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**NAXOS**

# **PICCOLO CONCERTOS**

**BAKSA  
HIDAS • KREK  
PAPANDOPULO**

**Francesco Viola,  
Piccolo**

**Nationaltheater-  
Orchester  
Mannheim**

**Salvatore Percacciolo**



## Piccolo Concertos

Andreas Baksa • Uroš Krek • Boris Papandopulo • Frigyes Hidas

### Quattro Canti

When I first met Andreas Baksa, I could not have known how much influence our encounter would have on me and my artistic and professional path. As a composer, violinist and an inventive mind he has been an inspiration to me. Beyond that, he was a friend, and his closeness led me to discover his music, starting with a recording I made of the piano reduction of his *Grande concerto piccolo, Op. 54* with Aurelia Vişovan (Farben, 2015). This album is the natural continuation of the project and includes three more Eastern European piccolo concertos, hidden gems of the modern and contemporary literature for my instrument: Krek's *Concertino*, which I am delighted to rediscover after the silence that followed its only recording decades ago; Papadopulo's *Concertino for Piccolo and Strings*, a refined work of contrast, harmonisation and exuberant virtuosity; and Hidas's *Oboe Concerto*, which I personally adapted for piccolo – an attempt to make it fully speak as an idiomatic concerto for my instrument.

I feel these four concertos ultimately brought me to a crossroads: four ways to the concerto for piccolo and orchestra, but also four paths into the heart of Europe and Mitteleuropa's folk music traditions. I saw the four pathways reflected in the Quattro Canti of my home city, Palermo: this historical square, opening up in all directions, immediately appeared to me as a direct metaphor for my endeavour to enrich the piccolo's repertoire, reaching to every corner of the finest literature of the past century.

Andreas Baksa's passing preceded the publishing of my first recording of his works, yet his music and his memory lives on. I dedicate this album to him and to Raphael Leone, in gratitude for his invaluable presence as a mentor and friend over the years. It is my hope that his support and insights as a dedicatee of Baksa's piccolo concerto will contribute to making this recording a historical document of the paths I chose to walk on.

**Francesco Viola**

At the beginning of the 20th century, the very idea of a piccolo concerto seemed far-fetched. Since then, however, composers have begun to write for it in a solo capacity, bringing it out from its traditional role as the highest instrument in the orchestra. Peter Maxwell Davies and Lowell Liebermann have relished both the challenge and the opportunity of writing concertos for a new instrument, while this collection from Francesco Viola brings together four works forgotten or unrecorded in the repertoire from four Eastern European composers.

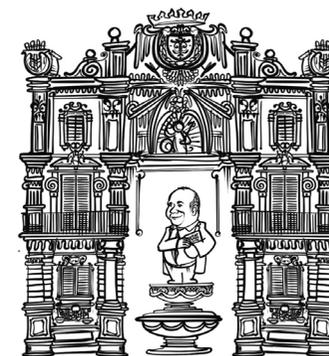
**Andreas Baksa (1950–2015):**  
**Grande concerto piccolo, Op. 54 (2012)**

Romanian composer Andreas Baksa was born close to the Hungarian border, a proximity reflected in his cross-country music. Studying the violin along with composition at Klausenburg, he played in the opera orchestra, using his position to escape to the West during a performance in Vienna.

Baksa wrote freely for woodwind, completing a concerto for bassoon and harp, a duet sonata for flute and clarinet and sonatas for cor anglais and piccolo among other works. The *Grande concerto piccolo* was first recorded by Francesco Viola with piano reduction in 2015. The composer was in attendance, discussing and approving the interpretation.

It is a substantial work, making virtuoso demands on its soloist. As it unfolds Baksa writes fluently for the orchestra's wind section, countering the piccolo with lower register melodies and imaginative scoring. The stern introduction gives way to music of a songful nature in the first movement, the piccolo moving between playful episodes and extended, bittersweet melodies.

The *Molto adagio* contrasts solemn woodwind with bells, as though recalling Stravinsky's *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*. Initially the soloist responds tentatively but soon dominates a chromatic dialogue with the orchestra. The solo line is free spirited and expressive, though occasionally regretful in tone.



The finale, marked *Allegro vivace*, is led off by the piccolo with complementary melodies from the orchestra, with prominent roles for bassoon and percussion. A substantial cadenza lies towards the end before a thoughtful woodwind chorale recalls the second movement. This ushers in the concluding section, where the concerto is heading for a sombre close until a burst of energy revives its fortunes, finishing with a flourish.

