

Memories

Traces

Rebirths



LUCA QUINTAVALLE

*Harpsichord built by Andrea Restelli (2018),
enlarged double-manual version derived from a model by Christian Vater
(1738) now at Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg*

With the participation of (Track 21):

Régis Campo *tape programming, keyboards, low voice,
whistling, cuckoo call, chicken toy*
Yoko Yamada *toy piano* | Baptiste Canale-Albertini *trumpet*
Amine Soufari *oud* | Joël Versavaud *duduk*
Guillaume Beer-Demander *beatbox* | Vincent Beer-Demander *mandolin*
Alexandre Beer-Demander *mandocello* | Joaquim Hock *polish water whistle*

METAMORPHOSEN

Wolfgang Rihm (1952-2024)

SECHS PRELUDES (2024 Harpsichord version)

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| 1. <i>I Sehr bewegt</i> | 02:57 |
| 2. <i>II Langsam und ausdrucksvoll</i> | 03:15 |
| 3. <i>III Presto</i> | 02:09 |
| 4. <i>IV Schwungvoll, im Walzertempo</i> | 01:57 |
| 5. <i>V Andante con moto</i> | 01:37 |
| 6. <i>VI Allegro agitato</i> | 01:46 |

Joan Magrané Figuera (1988)

- | | |
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| 7. FANTASIA SOBRE <i>UNA MATINADA FRESCA</i> (2023) | 04:46 |
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Maurilio Cacciatore (1981)

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| 8. BREVE VII (2021)** | 02:00 |
|-----------------------|-------|

Alex Nante (1992)

TRES PRELUDIOS PARA JACOBO FIJMAN

SUR LA FOLIE ET LA SAINTETÉ (2017)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| 9. <i>I Sognante rubato</i> | 02:13 |
| 10. <i>II Energico</i> | 01:12 |
| 11. <i>III Devoto</i> | 03:21 |

Benjamin Attahir (1989)

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| 12. LA CAPRICIEUSE (2025 revision) | 05:23 |
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Memories, Traces, Rebirths

Luis De Pablo (1930-2021)

DOS IMPROVISACIONES PARA CLAVE (1982)

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| 13. <i>I</i> | 04:41 |
| 14. <i>II</i> | 03:16 |

Hans Abrahamsen (1952)

THREE AMERICAN STUDIES (2025 Harpsichord version)

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|--------------------------------|-------|
| 15. <i>I Boogie-Woogie</i> | 02:18 |
| 16. <i>II For the Children</i> | 01:26 |
| 17. <i>III Blues</i> | 02:36 |

Mikel Urquiza (1988)

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| 18. CONTRAPLUMA (2025 Harpsichord version) | 07:13 |
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Régis Campo (1968)

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|--------------------------------------|-------|
| 19. PERPETUUM MOBILE (2025 revision) | 02:56 |
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Chris Dench (1953)

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| 20. FLICKERING INSTANTION (2024) | 11:26 |
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Régis Campo (1968)

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| 21. PAGAMANIA ! (2025 new version for harpsichord and electronics) | 02:52 |
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TOTAL TIMING	71:29
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METAMORPHOSEN by Luca Quintavalle

This CD stems from a reflection on a striking historical coincidence: Richard Strauss's *Metamorphosen* was composed at the same time as radically different works such as Pierre Boulez's *Second Sonata* and John Cage's *In a Landscape*. This plurality of languages, which I consider the true strength of contemporary music, forms the project's starting point and runs throughout the programme, uniting works to which I feel a deep personal connection. The guiding theme is metamorphosis, one of the central forces of human imagination. Philosophical and scientific reflections enrich the CD's ideas: the coexistence of heterogeneous styles can be explored through Donna Haraway's theories of hybridity or Lynn Margu-

lis's endosymbiotic theory. More broadly, theories of metamorphosis suggest a radically different view of history: no longer a linear path of progress against which one can oppose a *tabula rasa* or postmodern quotations, but a past conceived as living matter in constant transformation. History is not what has been, but what is still becoming. The CD therefore presents ancient compositional forms rethought through contemporary writing and numerous transcriptions. Works are not preserved by freezing them but renewed, revealing latent potential, as Walter Benjamin theorized through *Überleben* and *Fortleben*.

Metamorphosis, as Oren Harman shows, is a fundamental rule of life: about three quarters of animal species undergo some form of metamorphosis, and identity lies not in a fixed form, but in the thread

running through transformations. Survival comes through change—and this is especially true for the harpsichord. With Ligeti, its tradition could be rethought in dialogue with folk music and rock, while also gaining a new identity, drawing closer to electronics in *Continuum*. A great and enduring lesson.

