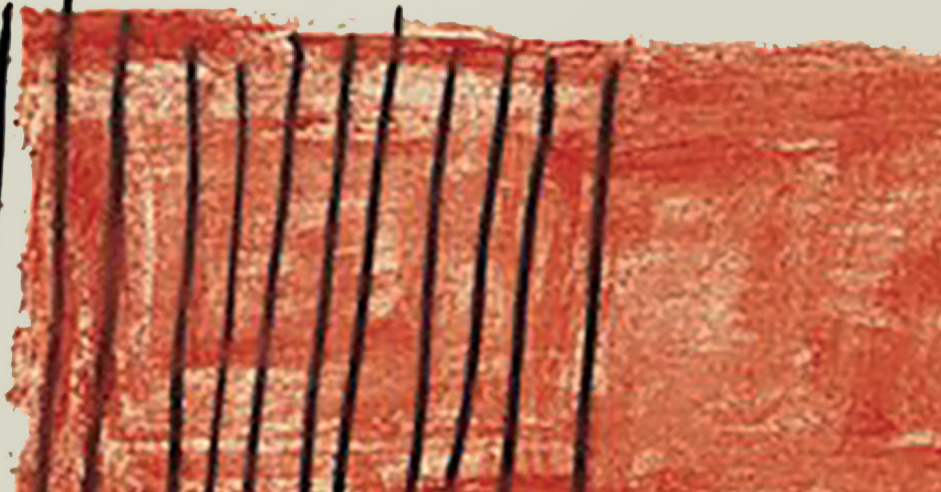


The NAXOS logo is a blue square with the word "NAXOS" in white, serif, all-caps font. Above the text are three stylized white columns.

NAXOS

Goffredo PETRASSI
Concertos for Orchestra
Nos. 4-6

Orchestra Sinfonica di Roma
Francesco La Vecchia

A rectangular area in the bottom right corner of the cover, filled with a rough, textured red color, resembling a piece of paper or a stamp.

Goffredo
PETRASSI
(1904–2003)

Quarto Concerto per orchestra d'archi (1954)		28:35
1	Placidamente –	7:05
2	Allegro inquieto –	2:51
3	Sereno –	1:41
4	Allegro inquieto –	1:13
5	Molto sostenuto – Lentissimo –	8:50
6	Allegro giusto	6:55
 Quinto Concerto per orchestra (1955)		28:04
7	I. Molto moderato –	6:30
8	Presto	6:16
9	II. Andantino tranquillo –	5:36
10	Mosso, con vivacità –	4:03
11	Lento e grave	5:39
 Invenzione concertata – Sesto Concerto per archi, ottoni e percussione (1956–57)		17:30
12	Mosso (inquieto) –	1:38
13	Energico –	3:32
14	Adagio sostenuto –	4:15
15	(estatico) –	2:46
16	Tempo (liberamente)	5:19

**Orchestra Sinfonica di Roma
Francesco La Vecchia**

Goffredo PETRASSI (1904–2003)

Concertos for Orchestra Nos. 4–6

Goffredo Petrassi was born in Zagarolo, near Rome, on 16 July 1904. His family relocated to Rome in 1911, where he became a choirboy at the Schola Cantorum of the Chiesa di San Salvatore in Lauro – as decisive a catalyst for his musical career as his work from 1919 at a music shop to supplement parental finances. From 1928 he studied organ and composition at the Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia where, in 1936, he was appointed teacher in the first of a series of prestigious posts – culminating in his being professor of composition during 1940 to 1960, then head of its masterclass in composition from 1960 to 1978. He also taught at the Mozarteum in Salzburg. From 1937 to 1940 he was superintendent of Teatro La Fenice in Venice where he organised the Biennale, the international festival devoted to contemporary music.

