

A woman with dark hair, Elisa Netzer, is shown from the chest up, looking directly at the camera. She is positioned behind a large, ornate harp. A thick cloud of fine, light-colored dust or powder is suspended in the air around her and the harp, creating a dreamlike atmosphere. The background is dark and textured.

TOCCATA

HODEL · KHACHATURIAN · MAAYANI · MORTARI
PARADISI · ROTA · A. SCARLATTI · TURINA

ELISA NETZER

Elisa Netzer: Harp Recital Hodel • Khachaturian • Maayani • Mortari • Paradisi • Rota • A. Scarlatti • Turina

Derived from the Italian *‘toccare’* (‘to touch’), the term ‘toccata’ is first found in print in 1536. Essentially associated first with keyboard music, it developed variously over the years, from the keyboard compositions of Johann Sebastian Bach to the rapid perpetual motion that became its characteristic in its 20th-century revival.

The name of Alessandro Scarlatti has suffered partial eclipse through the greater fame of his son, Domenico Scarlatti, composer of some five hundred or more keyboard sonatas, largely for his pupil and patron, the Portuguese Infanta Maria Bárbara, who became Queen of Spain in 1746. Alessandro Scarlatti was born in Palermo in 1660 into a Sicilian family that had various musical connections, leading to the development of his early musical gifts in Rome, with lessons from the composer Giacomo Carissimi. Scarlatti became *maestro di cappella* to the exiled Queen Christina of Sweden and in 1684 was appointed *maestro di cappella* to the Viceroy of Naples, his work there interrupted by the patronage of Ferdinando de’ Medici in Florence and other influential figures. He spent his final years in Naples, where he died in 1725. His achievements as a composer were considerable, including some 50 or more operas, with overtures that brought the tripartite form of the Italian overture, Mass settings, cantatas, and instrumental music. Among the last was the *Primo e secondo libro di toccate* (‘First and Second Book of Toccatas’), which enjoyed wide popularity, witnessed by the number of copies that survive, and other toccatas like the *Toccata No. 9 in G minor* recorded here, intended for the harpsichord. Transcribed for harp by Elisa Netzer, it has a first section of rapid figuration, leading to the serenity of a final *arioso*.

The Soviet composer Aram Il'yich Khachaturian (1903–1978), of Armenian origin, was trained at the Moscow Conservatory, where he studied composition with Myaskovsky. He later assumed important positions in the Union of Soviet Composers and continued to implement one aspect of official cultural policy in his use of regional Armenian thematic material, although his name was joined to those of Shostakovich and Prokofiev in the condemnation of formalism promulgated in 1948. His better-known compositions include the 1942 ballet, *Gayane*, which

contains the most popular of all Khachaturian’s works, the *Sabre Dance*. The ballet *Spartacus* of 1954 contains the well-known *Adagio of Spartacus and Phrygia*. There are concert suites from both ballets. Like other Russian contemporary composers, Khachaturian also wrote film music and incidental music for the theatre. His *Oriental (Eastern) Dance*, with its percussive elements, and the *Toccata*, both from the book of piano pieces, *Album for Children No. 2* (1965), were transcribed for harp by the distinguished Russian harpist, Vera Dulova.

Born in Naples in 1707 and perhaps a pupil there of Porpora, Pietro Domenico Paradisi, widely known in London, where he established himself in 1746, as Paradies, won distinction as a harpsichordist. Of particular fame, over succeeding generations, was his *Toccata*, now familiar in a whole series of diverse arrangements. It was originally the second movement, marked *Allegro*, from Paradisi’s *Sonata No. 6 in A major*, from a set of twelve sonatas published in London in 1754, and for many years remained a continuing element in amateur keyboard repertoire. In later life Paradisi returned to Naples, where he died in 1791.

A native of Seville, Joaquín Turina (1882–1949) won local success before travelling to Madrid, where he met Manuel de Falla and was further influenced by the prevailing currents of musical nationalism. Study in Paris at the Schola Cantorum, was followed, in 1914, by a return to Madrid, where he made his subsequent career, in spite of the difficulties he and many others of his background encountered during the days of the Republic. His compositions are imbued with the spirit of Spain and include various genres, stage works, orchestral and chamber music, and a quantity of music for the piano. His *Tocata y Fuga, Op. 50* dates from 1929 and was dedicated to his friend, the critic and composer Juan José Mamecón. The harp transcription is by the famous Spanish harpist Nicanor Zabaleta. The *Tocata* opens with grandiose chords, before the rapid figuration that characterises the form begins, then turning to a mood of another kind. The rapid figuration returns, bringing the movement to an end. The three-voice *Fuga* retains its distinctive Spanish harmonies, the elements of Bach suggested by the title soon forgotten.

The Israeli composer and conductor, Ami Mayani, was

born in 1936 and had his musical training at the Jerusalem Rubin Academy of Music and Dance, followed by a degree in architecture. He has played an important part in the musical life of Israel, heading the Rubin Academy and as professor of music at Tel Aviv University, and conducting various ensembles, including the Israel Youth Orchestra. His *Toccata* (1961), one of a number of works for the harp, is marked by his own characteristic musical idiom. It is framed by impressive chords, while the centre of the work introduces a form of rapid passage-work, justifying the work’s title.

