

A close-up portrait of a man with grey hair and a beard, looking down and to the left. He is wearing a white shirt. The background is dark and out of focus.

Malipiero

PIANO WORKS

PIANO
CLASSICS

Alessandro Riccardi

GIAN FRANCESCO MALIPIERO 1882-1973

PIANO WORKS

Preludi autunnali

1	Preludio Autunnale I	3'52
2	Preludio Autunnale II	3'00
3	Preludio Autunnale III	4'15
4	Preludio Autunnale IV	3'08

Maschere che passano

5	I. Allegro vivace molto capriccioso	1'26
6	II. Lento ma non troppo con una certa goffaggine	2'00
7	III. Mosso Spiritato	1'00
8	IV. Un poco ritenuto con enfasi grottesca	2'25
9	V. Vivacissimo Furiosamente	1'03

Omaggi

10	I. A un pappagallo	2'16
11	II. A un elefante	2'45
12	III. A un idiota	1'34
13	A Claudio Debussy	2'25

6 Morceaux

14	I. Serenata	3'49
15	II. Scherzando	1'50
16	III. Notturmo pastorale	3'09
17	IV. Bizzarria	1'41
18	V. All'alba	3'37
19	VI. Tarantella	2'22

3 Danze antiche

20	I. Gavotta	2'58
21	II. Minuetto	4'10
22	III. Giga	3'48

Alessandro Riccardi *piano*

Gian Francesco Malipiero (1882-1973) was one of the most significant Italian composers of the 20th century, known for his contribution to the rediscovery of Italian musical tradition and for his ability to blend elements of early music with the avant-garde of his time. Born in Venice, Malipiero grew up in a rich cultural environment, influenced by the presence of sacred music and the Italian operatic heritage. He studied in Vienna and Berlin, but his style was profoundly shaped by his encounter with the music of Claudio Monteverdi and his cultural exchange with contemporary composers such as Igor Stravinsky and Alfredo Casella. Malipiero was also one of the first to reevaluate Italian instrumental music from the 17th and 18th centuries. His output is vast and varied, including symphonies, operas, chamber music, instrumental works, and choral compositions. Among his most celebrated works are his symphonies, which reflect his quest for a personal and original musical language, where melody, polyphony, and timbral resonance play a central role. His music is characterized by a strong sense of lyricism, a refined use of orchestration, and deep expressiveness, often imbued with a sense of nostalgia and contemplation. Malipiero was also an important editor and musicologist, dedicated to studying and publishing the complete works of Claudio Monteverdi and the instrumental works of Antonio Vivaldi. His commitment to promoting the Italian musical heritage has had a lasting impact on musicology and historically informed performance, making him a prominent figure in 20th-century musical culture. Malipiero's piano music, on the other hand, represents a significant and fascinating aspect of his extensive compositional output, although it is less well-known compared to his orchestral and theatrical works. His approach to the piano reflects his ongoing search for a distinctive musical language, characterised by a balance between tradition and innovation. Malipiero approached the instrument with

a sense of expressive freedom, avoiding the conventions of pure virtuosity and preferring a more intimate and reflective language. His piano compositions range from short lyrical pieces to more structured and complex works, in which influences can be recognized from Italian early music to the modernity of Debussy, Casella, Stravinsky, and Scriabin. In this context, Malipiero's piano music emerges as a creative laboratory, where harmonic experimentation and the search for new expressive forms intertwine with a deep respect for the past. The program of this recording includes a selection of pieces from Malipiero's output for solo piano, covering a time span of the first two decades of the 20th century. The *6 Morceaux* are a series of six short piano pieces composed by Malipiero in 1905, which, like other works, were part of his 'repudiated works.' This first period, fully part of his youthful phase of discovery and learning, was characterized by formative experiences he had after returning to Venice from travels with his father to Trieste, Berlin, and Vienna. In 1899 Malipiero enrolled in the Liceo Musicale of Venice (now the Conservatory 'Marcello'), where he studied counterpoint with composer Marco Enrico Bossi (1861-1925), though without excelling. In 1902 – the year Bossi moved to Bologna – Malipiero independently came into contact with 16th, 17th, and 18th-century Italian music preserved in the Biblioteca Marciana, starting to transcribe the music of Claudio Monteverdi, Claudio Merulo, Girolamo Frescobaldi, Baldassarre Galuppi, Alessandro Stradella, Giuseppe Tartini, and other contemporaries. This experience greatly developed Malipiero's artistic consciousness, and when he moved to Bologna in 1904 to continue his studies with Bossi, he received praise from his teacher and graduated from the Liceo Musicale of Bologna (now the Conservatory 'Martini') with the late-19th-century-style symphonic poem *Dai Sepolcri* (1904), inspired by Ugo Foscolo's *I sepolcri*. The *6 Morceaux* – composed a

