade Hall of Český Krumlov Castle in the Czech Republic. Henri Rousseau's hauntingly beautiful *Carnival Evening*, in which a tiny Pierrot and Columbina stroll in the moonlight of a winter landscape, inspired the creation of the second movement, *The Magic Garden*. But the words rather than the artwork of the painter Georges Rouault inspired the final movement, *The Flight to Seventh Heaven*: "...I believe you will leave your various troubles, daily woes, and poverty in the cloakroom, for it is decreed that clowns can fly to the seventh heaven, abandoning the sad winters of earthly life, to satisfy their taste for the imaginary."

In my concerto, Pierrot – impish and impetuous – is personified by the solo bassoon. His love interest, portrayed by a solo cello, first appears midway through the opening movement. The two protagonists engage in a contrapuntal repartee against the backdrop of a sedate waltz and a cheerful Renaissance dance. In the second movement, memories of the romance flit through a darkly mysterious and haunting tonal landscape. Before the movement ends, an otherworldly contrabassoon – perhaps Pierrot’s alter ego – engages the soloist in a brief repartee. The final movement, a kind of manic *scherzo*, is driven by a propulsive, at times mechanistic, energy. At the outset, the bassoon introduces a jaunty melody with wide leaps over a perpetual-motion accompaniment. After a time, the solo cello returns and, together with the bassoon, recalls some tender moments from the dancing master’s palace. This particular flight path to the seventh heaven is clearly not a straight line, for at the very end, after many changes of mood, Pierrot resists the ethereal sounds of the harp and celeste, cheerfully plants his feet on *terra firma*, and winks at the audience as if to say, “It’s only a play, after all.” Listeners are encouraged to take the titles of the movements – as well as the commentary above – as mere points of departure to engage their own flights of fantasy and imagination.

Pierrot was premiered by bassoonist Benjamin Kamins and the Houston Symphony in 2002.

Columbina

Violin Concerto

Columbina (“little dove” in Italian) typically portrayed the role of a *soubrette*: a clever, streetwise servant girl or maid who was also occasionally Harlequin’s mistress. She often proved to be the smartest and wittiest character in the cast. (The charming Susanna in Mozart’s *Le nozze di Figaro* is a well-known example of a *soubrette*. Another quite different operatic Columbina is Zerbinetta, the free-spirited, pragmatic heroine of Richard Strauss’s *Ariadne auf Naxos*, who flits from lover to lover with no qualms at all about her fickleness.)

During *commedia* performances, Columbina might be called upon to perform a little dance for the audience in between the scenes. Her costume varied from era to era and region to region but was usually simple and – depending on the plot – could include a servant’s cap and apron. The costume could also have a patchwork quality, representing her lower status and flighty nature.

Columbina, my two-movement violin concerto, plays upon both the meaning of the original Italian word and the changeable nature of her character. In the first movement, *Ciaccone*, the solo violin flits about, weaving variations above a succession of chaconne patterns (repeated chord progressions). This mercurial quality suggests that Columbina is taking on a succession of lovers and treats men with cheerful disdain. A brief quote from the 15th-century *frottola* *Non è tempo d’aspettare* (“Now Is Not the Time for Waiting”) by Marchetto Cara, underscores her capricious nature.

In the second movement, *Siciliana*, we can imagine Columbina reveling in her role as lover of Harlequin (represented here in an oafish manner by the lower brass). There are numerous sweeping passages for the soloist that suggest the fluttering of the wings of a bird or the beating of a heart. As befits her character, there are many dramatic flourishes and sudden changes of mood. A loud *tutti* climax midway through ushers in a quieter, more introspective section. But this ends quickly enough, and in the final rush to the climax, Columbina displays boldness of character, the solo violin parrying with the full orchestra as she rushes off-stage in a burst of glory.

As for the dance element, the predominant rhythm in the second half of the second movement reflects the characteristic dotted figure of a *siciliana*, a very popular Italian dance of the Baroque and Classical era. (The opening of Mozart’s *Piano Sonata in A major*, K. 331 is a famous example of a *siciliana* rhythm.) *Siciliana* was premiered by violinist Michael Montero and the Moravian University Orchestra in 2023.

Innamorata

Flute Concerto

The character known as the Innamorata, or female lover, was always paired with her male counterpart, the Innamorato. The lovers were youthful, wore the latest fashions, and went unmasked to show off their comeliness. As one commentator observed, they tended to be more “in love with the idea of love than with each other.” They could be over-the-top romantics or quietly gracious and bemused observers of the comedic activities swirling around them. While typically not central to the plot, their presence was required to remind the audience that, ultimately, love was the bedrock of all *commedia* stagings.

