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NINO ROTA
COMPLETE SOLO PIANO WORKS • 2

ELEANOR HODGKINSON

NINO ROTA (1911–1979)

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ELEANOR HODGKINSON, *piano*

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For more information about Nino Rota, please visit www.ninorota.com

1	MOLIÈRE DAL BALLETO 'LE MOLIÈRE IMAGINAIRE' PER PIANOFORTE (1976)*	03:39
2	VARIAZIONI E FUGA NEI DODICI TONI SUL NOME DI BACH (1950)	19:57
3	BALLO DELLA VILLANOTTA IN ERBA (1931)	01:37
4	IPPOLITO GIOCA (1930)	01:43
5	THE LEGEND OF THE GLASS MOUNTAIN (1949) (version for piano)*	04:24
	SUITE DEL CASANOVA DI FEDERICO FELLINI (1976) (version for piano)	23:05
6	I. O Venezia, Venaga, Venusia	04:39
7	II. L'uccello magico	02:42
8	III. Intermezzo della mantide religiosa	05:35
9	IV. The Great Mouna	02:55
10	V. Il duca di Württemberg: 1a parte – VI. Il duca di Württemberg: 2a parte	04:30
11	VII. La Poupée automate	02:44

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12	BAGATELLA (1941)	02:12
13	VALZER (1945)	03:22
	OGNI ANNO PUNTO E DA CAPO – SUITE PER PIANOFORTE (1971)*	08:28
14	I. Il successo se l'afferri	01:40
15	II. È scoccata mezzanotte	02:25
16	III. Milleluci	01:36
17	IV. Viva il palloncino	02:47
	DUE VALZER SUL NOME BACH (1975)	03:44
18	No. 1. Circus-Valzer	01:53
19	No. 2. Valzer-carillon	01:51

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TOTAL TIME: 72:50

NINO ROTA (1911–1979)

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Giovanni (Nino) Rota was born in Milan on the 3 December 1911 and died on 10 April 1979 in Rome aged 67. When Rota was twelve his family enrolled him at the Conservatorio di musica di Milano, and the influence of composition tutors such as Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880–1968) in Milan and Alfredo Casella (1883–1947) in Rome, clearly shaped Rota's musical language. The compositional fusion of a multiplicity of stylistic influences into a cosmopolitan functional language clearly expressed by Pizzetti and Casella resulted in Rota's own musical dialectic being one that projected a similar approach to tonal functionality supplemented with modality, a reinterpretation of 'old' and 'new' within a neo-Classical (or at times Classical modernist) approach.

In 1930, the year before he enrolled in the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, Rota composed a short piece entitled *Ippolito gioca*. It celebrated the 50th birthday of the composer Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880–1968), whose composition classes Rota had attended. The title refers to Pizzetti's son, whose name was Ippolito, and conjures the joys and innocence of childhood play. The overall tonal feel is C major, with a digression into B flat major that proceeds through A flat major for a short time before returning back C major to conclude the piece.

Just a year later, in 1931, Rota composed the *Ballo della Villanotta in erba*, a musical birthday gift to his aunt, and it is again a short work that has, at its heart, a playfulness set in the countryside, Villanotta's dance in the grass.

The *Bagatella* was written in 1941 when Rota was a lecturer at the Conservatorio Niccolò Piccinni in Bari, and published in the Italian applied arts magazine *Domus* in the same year. It is a relatively short work that alternates between expressive

andante sections and rhythmically active *vivace* ones before concluding with a more tranquil section. There are modal impressions in the *andante* sections, with smaller modal inflections in the *vivace* ones, and the progression through various tonal centres give an overarching journey that moves from darkness through to light.

In July 1945, Rota composed *Valzer*, a waltz dedicated to his very close friend, Signora Giovanna Albano Sottomano, who taught with Rota at the Paisiello Music High School in Taranto from 1937 to 1939. It is a charming and technically well-crafted A–B–A ‘salon’ piece with a distinctly French flavour in the A sections, though imbued with Chopin-esque textures in the B section.