Virgilio Mortari’s *Sonatina prodigio* for harp reflects the composer’s interest, shared with Italian contemporaries, in earlier Italian music. Born near Milan in 1902, Mortari studied at the Conservatory there with Costante Adolfo Bossi and Ildebrando Pizzetti, continuing at the Paris Conservatoire, where he studied piano and composition. In Italy he taught at the Benedetto Marcello Conservatory in Venice and later at the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome. His career brought contact with Alfredo Casella and other leading Italian musicians of the time. The three-movement harp *Sonatina* starts with a neo-Classical *Gagliarda* followed by a slower movement, a *Canzone* and a final *Toccata*, with suggestions of contemporary French idiom in its harmonies. The work was published in 1939. Mortari died in 1993.

Toccare for harp solo, which explores different elements of ‘touch’ in the relationship of the instrument and its player, was written for Elisa Netzer by Stephan Hodel (b. 1973), a composer resident in the Swiss town of Berne. Hodel studied at the Royal College of Music in London under Joseph Horowitz, continuing at Berklee in Boston and in Lucerne.

Precocious as a composer, with an oratorio first performed when he was twelve, Nino Rota (1911–1979) studied at the Milan Conservatory, thereafter taking private lessons first with Ildebrando Pizzetti and then with Alfredo

Casella. His career brought a long association with Bari Conservatory, of which he was appointed director in 1950. A versatile composer, he contributed to a wide range of musical genres, writing some 80 film scores, including collaborations with Fellini, Zeffirelli and Visconti, and the score for Coppola’s *The Godfather*. He was the preferred composer of Fellini, and with Zeffirelli wrote the music for *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Taming of the Shrew*. He collaborated with Visconti on *Il gattopardo*, among other films. Rota’s *Sarabanda e Toccata* for harp, its neo-Classical form suggested in its title, was written in 1945, three years before his concerto for the instrument.

Keith Anderson

Toccare for harp solo

Toccare for harp solo was written especially for Elisa Netzer and her final recital at the Royal Academy of Music in London, a concert that consisted entirely of toccatas. The work considers the fact that the harp is one of the few instruments whose sounds are produced by physically touching the instrument with one’s hands – rather than with a bow or a mallet.

The piece tries to examine this special relationship between the harpist and her instrument: imagining a person sitting for the first time at a harp – by touching the soundboard, randomly moving the pedals up and down or hitting and scratching the strings, sound emerges from every action. Slowly the soundscapes become more rhythmic and finally turn into a melody. The process is repeated and intensified, before the piece ends where it started – in total silence.

Stephan Hodel
www.stephanhodel.com



Elisa Netzer

Elisa Netzer is one of Switzerland's leading young harpists. After making her debut at the prestigious Lucerne Festival in 2017 with a solo recital, she represented Switzerland at the World Harp Congress in Hong Kong. She has given recitals in Hungary, Russia, Brazil, France, Germany, Italy, the UK and Spain, and has appeared as guest soloist with many orchestras including the Orchestra della Svizzera italiana, the Filarmonica Arturo Toscanini and the Orchestra Città di Vigevano. In 2013 she made her international solo debut in St Petersburg at the Hermitage Theatre with the Hermitage Orchestra, and was selected as a promising young soloist by the Musical Olympus Festival. Elisa Netzer is a prizewinner of many international competitions including the Italian harp competition 'Suoni d'arpa', the Camac Harp Competition in London and the Antonio Salieri Competition. After graduating from the Parma Conservatoire in Italy, winning the 'Best Graduate of Italian Conservatoire' Award, Netzer completed a Master of Music with distinction at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

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Elisa Netzer

Photo © Molina Visuals

The term ‘toccata’ is associated with virtuoso music demanding the utmost dexterity of its performer. Elisa Netzer, winner of the 2015 ‘Suoni d’arpa’ International Harp Competition in Italy, presents a wide-ranging programme which includes her own arrangement of one of Alessandro Scarlatti’s harpsichord toccatas, popular pieces such as Khachaturian’s *Oriental Dance* and *Toccata*, original works for harp such as Nino Rota’s attractively neo-Classical *Sarabanda e Toccata* and the premiere of the brand new *Toccare* composed for her by Swiss composer Stephan Hodel.

ELISA NETZER

Harp Recital

Playing Time
51:49

Alessandro Scarlatti (1660–1725)		Ami Maayani (b. 1936)	
1	Toccata No. 9 in G minor (arr. Elisa Netzer)	5:13	7 Toccata (1961) 6:55
Aram Il'yich Khachaturian (1903–1978)		Virgilio Mortari (1902–1993)	
Album for Children No. 2 (1965) (arr. Vera Dulova)		8 I. Gagliarda 1:51	5:20 Sonatina prodigio (1939)
2	III. Oriental (Eastern) Dance 2:00	9 II. Canzone 1:13	
3	IX. Toccata 3:06	10 III. Toccata 2:16	
Pietro Domenico Paradisi (1707–1791)		Stephan Hodel (b. 1973)	
Keyboard Sonata No. 6 in A Major (1754) (arr. Elisa Netzer)		11 Toccare for harp solo (2014) 9:35	
II. Allegro, ‘Toccata’ 1:48		Nino Rota (1911–1979)	
4		12 Sarabanda 4:33	7:09 Sarabanda e Toccata (1945)
Joaquín Turina (1882–1949)		13 Toccata 2:36	
Tocata y Fuga, Op. 50 (1929) 10:14 (arr. Nicanor Zabaleta)			
5	Tocata 4:33		
6	Fuga 5:40		



Recorded: 20–22 March 2015 **1**–**10** and 25 April 2015 **11**–**13** at the Auditorium Steiner, Origlio, Switzerland
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