In *Innamorata*, my two-movement flute concerto, the light scoring – just winds and horns in pairs, strings and harp – reflects her youth and gentle spirit. In the first movement, *Pastorale*, the *Innamorata* – we'll call her Isabella – awakens before dawn and slips quietly out of her father's house to meet her lover Flavio in the fields beyond her town. The flute, accompanied by harp arpeggios and string harmonics, suggests a hesitant and impatient young girl in the first flush of love. As dawn breaks, Flavio appears, and the lovers unite in the warm embrace of the full string section playing lush chords. But all too soon, the lovers part, and Isabella returns to her father's home. Once there, she allows herself a private burst of joy in the second movement, *Scherzo*, in which her shyness is replaced by unrestrained jubilation as she frolics to a *corrente* with a sprightly dotted rhythm. Her comedic exuberance is reflected in the flute's swirling runs amid the triumphant declamations of the orchestra. And while the other three concertos end with boisterous final cadences, *Innamorata* ends with a quiet wink and nod to the audience, delivered by a cheeky flute arpeggio over pizzicato strings.

Innamorata was premiered by flutist Robin Kani and the Lehigh Valley Chamber Orchestra in 2004.

Harlequin

Bass Trombone Concerto

Of the entire *commedia* cast, Harlequin is perhaps the best known. He is certainly the most recognizable: his characteristic close-fitting costume of colorful diamond-shaped patches has remained largely unchanged since the 16th century. His humor was often more physical than verbal, and he was an adroit acrobat who leaped and strutted, danced and preened. The 18th-century critic Jean-François Marmontel described him as “a mixture of ignorance, simplicity, wit, awkwardness, and grace. He is not so much a fully developed man as a great child with glimmerings of rationality and intelligence, whose mistakes and clumsy actions have a certain piquancy.” He was not vicious or vindictive, like some *commedia* characters, yet neither could he claim a high moral ground. He was, after all, principally a scheming servant-clown who looked after his own best interests. At times, he was capable of some introspection, though it usually didn't last long.

My portrayal of Harlequin is more character study than a specific dramatic scenario. The bass trombone is, of course, the protagonist, and since Harlequin is a distracted sort, prone to rapid, improvised changes of plan, his music has a mercurial, turn-on-a-dime quality. But since he is also an unquenchable romantic, the piece includes several amorous interludes. The last one ends badly for our hero, and as he lies in abject despair (the bass trombone on an impossibly low A, the bottom note on the piano), an ethereal chorale rises in the strings, soon to be joined by a solo oboe. Seeking absolution, he gratefully joins in the sweet music, then grows suspicious of this voice of conscience, shaking off pathos with a snarl and jaunty swagger. A fit of introspection looms, and he gamely tries to fight it off. The struggle ends with the tolling of a midnight chime, and Harlequin, after a final reflective sigh, sets off on another capricious escapade, his silver sword shimmering in the moonlight.

Harlequin was premiered by bass trombonist Jeffrey Reynolds and the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 1997.

Larry Lipkis

Mykhailo Sosnovsky



Acclaimed Ukrainian flutist Mykhailo Sosnovsky has appeared as a soloist with various orchestras and chamber ensembles, and participated in numerous festivals and recordings. A graduate of the Lviv National Musical Academy, he is currently the director and principal flute of the Lviv National Philharmonic Orchestra of Ukraine, and a member of the orchestra of the Lviv National Opera. He has performed in major international concert halls, including New York's Carnegie Hall and London's Cadogan Hall, under the direction of conductors such as Theodore Kuchar and Volodymyr Sirenko. He is also a member of the flute ensemble Doppler Sextet.

Andriy Tkachuk



Bassoonist Andriy Tkachuk studied at the Volyn State College of Culture and Arts and the Lviv National Music Academy. In 2008 he was invited to be a bassoon soloist of the INSO-Lviv Youth Symphony Orchestra. A laureate of the All-Ukrainian Competition in Rivne and the All-Ukrainian Competition of Chamber Ensembles and Quartets in Lviv, he is concertmaster of the bassoon group of the Academic Symphony Orchestra of the Lviv National Philharmonic, and artistic director of the bassoon quartet Fagotissimo. He has taught at the Lviv Specialized Music Boarding School and the First Dora Schwarzberg Summer Academy, and in 2019 was a guest teacher at the Youth Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine. Since 2020, he has served as first bassoon of the Lviv National Opera orchestra. He is also a soloist with the early music ensemble Terra Barocco. Tkachuk has performed in prestigious concert halls worldwide, including the Philharmonie Berlin, Het Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Konserthuset Stockholm, Seoul Arts Centre, and New York's Carnegie Hall and Radio City Music Hall.

Oksana Hretchyn



Ukrainian violinist Oksana Hretchyn (b. Lviv, 1987) has established herself as one of the country's most accomplished violinists. Equally adept as a soloist and chamber musician, she is a graduate of the Lviv National Music Academy and has served as the concertmaster of the Ukrainian Festival Orchestra and first violin of the Lviv National Opera orchestra. She has performed throughout Europe both as an orchestral soloist and in recital since 2005. During the 2023/24 season she appeared as a soloist with orchestras in Australia, Costa Rica, Poland, Turkey, and the United States, performing concertos and major works for violin and orchestra by composers including Brahms, Mozart, Pleyel, Stamitz, Suk, and John Corigliano. During the 2024/25 season she joined Czech cellist Jiří Barta and the Lviv National Philharmonic Orchestra of Ukraine on tour across the UK, performing Brahms' *Double Concerto*.

