

A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a violin and bow, serving as the background for the left half of the cover. The lighting is dramatic, with bright highlights on the strings and the bow, and deep shadows elsewhere.

JOHN
CORIGLIANO

VIOLIN CONCERTO
'THE RED VIOLIN'

PHANTASMAGORIA

MICHAEL LUDWIG VIOLIN

BUFFALO
PHILHARMONIC
ORCHESTRA

JOANN FALLETTA

John Corigliano (b. 1938)

Phantasmagoria • Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, 'The Red Violin'

Phantasmagoria — Suite from 'The Ghosts of Versailles' (2000)

My opera *The Ghosts of Versailles* takes place on three different planes of reality: (1) the world of eternity, inhabited by the ghosts of Versailles, including the playwright Beaumarchais and Marie Antoinette; (2) the world of the stage, inhabited by the eighteenth-century characters of Beaumarchais (Figaro, Susanna, the Count and Countess, etc.); and (3) the world of historic reality, primarily the reality of the French Revolution itself, populated by the characters of (1) and (2). Thus *The Ghosts of Versailles* represents a journey from the most fantastic to the most realistic.

The architecture of the three-hour opera is mirrored in microcosm in *Phantasmagoria*, which begins with spectral ghost music and a melodic fragment from Marie Antoinette's first aria that reappears throughout the work. Sliding harmonics and cluster-chords create a liquid tableau behind this melody.

The world of the stage is highly stylized; as the characters would suggest, it is set in the world of eighteenth-century *opera buffa*. This section of *Phantasmagoria* comprises parts of Figaro's Act I aria and the many chase scenes that occur throughout the opera. Subliminal quotations from Mozart and Rossini (and even one from Wagner) are interspersed with rhythmically eccentric passages of great virtuosity for the orchestral players.

Throughout the work, the ghost music floats in and out, binding the other sections together. After the *buffa* reaches a climax (with of all things, the Tristan chord), we arrive at a setting of the septet (*Quintet and Miserere*) from Act II. This highly lyrical ensemble is set in the Conciergerie prison, and unites the Almadiva family (2) with Marie Antoinette (1) in the very real French Revolution (3). The end of the septet flows into the ghost music, and Marie Antoinette's melodic motto leads to a conclusion of of liquid repose.

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, 'The Red Violin' (2003)

My third film score (*The Red Violin*) gave me an opportunity to visit my own past, for my father, John Corigliano (I was a "jr.") was a great solo violinist and the concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic for more than a quarter of a century. My childhood years were punctuated by snatches of the great concertos being practiced by my father, as well as scales and technical exercises he used to keep in shape. Every year, he played a concerto with the Philharmonic (as well as in other venues), and I vividly remember the solo preparation, violin and piano rehearsals, orchestral rehearsals and the final tension-filled concerts (where I would sit backstage in the Carnegie Hall green room, listening to my father over a small speaker breathlessly playing the work in my head and listening to make sure everything came out all right.)

It is no wonder that the concerto form, and the violin concerto in particular, has a deep place in my heart. I have written a half-dozen concerti, but this is my first one for my first love, the violin. It is an "in the great tradition" kind of concerto, because I wrote it in an attempt to write the piece my father would love to play. Because he inspired it, it is dedicated to his memory.

The event that galvanized my energies into composing this concerto was, of course, the scoring of the film *The Red Violin*, directed by François Girard, and featuring the sublime young virtuoso, Joshua Bell as the voice of the violin. Josh's playing resembles that of my father; he is an artist in the grand tradition. No cold, clinical dissection of a work would flow from his bow.

The story of *The Red Violin* is perfect for a lover of the repertoire and the instrument. It spans three centuries in the life of a magnificent but haunted violin in its travels through time and space. A story this episodic needed to be tied together with a single musical idea. For this purpose I used the Baroque device of a

chaconne: a repeated pattern of chords upon which the music is built. Against the chaconne chords I juxtaposed Anna's theme, a lyrical yet intense melody representing the violin builder's doomed wife. Then, from those elements, I wove a series of virtuosic etudes for the solo violin, which followed the instrument from country to county, century to century. I composed these elements before the actual filming, because the actors needed to mime to a recording of these works since their hand motions playing the violin would have to synchronize with the music. Then, during the summer of 1997 while the film was being shot all over the world, I remained at home and composed the seventeen-minute *The Red Violin: Chaconne for Violin and Orchestra*, a concert work based on the existing elements, and given its world première in San Francisco with Josh and Robert Spano in the fall of that year. After that, I had only a few weeks to provide the underscoring (the music that is not seen on camera) for the recording dates around Christmas 1997 in London. The violin and orchestra *Chaconne* then became a concert work, performed by Josh (and others) around the world. But, as a moderate length single-movement work, it fell into a category of works that must be paired with other works to complete a soloist's guest appearance with an orchestra. Great works like Ravel's *Tzigane* or the Chausson *Poem*, or Beethoven *Romances*, have the same problems. More importantly for me, the chaconne had given me the opportunity to strip away any inhibitions and write a passionate and romantic essay that I probably would not have written had it not been accompanying a film. It bypassed my "censor button" that made it necessary for me to not only write a piece, but "rediscover" the form in the piece (like my three woodwind concerti.) I liked what I heard, and it came very naturally.