Luis de Pablo's *Dos improvisaciones* may be described as a 'transcription cubed'. The composer reworked for harpsichord the second and fourth pieces of *Cuaderno*, a set of five piano pieces written for the centenary of Joaquín Turina. The first improvisation later became, in 1990, the second of the *Cinco impromptus para orquesta*, significantly titled *Melodia*. The *Dos improvisaciones* were never published and were lost. The version recorded here is my transcription and reconstruction, based on a comparison of the composer's

first draft, the recording by the dedicatee Genoveva Gálvez, and the piano score. This first discographic version was finally 'translated' for a Baroque harpsichord, different from the pedal Goble instrument used by Gálvez.

The 1980s marked De Pablo's so-called 'lyrical phase'. The work *Kiu* introduces a compositional procedure central to the *Dos improvisaciones*: starting from a single pitch, vertical or horizontal structures are built through superimposed thirds, further enriched by other thirds at a fifth's distance. The resulting pitches are freely combined, even in close position. In the first improvisation, a long left-hand melody unfolds in broad, chromatically dense phrases, marked by strong intervallic expressivity, a structural use of timbre, and rhythmic richness capable of generating a 'speaking'

rubato, supported by ornamental or chordal interventions in the right hand. The second improvisation, predominantly chordal and fragmentary, displays a theatrical, rhetorical gesture recalling even the baroque form of recits. A rapid sequence of contrasting images comes to an abrupt halt on B♭, the implicit polarity of the entire piece, related by a third to F♯, which structures the first improvisation. The *Preludes* are Wolfgang Rihm's earliest published work, written at the age of fifteen, and probably also among the last to appear. A few months before his death I obtained permission to transcribe them. Rihm maintained that art has no age and that composing can even allow one to "jump in biological time": each work responds to others, anticipating or reactivating what seemed lost. His openness to new ideas until

the very end remains a profound lesson. There is no sense in separating his early output from his later work. As he stated: "I have the vision of a large block of music inside me. Each composition is part of this block and a precise physiognomy to be carved. To see who I am, I must cut into my own flesh, open myself, ask a mirror what it sees." The *Preludes* follow a mirror structure: the two preludes (1–6), the two barcarolles (2–5), and the two dances (3–4). The macro-form divides into two blocks: the first three movements, centred on tonalities a minor third apart, and the last three, with more unstable tonal centres. The forms, close to the rondo, rely on the cyclical return of one or two themes alternating with contrasting episodes, without true development. Dynamic, timbral and registral contrasts prevail, while

pauses—charged with tension—are fundamental. For Rihm, form “must not be a construction, but a territory—a half-buried labyrinth in contact with deep forces.” It is flow that he claims against form. “We must be shaken by energy, or remain silent before emptiness: then we are composers.” Even Benjamin Attahir’s early work *La Capriceuse* already displays the traits defining his style: “a world of expressive, virtuosic compositions blending French elegance with Middle Eastern influences”. The importance of the fourth (as well as the seventh or second) is evident from the opening bar. The caprice suggested by the title emerges in rhythmic and metric instability, repeated pedal notes, and the gradual infiltration of thirds. Ornamentations with a vaguely oriental flavour merge with the French harpsichord prac-

tice of overlegato. In the first section, the expansive cantabile of the right hand is disrupted by brief rhythmic interventions in the left. The hands converge in the second section, a powerful toccata largely in unison, still marked by quarrels, suspensions and resummptions. No conflict, however—only the childlike pleasure of play, which in French also means to play an instrument and which, as Winnicott teaches us, is the privileged space of transformation.

Hans Abrahamsen’s *Three American Studies for harpsichord* are transcriptions of his fifth, sixth and seventh piano études, also reworked in the *Three Pieces for Orchestra* and in the final movements of the *Six Pieces for Horn, Violin and Piano*. *Boogie Woogie* is a sophisticated mensural canon. Three-part imitations of ascending scale fragments, combined



with rapid pulse and metric contraction, give the opening section strong directionality and motor energy. These 129 bars are built on a complex sequence of measures in mathematical and golden ratios: 36, 22, 11, 4, 11 (understood as 4+7), 16 (reaching the highest note of the keyboard at the golden section of the entire piece), 28. The last scalar gesture seems to open a broader section, but suddenly collapses into the low register. Section B, in four voices, is a double canon, more chordal in character, with a constant 4/4 metre and a tempo about 25% slower, allowing gravity to prevail over the earlier ascent. Section B is itself divided into two parts: in the first half the highest note of the keyboard is reached again at bar 17, before plunging back at bar 19 (the golden section of 32) into the low register, preparing the final two ascents. These

last two ascending directions are perfectly symmetrical (7+7 bars). The result is a sophisticated formal construction that is never merely intellectual: the golden ratio, as biology reminds us, is among the most 'natural' proportions.