year later – thus represent the first expression of Malipiero's compositional personality, where modal influences intersect with late 19th-century trends. The first of these pieces, *Serenata*, is in ternary form, with a lyrical and contrapuntal character, animated by the driving rhythm of irregular figurations and archaic-sounding harmonies. The second piece, titled *Scherzando*, is brighter in character and maintains the same form as the previous piece, weaving together a succession of brisk rhythmic figurations and chords supported by meticulous articulation, rigorously annotated. *Notturmo pastorale* is the third piece in this collection, immediately displaying significant folk influences (the introduction recalls Chopin's *Mazurka Op.56 No.2*), coloured by the Aeolian mode, onto which a melody of ancient flavor, characterized by embellishments and rhythmically irregular groupings with a pathetic character, is superimposed. John C. G. Waterhouse, a great scholar and biographer of Malipiero, finds in this piece certain influences from the contemporary poetry of Pascoli and the 'crepuscolari' (twilight poets), and from a musical perspective, he notes some influence from Janáček's piano pieces *Po zarostlém chodníču* (1902-8), although Malipiero only became acquainted with Janáček after World War I. The fourth piece, *Bizzarria*, is certainly the most dissonant and rich in harmonic ripples with a tragicomic flavor that pushes well beyond the key of G minor. This piece would be an early experiment in a grotesque style that would develop later in Malipiero's output, as in the last of the *Preludi autunnali* from 1914, composed most likely under the influence of Alfredo Casella, which will be analyzed later. The fifth and sixth pieces present two divergent characters: *All'alba* is a polyphonic piece of great charm, seemingly without direction, consciously leaving the listener immersed in a polyphony, at times serene, at times agitated; the final piece of the collection, *Tarantella*, is naturally of a popular character, where,

as seen before, a mixture of ancient and modern elements is once again invigorated by the liveliest folk dance from southern Italy. These six pieces, which fully embody Malipiero's phase of self-discovery, were first published in 1907 in Milan by Carisch & Jänichen, and a posthumous reprint titled *6 pezzi* was issued in 1975. Shortly thereafter came the *Tre Danze antiche*, which reflect another side of Malipiero's compositional personality, bringing to light a neo-18th-century style. As Waterhouse notes, it is surprising how few pre-1920 compositions prominently feature archaic characteristics: the *Tre danze antiche* and *Canto notturno di un pastore errante dell'Asia* are, in fact, the only exceptions where the purely ancient character is not used only transiently. The first of these three dances, *Gavotta*, is a small charming piano piece in binary meter derived from the contemporaneous *Sinfonia del silenzio* (see the episode "Ritmo di un'antica danza") contained in *Sinfonie del silenzio e de la morte* (ca. 1910). The second dance, *Minuetto*, is a piece with a graceful and naïvely nostalgic character, driven by a dotted rhythm. The last dance is a *Giga*, and is probably the most intricate and complex of the 'ancient' triad in terms of melody, motives, and structure. These three charming pieces were published in Leipzig in 1910 by D. Rahter. From this year onwards, a deep and lasting relationship with the Venetian town of Asolo began. The aforementioned *Preludi autunnali* were composed in Venice in September 1914 and foreshadow a period of "perpetual tragedy" caused by the outbreak of World War I. As Malipiero himself wrote in his 1952 notes: "Their melancholy is perhaps the effect of the war just begun and not yet felt." The influences Waterhouse identifies in the first two pieces of the collection are primarily of a Ravelian type, but especially in the first *Preludio*, he finds similarities with the music of Scriabin. In the third *Preludio*, one can feel the experience of Mussorgsky, while the fourth piece is perhaps the most

dissonant of the collection, which, as mentioned earlier, brings out Malipiero's grotesque style in a new, more violent light, probably influenced by the work of Alfredo Casella (1883-1947). The two composers were in close correspondence, and Malipiero was surely inspired for the composition by Casella's *Nove pezzi per pianoforte Op.24*, written in the same period; despite their mutual influence, their relationship was mainly based more on friendship and encouragement. The four *Preludi autunnali* were published in Paris in 1917 by the publisher Rouart Lerolle. From 1921 Malipiero became associated with the Italian Society of Modern Music, which was founded in 1917 in Rome by Casella. *Maschere che passano* are instead a precursor of Malipiero's future theatrical interest in the mask. This collection of five pieces, composed in Rome during October and November of 1918, is characterized by a freedom almost deriving from improvisational practice, with a strong effect of unpredictability and piano sonorities that are modes of expression in their own right. The first piece (*Allegro vivace. Molto capriccioso*) has violent and almost frenetic traits, while the title of the second piece (*Lento ma non troppo. Con una certa goffaggine*) clearly reflects the character of the music, awkward but also containing a deep sense of gravity. The last three pieces of the collection, on the other hand, are of a contrast in nature: the third and fifth pieces tend towards violence, dissonance, and even a sense of possession, while the fourth piece (*Un poco ritenuto. Con enfasi grottesca*) oscillates between an atmosphere of suspension and grotesque presence. These pieces were published in London by Chester in 1920. As previously mentioned, a fundamental component of Malipiero's artistic career was his dialogue with other composers, both past and contemporary. One of these was Claude Debussy (1862-1918). In fact, his work *A Claudio Debussy* (To Claude Debussy) is dedicated to the French composer, whose stylistic