Rota, also worked consistently in film scoring, a medium he excelled in. He wrote music for over 170 films, beginning with his first in 1933 *Treno popolare* (‘Tourist Train’), though it was from 1946 that Rota’s growing reputation resulted in him being asked to compose scores for a plethora of Italian films – six each in 1946 and 1947, and eleven in 1948, before the director Henry Cass in 1949, asked him to compose the music for the British film, *The Glass Mountain*, which brought his name to a wider international audience. The film is a poignant love story concerning a pilot (who is also an aspiring composer) shot down over Italy in the Second World War who is rescued by a girl who tells him of a local legend which he transforms into an opera at the end of the war. Stylistically, the music inhabits the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a fusion of Rachmaninov and Puccini extensively. Additionally, Rota reused some of his own music from an earlier film *La donna della montagna* (1943), and chose to include a song called *La montanara*, written by Antonio Orтели and Luigi Pigarelli, that perfectly encapsulated the essence of the Italian Alps where the film was set. Rota also produced a version of the film score for piano and orchestra, following precedents set in the 1940’s with other British films, starting with Richard Addinsell’s *Warsaw Concerto* from the film *Dangerous Moonlight* (1941), followed

by Hubert Bath's *Cornish Rhapsody* from the film *Love Story* (1945), and Charles Williams' *The Dream of Olwen* from the film *While I Live* (1947). These piano and orchestra compositions would collectively become known as 'Denham Concertos' named after the studio in Buckinghamshire built by Alexander Korda in 1935.

The *Variazinoni e fuga* from 1950, is a Proposta and twelve variations concluding with a four-part fugue. In the work he engaged with a multitude of melodic possibilities using the name Bach (BACH) which corresponds to the notes B flat, A, C, B natural. Some are relatively easy to spot (variations 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8 and 11) whilst others use various anagrams of the name (variations 5, 6, 9, 10 and 12) which are sometimes hidden within inner lines, variations 9 and 10 for example. A restatement of the name BACH is an announcement in the first two bars of the fugue before the commencement proper. Rota then proceeds to use BACH on different tonal centres, sometimes using the name backwards and as anagrams within textures, leading to the final *Maestoso* section in which BACH is again more prominent, first as semibreves, then quickening to crotchets, quavers, quaver triplets, and semiquavers, before a final *Largo* bar concludes the work.

Ogni anno punto e da capo, composed in 1971, is based on music of Eduardo de Filippo (1900–1984) written for the one-act play of the same name in 1931 which was being revived for a 1971 performance in Milan. Rota had been asked by de Filippo to edit songs from the 1930s Italian Rivista tradition, and the music provided by Rota illustrated perfectly the *commedia dell'arte* premise of de Filippo's theatrical concept – heroes suffering misfortunes whilst retaining their human dignity.

Rota returned to the use of the name Bach for the piece *Due Valzer sul nome BACH*, composed in 1975 as the director Federico Fellini (1920–1993) was working on the film *Il Casanova*. Fellini had asked Rota to write pieces he could use during the actual filming and these two waltzes became essential material for the film score as

a whole. Within the two waltzes – *Circus-Valzer* and *Valzer-carillon*, Rota again uses variations and anagrams of BACH that suffuse the descriptive notions exemplified through the titles. The *Circus-Valzer* initially uses the cryptogram BACH within sections of a harmonically static nature, though with changes of tonal centre and figuration. The *Valzer-carillon* has a lilting hypnotic aspect with semitonal shifts that again engages with various anagrams of BACH that are juxtaposed with material that has a more dissonant edge.

The music for the film *Il Casanova di Federico Fellini* (1976) used the *Due Valzer sul nome BACH* that Rota had written the year before, however the musical meaning that is now combined with the visual imagery, a process known as ‘semantic looping’ allowed emotional and psychological differences to appear in the narrative communication with the audience. The seven pieces chosen that form the suite from the film perfectly illustrate this and offer a glimpse into the mind and rationale of the characters on screen. In the first piece *O Venezia, Venaga, Venusia* and the seventh piece *La Poupée automate*, the repetitive patterns in the bass, undulating melodic lines that turn in on themselves, and the repetition and juxtaposition of material results in obsessive, but emotionally empty, implications regarding Casanova’s inner self. The second piece *L’uccello magico* uses material derived from the *Valzer-carillon* with again repetitive circling figuration which is slightly comedic, dissonant chords that fail to resolve and an overall effect that verges on an obsessive-compulsive characterisation. The third piece *Intermezzo della mantide religiosa* has at the start a series of chords that have a harmonic linkage though without fully resolving after which a melodic line emphasises a long held note a semitone lower than expected in a chromatically displaced way. A series of key changes with material that uses textural and figural variations, interspersed with the use of a symbolic chord that proffers pain and passion, leads us back to the opening material, though in a reverse order. The fourth piece *The Great Mouna* uses three main blocks of material assembled in various ways, opening with material from *O Venezia, Venaga, Venusia*