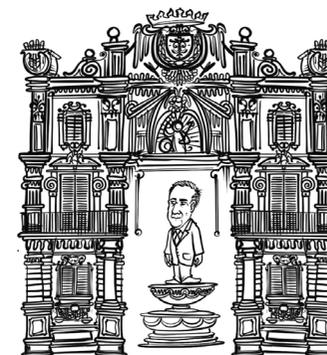
**Uroš Krek (1922–2008):**

**Concertino for Piccolo and Orchestra (1967)**

Uroš Krek lived in Ljubljana for the majority of his 85 years. A pupil of the late Romantic Slovenian composer Lucijan Škerjanc, he held positions including editor at Radio Ljubljana, lecturer at the Ljubljana Academy of Music, member of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, and an honorary member of the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra. His output contains many orchestral works, headed by the *Sinfonietta* of 1951 and the *Violin Concerto* of 1945, both winners of the Prešeren Prize, while he became established as a regular soundtrack composer for RTV Slovenia. The *Concertino for Piccolo and Orchestra* dates from 1967, with forces including harp, celesta and percussion.

It is with hushed tremolo strings that the *Concertino* begins – its enchanted setting embellished by harp, with the piccolo in plaintive voice. Soon the orchestra gathers for an impressive climax, after which confidential dialogue takes place between the piccolo and orchestral soloists, headed by violin and cello. In spite of the piccolo's penetrating tone, Krek often writes thoughtful conversations with the orchestra, and the movement ends with harp and celesta revisiting the opening mood.

The spell is broken by urgent string figurations reflecting the second movement's tempo marking of *Presto*. There are busy exchanges of florid themes, though presently the mood and tempo of the first movement are re-established. The piccolo retreats, conversing with muted trumpet and soft flute, before the *Presto* marking returns. The strings surge forwards with renewed, folksy vigour before the *Concertino* ends with a salvo of timpani.



**Boris Papandopulo (1906–1991):**

**Concertino for Piccolo and Strings (1977)**

Though born in Germany, Boris Papandopulo moved to Zagreb aged six. His grandmother and uncle were prominent actors, and his mother, Croatian opera singer Maja Strozzi, was friends with Stravinsky. Inevitably he turned to the arts at an early age, learning the piano, then studying conducting and composition at the Zagreb Academy of Music. Stravinsky wrote a letter of recommendation enabling him to study in Vienna with Dirk Fock. Papandopulo enjoyed success at the Musikverein with his cantata *Slavoslovije* in 1928, before returning to his homeland to accept positions at the Kolo choral society, Zagreb Opera and the Zagreb Radio Orchestra. Opera remained a big part of Papandopulo's life, though his compositional output includes concertos for soprano voice, harpsichord, timpani and alto saxophone. His belief that he could write for any instrument was put to the test by flautist Tinka Muradori, and by the end of October 1977 Papandopulo had obliged with the modestly titled *Concertino*. Though a relatively late work, it draws on earlier themes in the composer's output.

Starting with a recitative for the soloist over held strings, the first movement of the *Concertino* enjoys balletic exchanges between the two forces. The second movement *Romanca* is solemn and expansive, the piccolo leading nostalgic melodies whose inflections speak of Papandopulo's Balkan heritage. The finale is a busy dance, using a theme from the 'Dance of the Slave Women' in the opera *Marulova pisan*. The piccolo maintains a perky presence above the strings, who enjoy snapping at the soloist's heels before the *Concertino* rushes to an excited conclusion.



**Frigyes Hidas (1928–2007): Oboe Concerto (1951)**  
(arr. F. Viola for piccolo and orchestra, 2019)

Two decades prior, Hungarian composer Frigyes Hidas had completed his *Oboe Concerto*, a diploma piece written in 1951. Living in Budapest, Hidas studied at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music before graduating to major roles as music director at the Budapest National Theatre and Budapest Operetta Theatre. His large output includes a wide selection for soloist and orchestra with works for violin, clarinet, harp, trumpet and tuba, along with inventive combinations such as the *Double Trombone Concerto* of 1989.

The transcription for piccolo and orchestra heard in this recording is by Francesco Viola. The work's dramatic introduction carries the imprint of Liszt, the upbeat to an attractive, dance-based theme in D major. The piccolo contrasts this with a *legato* second theme, after which the lively movement plots an entertaining course, including a substantial cadenza.

A passionate *Andante* follows, its romantic string melody giving way to thoughtful episodes led by the soloist. These collectively rise to a climax bearing the imprint of Kodály or Enescu, the high piccolo grounded by timpani strokes before an expressive *legato* section, which subsides to a tender close. The bracing finale clears the air with energetic exchanges, bolstered by colourful percussion, before the work ends in high spirits.