For the Children (with an explicit reference to Bartók) is a four-voice double mensural canon, rigorous in the first half with a 3:2 ratio and freer in the second. The extreme proximity of the lines and of the intervals renders the imitations almost imperceptible, producing contemplative stasis. Each note appears like a snowflake in the highest register, in stark contrast to the preceding piece.

Blues is a distant echo of a slow blues, mysterious and lugubrious. The piece combines the blues scale with the Dorian mode on D, exploiting the clash between their single differing pitch (F natural

and G♭). Chromatic seconds intensify the pathos, while traditional 4/4 metre is reworked through internal ternary subdivisions, suggesting swing in the right-hand rhythmical writing. Static quality arises from harmonic pedals, the absence of melodic directionality, and a constant rallentando beginning at the golden section (bar 12, a typical metric closure in the blues). The closing on the minor third of the G chord reinforces the modal, suspended character.

Playfulness is equally present in the music of Régis Campo. *Perpetuum mobile* is a musical joke: an extremely energetic, motoric toccata containing a bizarre, almost unrecognisable quotation from Mozart—the opening cell of *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, transposed to C. Tritones and apparent Lydian inflections initially confound perception, only to reveal

a simple F-major scale starting on the fourth degree. The composition plays with ambiguities. This game continues through clashes of different scales and near-minimalist motivic reworking, culminating in a jubilant finale recalling Bach's *Fifth Brandenburg Concerto*. The piece ends mockingly with a 'wrong' cadence: B♭–F♯. The circle remains open! *Pagamanía!* is presented here for the first time in its version for harpsichord and electronics, following an earlier version for accordion and violin. Drawing on the famous theme from Paganini's *Caprices*, the work leads through the streets of Marseille, the composer's birthplace. Influences and instruments from different Mediterranean cultures coexist on planes that sometimes interact and sometimes run in parallel, creating constant surprise and es-

trangement. A potentially infinite piece, it can end only abruptly, like a screen suddenly switching off. Finally, here is what the composers themselves have written about the remaining works.

Chris Dench: “The piece is ironic on several levels: its title comes from a newspaper review rather than a novel; it draws on early Baroque models (Frescobaldi’s *Cento partite sopra passacagli* and Louis Couperin’s *C major Passacaille*) while operating within abstract modernism; and writing such a modernist piece for a baroque instrument sits somewhere between quixotic and contrarian. Its structure is based on newly invented tonal systems that echo historical pitch hierarchies through symmetry and function, with transposed ‘tonalities’ forming a fixed harmonic trajectory. Pitch behavior recalls early

practices, closer to the 15th than the 17th century, with imitative lines reminiscent of Busnoys and a rhythmic sensibility akin to French non-mesuré preludes. The three-part form opens with an expository section presenting materials as a mosaic of contrasting textures and gestures (‘flickering instantiations’), alternating brevity and expansion, volatility and insistence. A more static chordal gesture begins to interrupt the music here and there, presenting the harmonies in simpler vertical form. The section ends with a brief *ricercar à la Cabezón*. A central episode stretches a single gesture into extended, banner-like lines, balancing maximalist and minimalist tendencies into a geometric toccata in homage to Xenakis and Terry Riley. This music also ‘flickers’, but suspendedly. The final stretto compresses the music into



extreme density, less a coda than a pressure release of accumulated material. The work grinds to a halt in exhaustion; there is too much left unsaid."

Maurilio Cacciatore: "*Breve VII* is a toccata for harpsichord based on the archetype of the ostinato: while the left hand endlessly repeats the cell C–B–B♭–A♭, the right hand begins with the same cell in unison and, according to a logic of generative grammar, progressively detaches from it, exploring the entire range of the instrument. This ascent, built almost always on the same intervals and only occasionally diverted in an improvisatory direction, collapses in the final section under the accumulated tension. The persistence of the low ostinato restores an image of the harpsichord as a violent instrument that yields nothing, controllable only through rigorous

technique, yet precisely for this reason it continues to reveal itself as surprisingly contemporary."