Petrassi's reputation was established in 1932, when his *Partita* attracted popular and critical acclaim. That year it won the Contemporary Music Award of the National Musicians Union and was selected by the Società Internazionale di Musica Contemporanea (SIMC) for both its festivals in Amsterdam (1933) and Prague (1935). Comparable inspiration in traditional Italian dances is apparent in the *Introduzione e Allegro* (1933), whose adherence to neo-Classicism is countered by more modern traits expressed via allusions to jazz and a marked timbral asperity. Works such as his *Ouverture* (1931) show the influence of Hindemith and Stravinsky. Sacred choral compositions, such as *Psalm IX* (1934–36) or the *Magnificat* (1939–40), refer to Baroque polyphonic music with the sacred aspect evident in a luminous and solemn rituality.

In the 1940s, as a direct experience of working at the Teatro La Fenice, Petrassi turned to the theatre, composing the ballets *La follia di Orlando* (1943), then *Ritratto di Don Chisciotte* (1945), both in collaboration with choreographer Aurelio Milloss. He enjoyed further success with his two one-act operas: *Il cordovano* (1944–48), derived from Cervantes and translated by Eugenio Montale, then *Morte dell'aria* (1949–50), with its libretto by Toti Scialoja. Religious inspiration was to find further expression toward the end of the composer's life. Of particular significance are the cantata *Noche oscura* (1950–51), to a poem by San Giovanni della Croce, and *Propos D'Alain* (1960) – the idea for which had come directly from one of the *Propos sur le christianisme* of Alain Chartier. In his last years Petrassi was at work on a Mass, of which he managed to complete the *Kyrie* (1986), but got no further than the beginning of the *Gloria* when failing eyesight intervened. He died in Rome on 2 March 2003 at the age of 98, his contribution to 20th-century European music duly acknowledged well beyond his homeland.

This second volume of Petrassi's concertos for orchestra (the first being on Naxos 8.573702) comprises his fourth, fifth and sixth such works, written in straight succession during the mid-1950s. Completed in Rome in 1954 and premiered there by Fernando Previtali with the RAI National Symphony Orchestra on 28 April 1956, the *Fourth Concerto for Orchestra* is scored for strings only and increases its number of movements to six though, as with its predecessor, these form a continuous sequence and vary considerably in terms of length or expressive substance.

The opening movement commences with a finely wrought polyphony of no mean emotional breadth, for all its uniformity of timbre. Gradually the initial motivic and harmonic ideas gain momentum as the music reaches a sustained culmination, before this subsides into a haunting tremolo passage, and alights on several fugitive gestures. These lead directly into the second movement, which pursues a constant and purposeful activity despite its largely fragmentary texture. The next two movements are even briefer, a pulsating if restrained dialogue between separate string sections, then a more rapid yet even more speculative sequence of exchanges.

By contrast, the fifth movement is the most sustained of the whole work, anguished gestures on the upper strings being intoned against a subdued motion in the depths. At length a more discernible theme emerges on violas, rising through the texture before it alights on a stasis that persists for all that the expression varies considerably. A crescendoing chord leads straight into a finale notable for its incisiveness of manner and its range of playing techniques, the music covertly alluding to motifs that were encountered previously, before it makes way for an evocative passage where the texture

becomes focussed on a group of musing solo voices. Earlier activity soon resumes, however, to bring about the decisive and resolute conclusion.

Written in 1955, Petrassi's *Fifth Concerto for Orchestra* was commissioned to mark the 75th anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and dedicated to the memory of its conductor Serge Koussevitzky, the premiere taking place in Boston with Charles Munch conducting on 2 December that year. At almost half an hour in duration and fastidiously scored for one of the composer's most extensive orchestras, this is among his most imaginative works, its five movements, expressively distinct from each other, merging into a formally cumulative whole.

The opening movement starts with subdued yet ominous activity on muted brass and strings, setting up a pulsating motion that enables the instrumental groups to characterise themselves without disrupting the overall texture. Gradually, the music builds towards a dramatic climax enhanced by timpani and percussion, but this rapidly disperses when that earlier expectancy is resumed. A sudden tense gesture leads into the second movement, akin to a scherzo in its capricious manner, and characterful exchanges between various instruments. A tempestuous climax duly brings the full orchestra into play, but this subsides to leave an intent motion on brass and percussion. There follows what might be conceivably described as an intermezzo, its capering motion and genial while inscrutable aura affording some of the composer's most imaginative writing, despite (or perhaps even because of) the underlying poise and restraint.