philharmonia.lviv.ua/en/collective/oksana-hretchyn-skrypka

Luke Sieve



Luke Sieve joined The Cleveland Orchestra as bass trombonist in January 2024. He was previously acting bass trombonist of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra for its 2021/22 season. Sieve has also performed with the London Symphony Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Boston Pops and National Arts Centre Orchestra. A finalist in the Music Academy of the West's Duo Competition in summer 2023, he also won the 2019 Southeast Trombone Symposium's S.E. Shires Solo Competition, and was named a finalist in the International Trombone Association's 2018 George Roberts Competition. A student of James Markey, bass trombonist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Sieve graduated from the New England Conservatory in May 2023 with a Bachelor of Music in bass trombone performance. He also spent several years as a fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center before attending the Music Academy of the West in 2023.

www.clevelandorchestra.com/people/luke-sieve

Lviv National Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra



Established in 1902, the Lviv National Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra was initially led by Ludwik Vitezslav Czeliński. In 1933, it became incorporated as the Philharmonic Orchestra, and was under the baton of Adam Soltys, Isaac Pain, and Mykola Kolessa. The orchestra did not operate from 1941 to 1944, but was re-assembled in the post-war period, and from the 1950s onwards was led by Yuriy Lutsiv, Demyan Pelekhatyi, Ivan Yuziuk, Aidar Torybayev, Ilya Stupel, and Taras Krysa. Many of the world's greatest musicians have performed with the orchestra, including Sviatoslav Richter, Emil Gilels, Mstislav Rostropovich, and Gidon Kremer, and it has hosted numerous distinguished conductors such as Kirill Kondrashin, Kurt Masur, and Mariss Jansons, as well as Ukrainian conductors Stefan Turchak, Fedor Glushchenko, and Igor Blazhkov, among others. After two seasons as the orchestra's principal guest conductor, Theodore Kuchar was appointed principal conductor in 2022. The orchestra has toured extensively, including across the United States in 2023, and the UK in 2024. Its discography includes highly acclaimed recordings for Naxos, Toccata Classics, and Brilliant Classics.

philharmonia.lviv.ua/en/collective/lviv-national-philharmonic-symphony-orchestra

Theodore Kuchar



Multiple award-winning conductor Theodore Kuchar appears on nearly 150 albums across the Naxos, Marco Polo, Brilliant Classics, Ondine and Toccata Classics labels. Recently appointed principal conductor of the National Philharmonic Orchestra of Ukraine, he concurrently serves as principal conductor of the Lviv National Philharmonic Orchestra of Ukraine. He was previously the artistic director and principal conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine. He has also served in the same position with the Janáček Philharmonic Ostrava, Orquesta Sinfónica Venezuela, Great Barrier Reef Orchestra, and prior to that was music director and principal conductor of the Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra. Kuchar has been artistic director of two of the world's pre-eminent chamber music festivals, the Australian Festival of Chamber Music (1991–2007) and the Nevada Chamber Music Festival (2003–2018). Recent concert appearances have included the Philharmonie Berlin and New York's Carnegie Hall. A highly devoted pedagogue, he has served in professorships at major international universities and conservatories, and is presently the artistic director of the Summer International Conducting Academy in Ukraine. He is artist-in-residence at Moravian University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.



Larry
LIPKIS
(b. 1951)

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|---|--|--------------|
| | Pierrot (2001) | 28:12 |
| ❶ | I. In the Dancing Master's Palace | 7:40 |
| ❷ | II. The Magic Garden | 9:26 |
| ❸ | III. The Flight to Seventh Heaven | 11:06 |
| | Columbina (2023–24) | 12:21 |
| ❹ | I. Ciaccone | 6:40 |
| ❺ | II. Siciliana | 5:41 |
| | Innamorata (2004) | 11:14 |
| ❻ | I. Pastorale | 7:34 |
| ❼ | II. Scherzo | 3:40 |
| ❽ | Harlequin (1997) | 17:08 |

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

Mykhailo Sosnovsky, Flute ❹ ❷

Andriy Tkachuk, Bassoon ❶–❸

Oksana Hretchyn, Violin ❹ ❺

Luke Sieve, Bass Trombone ❽

**Lviv National Philharmonic
Symphony Orchestra**

Theodore Kuchar

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AMERICAN CLASSICS

Internationally acclaimed performer, professor and composer Larry Lipkis has written over 100 works for a variety of vocal and instrumental ensembles. Lipkis's love of *commedia dell'arte* stems from his career as a performer of Renaissance music, and these four concerti are musical depictions of characters from this popular theater tradition. The impish and impetuous *Pierrot* is personified by the bassoon, while his love interest *Columbina* flits and charms through a mercurial violin. The gently youthful *Innamorata* or female lover is expressed through a translucently accompanied flute, and the romantic entanglements and acrobatic humor of *Harlequin* is a perfect fit for the outsized musical personality of the bass trombone.

www.naxos.com

Playing
Time:
69:24