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elements are clearly detectable in the piece. This piece was composed in Rome in May 1920 and was published in London the following year by Chester. Instead, the *Tre Omaggi* (Three Homages) are not dedicated to significant personalities like Debussy, but rather humorously *A un pappagallo*, *A un elefante*, *A un idiota* (To a parrot, To an elephant, To an idiot). According to Waterhouse, these pieces are some of the best examples of Malipiero's grotesque style, and, though blatantly comical, contain subtle irony. At the beginning of the second piece, for instance, the "heavily yet silently treading steps of an elephant" are evoked. These three pieces were composed in Capri in August 1920 and published in London by Chester the following year. In conclusion, this disc of piano music by Gian Francesco Malipiero offers a fascinating journey through a repertoire rich in expressive nuances, harmonic, and contrapuntal innovations. Throughout his music, the piano becomes an instrument for personal introspection and sonic exploration, while maintaining a strong connection to Italian tradition and, at the same time, looking toward the future. The selection of works included in this collection reveals the depth of his musical thought, his stylistic freedom, and his constant desire for experimentation.

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Translated by Alessandro Riccardi

Currently a professor at the Conservatory of Vibo Valentia (Italy), Alessandro Riccardi has taught piano at Ball State University (Muncie, Indiana, USA) for the academic years 2019/2020/2021, held masterclasses at the Conservatory of Livorno, the Universidad del Yucatán (Mérida, Mexico) and at the Festival dei Colli di San Gemini (TR), in collaboration with the University of Łódź (Poland). After participating in piano festivals at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice, the Settimane Musicali at the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza, the Giovine Orchestra Genovese, and the Ferruccio Busoni International Piano Competition in Bolzano, Riccardi embarked on tours across Europe and America, performing at various concert halls, including: Teatro degli Arcimboldi (Milan), Palais des Congrès (Paris), Wiener Stadthalle (Vienna), Hallenstadion (Zurich), Geneva Arena (Geneva), Porsche Arena (Stuttgart), Palacio Vistalegre and Teatro Albéniz (Madrid), Palacio Euskalduna (Bilbao), Indiana Wesleyan University (Marion, IN, USA), Universidad del Yucatán (Mérida, Mexico), and Teatro Goldoni (Livorno). He has also distinguished himself in piano competitions such as the "Indianapolis Matinee Musicale" (IN, USA), "Val Di Sole" (TN), and "Jan Langosz Città di Bardolino" (VR). In 2017, he won a competition to perform Schumann's Piano Concerto with the Orchestra Monteverdi of Bolzano and made his debut at the Krzysztof Penderecki Hall in Radom (Poland) and the Athanas Kurtev Hall in Kjustendil (Bulgaria). During a tour in Mexico in 2019, Alessandro held a lecture-recital titled "Alexander Scriabin, the Romantic Soul of Early Piano Works." In 2020, he recorded a monographic album on Scriabin's works for Da Vinci Publishing (Osaka, Japan), including the world premiere of the unfinished Ballade Ahn.14. This discographic project was endorsed by Alexander Serafimovic Scriabin, President of the Moscow Scriabin Association and relative of the renowned Russian composer. In 2021, marking the Dante year, Alessandro released

a monographic album on Franz Liszt's music inspired by Italian literature: *Franz Liszt Pèlerinage en Italie, a Piano Journey in Italian Poetry*. In 2022, the album was presented in recital form at the University of Zurich during the international conference commemorating 700 years since Dante Alighieri's death, and at the University of Potsdam (Germany) during the conference "Dante and Botticelli." The album received a 5-star rating from Amadeus magazine, and in October 2022, Alessandro Riccardi was invited to perform live and give an interview at the RAI Studios in Milan during the program Piazza Verdi on Rai Radio 3. In 2023, Alessandro gave a recital titled "Images of Nature" at the Universities of Uppsala and Potsdam, participating in the international conferences "Mediating Words and Images" and "Le monde végétal, des crépuscules des Lumières à la fin du XIXe siècle." Also in 2023, he began a project to rediscover composer G. F. Malipiero with pianist Roberto Prosseda, performing in Asolo (TV) in front of Villa Malipiero and holding a lecture-concert for Rai 5 on the 50th anniversary of the composer's death. Riccardi studied at the Conservatories of Livorno, Bolzano, and Rovigo, graduating with top marks and honors in Piano performance and Music Pedagogy. He furthered his studies at the Karol Szymanowski Music Academy in Katowice (Poland) with Professors Andrzej Jasinski and Wojciech Switala and earned an Artist Diploma in Piano Performance from Ball State University (IN, USA), where he has taught piano and worked as a collaborative pianist for instrumental, vocal, choral, and ballet classes.



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