A sudden upsurge of activity elides into the fourth movement, akin to a toccata in its forward motion which not even the chorale-like gesture on brass around its mid-point can undermine. From here the music builds towards a powerful climax which trails off to leave cor anglais in pensive solitude. The ensuing finale evinces more than a passing resemblance to the opening movement in its deliberation and understatement, though now the expression is informed by a pathos and experience intensified by frequently ominous writing for brass and percussion in its latter stages. From here the music returns to that with which the work commenced, dying away on strings in a mood less of defeatism than of a fatalism as had been present all along.

Composed between October 1956 and March 1957, Petrassi's *Sixth Concerto for Orchestra* was commissioned to mark the BBC's Third Programme radio station, then premiered in London with Basil Cameron conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra on 9 September 1957. Its subtitle, '*Invenzione concertata*', denotes the prevalence of solo instruments and of soloistic writing throughout a piece that, once again fashioned in five movements, reverts to the more fragmented formal conception previously shared by the third and fourth concertos.

The opening movement is more an epigraph in its introductory nature and air of anticipation. Quickly reaching an expectant pause, its successor bursts in with baleful exchanges on brass and percussion – strings duly entering the fray as the music maintains its energy on the way to a dramatic culmination. The unexpectedly subdued close leads into a central *Adagio* that develops motifs already encountered, in a texture never less than eventful for all its restraint.

Gradually a sustained activity from strings comes into the foreground, only to recede as the fourth movement begins. This features solemn intoning on brass then impulsive gestures on strings, which leads into a finale that attempts (successfully) to wrest cohesion from those disparate modes of expression which have thus far been encountered. This it does by quickly galvanizing the principal motifs towards a culmination where brass and percussion are to the fore. Even if a more over peroration is consciously avoided, the visceral closing gestures make for what is arguably the most unequivocal ending in any of these concertos.

Richard Whitehouse



Orchestra Sinfonica di Roma

Francesco La Vecchia

The Rome Symphony Orchestra was established in 2002 by the Rome Foundation (Fondazione Roma Arte – Musei), a rare example in Europe of an orchestra that was completely privately funded. Under its artistic and musical director Francesco La Vecchia who, in turn, set up the Fondazione Arts Academy, the orchestra performed regularly in Rome at the Teatro Argentina, Teatro Sistina and Auditorium Conciliazione. It received critical and public recognition at distinguished venues in Asia, the Americas and Europe, with notable success in 2007 at the Berlin Philharmonie. The orchestra also undertook a wide-ranging and well received series of recordings, principally for Naxos, of important compositions by Italian composers of the 19th and 20th centuries, including Busoni, Catalani, Ferrara, Ghedini, Malipiero, Mancinelli, Martucci, Mercadante, Petrassi, Sgambati and Wolf-Ferrari. Many of these are world premiere recordings. The orchestra was dissolved in 2014 not long after giving the first modern performance of Giovanni Sgambati's *Symphony No. 2*.

Goffredo Petrassi was 28 when his *Partita* (recorded on Naxos 8.572411) propelled him to European fame. He fused neo-Classicism with more contemporary traits reinforced by his mastery of polyphony, qualities that can be found in his eight *Concertos for Orchestra* (Nos. 1–3 are available on 8.573702). *Concertos* Nos. 4–6 were written in the mid-1950s and are striking examples of emotional turbulence and structural compression, fastidiously scored and imaginative in their formal conception. The soloistic writing of *Invenzione concertata* (*Concerto No. 6*) adds another layer of sonic complexity to these gripping concertos.

Goffredo
PETRASSI
(1904–2003)

1–6 Quarto Concerto per orchestra d'archi (1954) **28:35**

7–11 Quinto Concerto per orchestra (1955) **28:04**

**12–16 Invenzione concertata – Sesto Concerto
per archi, ottoni e percussioni** (1956–57) **17:30**

Orchestra Sinfonica di Roma
Francesco La Vecchia

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

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