**Ben Hogwood**

*Composer caricatures by Ernesto Lucas Herrera Orta*

## Francesco Viola



Photo: Angelo Contorno

Francesco Viola (b. 1987) is one of the leading talents of the Italian piccolo scene. Piccolo soloist of the Nationaltheater in Mannheim and Maggio Musicale Fiorentino in Florence, he has performed with the world class orchestras of Teatro alla Scala, SWR, Oper Frankfurt, Oper Stuttgart, Teatro San Carlo, Teatro Massimo di Palermo, Arena di Verona and the Bamberg Symphoniker. His commitment to the piccolo has led him to create new repertoire by publishing his own arrangements, including Krähmer's *Variations for csakan*, and performing contemporary works including Andreas Baksa's *Grande concerto piccolo* and Mike Mower's *Piccolo Sonata*. A passionate teacher, Viola is regularly invited to music universities and international flute festivals to give masterclasses and recitals, his most recent teaching position being flute lecturer at the Conservatorio 'A. Scarlatti' in Palermo. Francesco Viola studied at the Conservatorio 'V. Bellini' in Palermo, at MDW in Vienna and the Conservatoire 'Pierre Barbizet' in Marseille, obtaining the Premier Prix with mention and the Grand Prix de Marseille for piccolo and flute. He was awarded First Prize in the 'Severino Gazzelloni' Competition 2015 for the Piccolo category.

[www.francesco-viola.com](http://www.francesco-viola.com)

## Nationaltheater-Orchestra Mannheim



Photo: Christian Kleiner

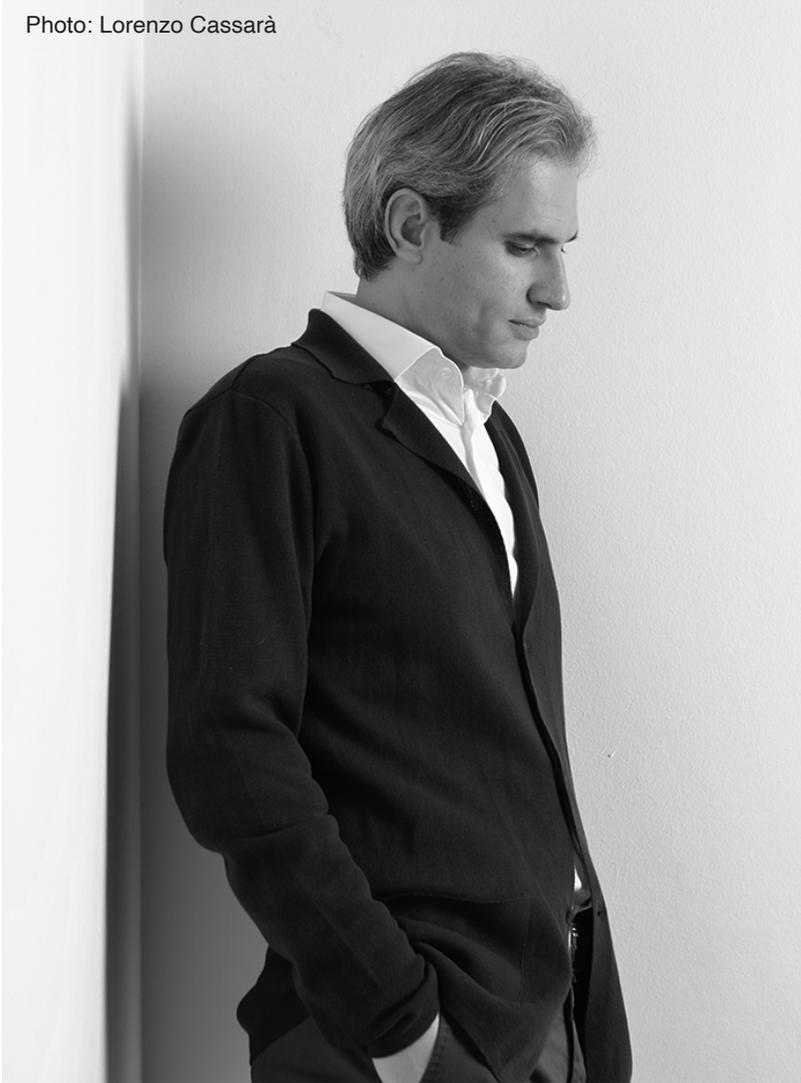
orchestra musicians with artistic independence and financial autonomy. Personalities such as Carl Maria von Weber, Hector Berlioz, Richard Wagner, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Erich Kleiber, Horst Stein, Hans Wallat and Adam Fischer have conducted the orchestra in the past. Roberto Rizzi Brignoli is the new music director, starting with the 2023–24 season.