Joan Magrané Figuera: "This *Fantasia* engages in a dialogue, with Catalan folk-rooted music. based on the little-known song *Una matinada fresca* from the Solsonès region, collected in the early twentieth century by the Obra del Cançoner Popular de Catalunya. The small melodic gesture C/B, which dominates the first section of the original song, serves as the driving force of my work. From these two notes unfolds the *Poco mosso*, following a clear linear trajectory from the upper to the lower register, which gradually comes to be juxtaposed with a harmonic element that forms the basis of the following section (*Meno mosso, languido*): a small chorale alternating with a light chromatic filigree that anticipates a play of orna-





mented descending diatonic scales (*dolce*), taking as its reference the likewise descending diatonic scale that dominates the central part of the original folk song. From here, the work ascends once again to the upper register, dominated, once more, by the C/B semitone. Free of any predetermined form, the *Fantasia* unfolds through cells drawn from the original song, developing either organically (like the natural fluidity of the folk melodies) or through abrupt, almost cubist, juxtapositions of gestures and characters. Alex Nante: “This work written in 2017 is part of a cycle dedicated to the Argentine poet Jacobo Fijman (1898, Bessarabia - 1970, Buenos Aires). His poetry is embedded with images related to his deep mystical experiences, in a style which is in the threshold of surrealism and Christian mystical poetry.

Fijman’s extreme mysticism led him to isolation and progressively to a disconnection from mundane reality. His work explores the ambiguity between madness and holiness, varying between luminous, angelical facets and painful dark moments. The whole Fijman cycle reflects this ambiguity, sometimes reaching a certain conciliation, and other times simply juxtaposing the contradictory experiences that arise. Repetition and simplicity are two elements that are essential to Fijman’s work and are present in these preludes. Transparency that derives from austere textures resonate with the poet’s religious and contemplative writing. There exists, particularly in the first prelude, a connection with Gregorian chant, which was a relevant source of inspiration in Fijman’s work. Longer melodic lines are progressively fragment-

ed to a point where small gestures bring about a discourse that is on the verge of silence.

Mikel Urquiza: "If a man can be caressed against the sense of the hair, a bird can also be caressed against the sense of the feathers – provided that it is consenting. The man is Albrecht Dürer; the bird, a blue roller of which he painted the wing with breathtaking precision (*Wing of a blue roller*, 1512). Caressing the wrong way allows to feel the grain, the imperfection, the unique detail. Music can also be caressed: in this case, Schubert's *Impromptu No. 4*. The bouncing, descending arpeggio is atomised and transposed into the highest register, deprived of all its gentleness. Every cascade of notes reproduces the wavy form of a wing, the light flags of semiquavers remind the morphology of feathers. The background is grey,

full of minor and major seconds, but it is illuminated by flashes of pure colour: thirds, fourths, fifths and perfect chords, brief and intense; fauvist. The different types of ascending glissando are a caress against the sense of the keys, an ascension close from flying. Finally, one can also write against the sense of the pen – reconsidering every instinct. I must have written every measure of *Contrapluma* three times, getting gradually closer to my original vision of the piece. Writing is reaching oneself the wrong way."

I am very happy that this project also involves the reproductions of works by the artist and philosopher Giovanni Ferrario, for whom the artistic act is already a metamorphosis of reality. His work shares many points of con-



tact with the themes outlined above: the heterogeneity of materials and styles (despite a rejection of postmodernism, also evident in his *Ritagli*), and a conceptual art that consistently seeks aesthetic beauty. An idea of form in constant transformation emerges in works such as *Dust, Clouds and Clays*, along with an interest in an art that can germinate from the folds of a sheet of paper or from the breaking of objects, reflecting both Deleuze's philosophy of becoming and his view of baroque as well strong influences from Japanese aesthetics. If Oren Harman has shown that biological life is a continuous process of creative destruction, in Ferrario's work rupture is not merely recomposed and displayed, but can generate new forms (*Cups*). Ferrario plays with matter, pushing it beyond physical laws (*Geologica*) or deconstructing

it (*Geometrica, Eggs, Flowers*). In his images created with artificial intelligence, central themes return: "non-authorship", the reuse of pop aesthetics and the concept of "compost" (in this case of data). "What appears true is not, and what is false may reveal profound truths," as Ferrario states.

The works at tracks 8, 12, 15-17, 19, 20, were dedicated by the composers to Luca Quintavalle.

The transcriptions of the pieces by Rihm, Abrahamsen, and Urquiza were prepared in collaboration with the composers and approved by them.

Figuera's Fantasia was commissioned by Festival Espurnes Barroques; Capo's Perpetuum mobile was commissioned by Commissioned by Live at Mission Blue.

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Giovanni Ferrario's works: *Pietre* (p. 6); *Fiori* (p. 11); *Geologica* (p. 15);
Ori (p. 17); *Uova* (p. 18), *Geometrica* (p. 21),
Rizoma (cover graphic elements)

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