So, like Schumann, I decided to add some movements to the existing chaconne (he to his piano and

orchestra fantasy) and make it a full-length concerto. In my case, that meant composing another three movements to balance the large first one. The other movements are connected to the first (and the film) in different ways: the first is a fleet *Pianissimo Scherzo* in which the dynamics are soft, but the action wild and colorful. I wanted to break the romantic mood of the first movement with sonoric and timbral effects that create a sparkling, effervescent energy. A central trio is distantly related to Anna's theme, but here heard in knuckle-breaking double harmonics by the soloist – high, ethereal, and dance like. The third movement (*Andante Flautando*) starts with an intense *recitativo* that is more closely related to the film's main theme, but soon gives way to a gentle, rocking melody played by the soloist in an unusual manner that results in his sound changing to that of a flute (*flautando*.) He and the alto flute pair up as a complementary duo in this theme. The final movement (*Accelerando Finale*), as the title suggests, is a rollicking race in which the opposed forces of soloist and orchestra vie with each other. They each accelerate at different times and speeds, providing a virtuoso climax befitting a last movement. Some other unusual techniques are used here: the violin (and orchestral strings) are asked to press so hard on their strings that there is no pitch at all, just a crunch. This percussive and unusual sound provides energy, especially during the races. A major theme from the film that was not used in the concert chaconne was that given to Moritz, the contemporary violin expert who discovers the mystery of the Red Violin. It is a sadly romantic theme, and becomes the lyrical counterpoint to the high spirits of this final movement. Near the end of the work, the original chaconne from the first movement comes back to complete the journey of this violin concerto.

John Corigliano

Michael Ludwig



Photo: Mark Dellas

The violinist Michael Ludwig enjoys a multi-faceted career as a soloist, recording artist, and chamber musician. He has performed on four continents, including appearances with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Boston Pops, the Buffalo Philharmonic, and the Shanghai Philharmonic, collaborating with such conductors as JoAnn Falletta, Sir Georg Solti, and John Williams. His career takes him to engagements in Germany, Spain, Portugal, Israel, Lithuania, Japan, Mexico, the Czech Republic and throughout the United States, as well as bringing commissions for concertos by Daron Hagen and Behzad Ranjbaran. His growing discography includes both Dohnányi *Violin Concertos* with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (Naxos 8.570833) and the *Piano Trio* of Marcel Tyberg. As a chamber musician, he has shared the stage with numerous acclaimed artists, such as Christoph Eschenbach, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Yefim Bronfman, Sarah Chang, and Jean-Yves Thibaudet. The outstanding violin being used by Michael Ludwig is the ex Mary Portman, Guarneri del Gesù, 1735, on extended loan from Mr and Mrs Arrison through the generous efforts of the Stradivari Society of Chicago. The Stradivari Society is a unique organization that supports the very highest level of string playing by assisting patrons who own the most precious antique Italian instruments and choose to make them available to artists of exceptional talent and ability.

Please visit www.MichaelLudwig.org for further information.

Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra



Photo: Enid Bloch

The orchestra's European tour included two sold-out performances in Vienna's Musikverein, and concerts in Milan, Geneva, Zurich and Frankfurt, among other venues. The BPO performs 120 concerts annually and is heard by millions on radio broadcasts across the United States and beyond on American Public Media's *Performance Today*.

JoAnn Falletta



Photo: Mark Dellas

Recipient of the Seaver/National Endowment for the Arts Conductors Award, winner of the Stokowski Competition, and the Toscanini, Ditson and Bruno Walter conducting awards, JoAnn Falletta has also received ten awards from the American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP) and serves on the U.S. National Council on the Arts. A champion of American music, she has presented over four hundred works by American composers including over eighty world premières. She currently serves as music director of both the Buffalo Philharmonic and the Virginia Symphony and guest conducts many of the world's great symphony orchestras, including the Philadelphia Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Dallas Symphony, Rotterdam Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and the National Symphony. Her Naxos recordings include the double Grammy Award winning disc of works by John Corigliano (8.559331) and GRAMMY® nominated discs of works of Kenneth Fuchs, Franz Schubert, and Ottorino Respighi.

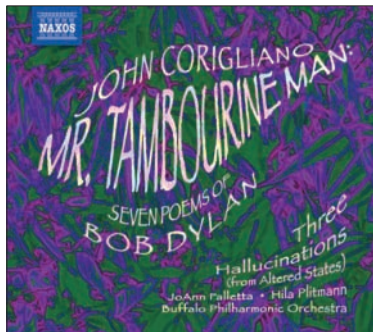
www.joannfalletta.com



Michael Ludwig, John Corigliano and JoAnn Falletta

Photo: Enid Bloch

Also available:



8.559331



8.559364

Playing
Time:
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NAXOS

John
CORIGLIANO
(b. 1938)

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| 1 | Phantasmagoria – Suite from 'The Ghosts of Versailles' (2000) | 22:04 |
| | Violin Concerto, 'The Red Violin' (2003)* | 38:58 |
| 2 | I. Chaconne | 17:16 |
| 3 | II. Pianissimo Scherzo | 5:24 |
| 4 | III. Andante Flautando | 6:28 |
| 5 | IV. Accelerando Finale | 9:50 |

Michael Ludwig, Violin*
Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra
JoAnn Falletta

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Booklet notes: John Corigliano

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AMERICAN CLASSICS

With this new recording, JoAnn Falletta and the Buffalo Philharmonic continue their revelatory exploration of Corigliano's highly engaging and imaginative symphonic music. *Phantasmagoria* draws material from his immense opera *The Ghosts of Versailles*, with subliminal quotes from Mozart, Rossini and Wagner. Music from his third film score, *The Red Violin*, provided elements which Corigliano elaborates in the *Violin Concerto*, its opening *Chaconne* being described by the composer as 'a passionate romantic essay' which he has complemented with an effervescent *Scherzo*, an intensely emotional *Andante* and a racing, rollicking *Finale*.

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