[www.nationaltheater-mannheim.de](http://www.nationaltheater-mannheim.de)

The beginnings of the Nationaltheater-Orchestra date back to the time of Elector Carl Theodor, whose Mannheim court orchestra was one of the most prestigious orchestras in Europe. The most famous admirer of Mannheim's culture and sound was Mozart, who stayed in Mannheim several times. Composers such as Johann and Anton Stamitz, Christian Cannabich, Ignaz Holzbauer, and Abbé Vogler shaped the orchestral culture of the 'Mannheim School'. The long-standing tradition of performing the works of Wagner was established under the direction of the Kapellmeister brothers Franz and Vinzenz Lachner (1834–72) and continues to this day. Within the framework of the Musical Academy, the members of the Nationaltheater-Orchestra Mannheim are the organisers of one of the oldest concert series in Germany. Since 1779, the Academy concerts have been planned and performed by the

## Salvatore Percacciolo

Photo: Lorenzo Cassarà



The Italian conductor Salvatore Percacciolo is First Kapellmeister of the Nationaltheater in Mannheim since November 2022. He studied piano, composition and orchestral conducting with Piero Bellugi and Bruno Bartoletti attending masterclasses with Jorma Panula and Lorin Maazel. Percacciolo has conducted several opera productions ranging from Baroque to contemporary at the Teatro Massimo Bellini in Catania, Teatro Lirico in Cagliari, Teatro Comunale in Bologna, Teatro Lirico Sperimentale in Spoleto, Festival Puccini in Torre del Lago, Tirana Opera House, Castleton Festival in Virginia and the Royal Opera House in Muscat. Orchestras with which he was worked include La Toscanini in Parma, the Orchestra Sinfonica Siciliana, the Orchestra di Padova e del Veneto, and he has been particularly active with the Rundfunk Sinfonieorchester in Berlin in recent years, as well as collaborating with internationally renowned soloists including Roberto Cominati, Sir James Galway, Calogero Palermo, Giovanni Sollima and Uto Ughi. Percacciolo conducted the world premieres of *Istoria di S. Agata* by Giovanni Sollima and *The world to come* by Birke Beterlsmeier. Since 2020 he has also collaborated with the Philharmonische Camerata of the Berliner Philharmoniker.

[www.salvatorepercacciolo.com](http://www.salvatorepercacciolo.com)

Francesco Viola at the Grande Cretto (Cretto di Burri) in Gibellina, Sicily, by Alberto Burri (1915–1995)



Photo: Angelo Contorno

The idea of a piccolo concerto might have seemed far-fetched at the beginning of the 20th century, but numerous composers have now expanded its role as the highest instrument of the orchestra into a true solo voice. With this recording Francesco Viola has brought together four unknown works by Eastern European composers – the Romanian Andreas Baksa; Slovenian composer Uroš Krek; German-Croatian composer Boris Papandopulo; and Hungarian composer Frigyes Hidas whose *Oboe Concerto* is recorded here in Francesco Viola's transcription for piccolo. All of these concertos are filled with atmosphere, passion and high spirits.

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# PICCOLO CONCERTOS



**Andreas Baksa (1950–2015)**

**Grande concerto piccolo,  
Op. 54 (2012)\***

- |          |                                         |             |
|----------|-----------------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>I. Allegro, brillante e energico</b> | <b>9:22</b> |
| <b>2</b> | <b>II. Molto adagio</b>                 | <b>8:34</b> |
| <b>3</b> | <b>III. Allegro vivace</b>              | <b>7:19</b> |

**Uroš Krek (1922–2008)**  
**Concertino for Piccolo  
and Orchestra (1967)**

- |          |                    |             |
|----------|--------------------|-------------|
| <b>4</b> | <b>I. Moderato</b> | <b>8:13</b> |
| <b>5</b> | <b>II. Presto</b>  | <b>6:07</b> |

**Boris Papandopulo (1906–1991)**

**Concertino for Piccolo  
and Strings (1977)**

- |          |                    |             |
|----------|--------------------|-------------|
| <b>6</b> | <b>I. Predigra</b> | <b>5:00</b> |
| <b>7</b> | <b>II. Romanca</b> | <b>5:43</b> |
| <b>8</b> | <b>III. Igra</b>   | <b>4:40</b> |

**Frigyes Hidas (1928–2007)**  
**Oboe Concerto (1951)**  
(arr. F. Viola for piccolo  
and orchestra, 2019)\*

- |           |                          |             |
|-----------|--------------------------|-------------|
| <b>9</b>  | <b>I. Allegro</b>        | <b>8:35</b> |
| <b>10</b> | <b>II. Andante</b>       | <b>7:03</b> |
| <b>11</b> | <b>III. Allegro vivo</b> | <b>4:56</b> |

**\*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

**Francesco Viola, Piccolo**

**Nationaltheater-Orchester Mannheim • Salvatore Percacciolo**

Recorded: 2 **4–5**, 3–4 **1–3** 4 **6–8** and 5 **9–11** November 2022 at the Börsensaal, Mannheim, Germany  
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