and *La Poupée automate*. Here though, the obsessive nature of the material is more driven and unsettling. The fifth and six pieces, *Il duca di Württemberg, part 1* and *part 2*, share some similarities – dense repetitive chordal writing that is an obvious homage to Igor Stravinsky (*part 1*) combined with a melodic line from *O Venezia, Venaga, Venusia* and *La Poupée automate*. Also, in *part 1* there is a chordal and textural appropriation from Stravinsky's ballet *The Rite of Spring*, specifically *The Augurs of Spring* section and its interpretative meaning as commodity production, which Rota makes the analogy of sex as a societal commodity in relation to Casanova and the aristocracy. In *part 2*, which has some textures reminiscent of Carl Orff, there is another quotation, this time a melodic figure that was used in Rota's score to *The Godfather* (1971) making the analogy between Michael Corleone and Casanova, both unable to truly escape the direction their lives have taken.

The ballet *Le Molière Imaginaire*, composed in 1976, at the behest of the choreographer Maurice Bejárt, celebrates the life of the French dramatist and comic playwright Jean Baptiste Poquelin (1622–1673) better known as Molière. The seven sections that constitute the piece illustrate various aspects of Molière's life, places, and people within it. The second section in the set illustrates Molière's overall character, a man who was overtly charismatic, but also a wonderful social commentator regarding the multitude of life's absurdities and hypocrisies. In this second section, and throughout the work as a whole, Rota imbues the music with a variety of stylistic juxtapositions, a characteristic of Rota's overall musical pluralism, and one that defines his compositional output.

Dr Carl Alexander Vincent

ELEANOR HODGKINSON

Pianist Eleanor Hodgkinson divides her time between performing, teaching and writing. A versatile chamber musician, she has been part of numerous cross-genre projects, having performed and recorded with Mid Wales Opera, Southern Sinfonia, Orchestra of the Swan and Nevill Holt Opera. Hodgkinson has long-standing duo partnerships with cellist Nick Stringfellow and pianist Jakob Fichert, and as writer she has devised many educational projects. In 2014 she founded BabyGigs C.I.C., which presents musical events for under sevens and their adults. The company is frequently commissioned for community projects, and its musical story shows have featured in many UK festivals. Hodgkinson is the keyboard coordinator at the Junior Academy of the Royal Academy of Music, where she has taught piano and chamber music for over 20 years; additionally, she is the specialist piano tutor for the LRAM teaching qualification. She is a principal lecturer in piano at Leeds Conservatoire and an external examiner at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and the Royal College of Music. Hodgkinson is regularly invited to give masterclasses and adjudicate competitions in conservatoires and schools, and is also a trainer and examiner for the ABRSM. An award-winning student, Hodgkinson studied with Renna Kellaway and Carole Presland at the Royal Northern College of Music. She undertook the postgraduate course in accompaniment at the Royal Academy of Music with Malcolm Martineau, with further study at IMS Prussia Cove and with her piano trio at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Canada. In 2013 she obtained an MA in music psychology from the University of Sheffield.

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NINO ROTA
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Nino Rota's iconic score for *The Godfather* is typical of his neo-Classicism – or 'Classical modernist' language – a cosmopolitan and functional musical style inspired by his teachers Pizzetti and Casella. This second and final volume of Rota's solo piano music ranges from *Ippolito gioca*, an early piece celebrating Pizzetti's 50th birthday, to a large-scale *Variations and Fugue* on the name Bach that concludes with a four-part fugue. The psychologically expressive music Rota composed for Federico Fellini's film *Il Casanova* is also featured, alongside the piece *Molière* from his music for the ballet *Le Molière imaginaire*.



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