



**BUSONI**

DDD

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**Complete Works for Cello and Piano**

**Serenade • Little Suite  
Finnish Variations**

**Duo Pecipelli**



## Ferruccio Benvenuto Busoni (1866-1924) • Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)

### Works for Cello and Piano

What are the elements in common between Ottorino Respighi and Ferruccio Busoni, apart from the fact that they are both Italian composers who lived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century? At first one would say that the differences between them are more numerous than the similarities; on closer examination of the two composers, however, it is possible to see some points of contact. A cursory glance at their respective biographies reveals initially that both Respighi and Busoni had an international musical training that decisively influenced the future course of their careers. Respighi, in fact, studied in Bologna with Martucci, but also at St Petersburg with Rimsky-Korsakov and in Berlin with Bruch; the Italian-German Busoni followed regular courses of instruction in Graz, but received advice from Boito in Bologna, from Rubinstein and Brahms in Vienna, from Reinecke in Leipzig and from other eminent composers who heard him as an infant prodigy on tour in Europe.

Both Respighi and Busoni fought for a reevaluation of Italian music of the past and for the creation of a national school; as far as Respighi is concerned, his enthusiasm for the glorious Italian sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is well known, shared also by other composers of the so-called 'generation of the 80s', Pizzetti, Malipiero and Casella. Less well known is Busoni's passion for the masterpieces of early Italian polyphony; yet from his correspondence there often emerge the names of Scarlatti, Marcello, Jommelli, scores of whose music he sought to have published. The practice of transcription was also shared by both composers: Respighi's works include a notable number of arrangements of Tartini, Monteverdi, Vivaldi and others. As far as Busoni is concerned, transcription was second nature to him and he transcribed not only music by Bach but also works of Mozart, Beethoven, Liszt, Brahms and Wagner, and even of his own music, of which there often exist different versions.

There remain, naturally, fundamentally different

aesthetic choices: the musical language of Respighi remains always tied to the tonal system, with a strong tendency towards the revival of ancient Gregorian modes. His instrumental taste shows a debt to Rimsky-Korsakov, but also to Debussy and Strauss. Busoni's mature style, by contrast, goes beyond tonality, touching first on the atonality of Schoenberg, then to find sublimation in 'new classicism', as he himself defined the stylistic stage he reached in his final years. Busoni's use of the orchestra is certainly less attractive than that of Respighi: here one can distinguish a German background, but treated in a very personal way. The works included in the present recording, nevertheless, go back to the early years of the two composers (with the exception of the transcriptions by Busoni) and so can be heard side by side.

The present release starts with Respighi's *Adagio con variazioni* (1903-1910), written when he was very young and then transcribed for cello and orchestra. The theme of the *Adagio* is by Antonio Certini, a cellist friend of Respighi in Bologna and the dedicatee of the work. In the formal structure and the treatment of the string instrument there is a possible precedent in Bruch's *Kol Nidrei* of 1881; Respighi's work, moreover, anticipates certain moods of Bloch's *Schelomo* (1915). This does not mean, naturally, that the thematic material used is derived from traditional national sources, but that the element common to the three works is rather that of a singing theme of traditional pattern. It could, indeed, be interesting to study more deeply how this singing instrumental quality of Respighi may be related to his transcriptions of the works of early Italian composers, already many in number before the *Adagio* was composed.

While it is a mere hypothesis that the *Adagio con variazioni* may in some way have a debt to other music arranged by Respighi, the Bach-Busoni *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue* of 1917 is to all intents and purposes a transcription. For many concert-goers after

the second world war Bach-Busoni constitutes a kind of double-barrelled name, like Wolf-Ferrari or Pick-Mangiagalli: the figure of Busoni came to be covered by the giant shadow of Bach, without too many problems. In this case we have a division into two of a work written for keyboard that has to be played by two instruments; without going into too many technical details, it is extraordinary how Busoni preserves the appearance of a grand solo improvisation in the *Chromatic Fantasia*, with scales, runs and recitatives for cello and piano. In the fugue the division of labour is simpler: Busoni takes one of the three voices entrusted to the keyboard by Bach and appropriates it for the string instrument.

The *Kleine Suite, Opus 23* (1885-86) is not a transcription, but, like the greater part of the compositions of Busoni in his twenties, pays its debt to the spirit of Johann Sebastian Bach. It is, in fact, a kind of idealised reconstruction of a Bach suite, with some concessions towards instrumental idioms of late romanticism. It opens with a *Moderato ma energico* that is a true *Corrente*, with a relatively dense contrapuntal dialogue between the instruments; this is followed by an *Andantino, con grazia* that takes the place of an *Aria*. The succeeding *Mässig, doch frisch* recalls movements of Bach's *Partitas* with the titles of *Capriccio*, or *Scherzo*, or *Rondo*, while the *Sostenuto ed espressivo* is at all intents and purposes a *Sarabande*. The final *Moderato ma con brio* to some extent moves away from the model and offers writing suggesting Schumann.

Dated some years earlier, the *Serenata, Opus 34* (1883) is actually a transcription of the last movement of the *Suite, Opus 10* (1878) for clarinet. Comparison between the first and second versions of the work is illuminating in its revelation of the growing maturity of a boy between the ages of twelve and seventeen, although Busoni is more familiar with the clarinet, of

which his father was a recognised virtuoso, than with the cello. The writing for the cello is more extended and more careful, but also it is much freer and more personal in its harmony and in its thematic development; the ternary form is treated with authority and the return of the central element in a coda gives unity to the whole piece.

Five years later Busoni turned again to the cello, writing a series of ten short variations on a Finnish folksong, *Kultaselle* (1878). He had already made use of Finnish folk-music in his piano duet *Finnländische Volksweisen, Opus 27* (1889). *Kultaselle* is more developed both from the point of view of harmony and in concertante writing: Busoni, who was nevertheless very critical of his own youthful compositions, kept it in his repertoire and in his final years thought even of preparing a new version. Perhaps he treasured these variations because they recalled the period he had spent in Helsinki, when he had met his wife; or perhaps he found that it was his best contribution to cello repertoire, beside, of course, the transcriptions.

The present release ends with another transcription, in this case of a late work of Liszt, the *Valse oubliée* that Busoni split between the two instruments in the same year of 1917 in which he had made a similar arrangement of the *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue*. Here too we meet a surprising result that modifies the timbre of Liszt's chords, immersing the whole piece in an atmosphere that seems to prefigure early Bartók. In particular, the three-string *pizzicati* of the cello and the exploitation of the upper register in the ending shifts the sonority of this waltz, already very advanced harmonically in Liszt's version, towards the twentieth century, of which Busoni was one of the greatest prophets.

**Marco Vincenzi**

*English version by Keith Anderson*

## **Duo Pepicelli**

**Angelo Pepicelli, piano • Francesco Pepicelli, cello**

The Duo Pepicelli owe much to the Trio di Trieste at the Fiesole School of Music, to Rocco Filippini at the Stauffer Academy, to Bruno Canino, and to their early training at the Terni and Perugia Conservatories. The Duo has won prizes in all the major Italian chamber music competitions, as well as in the International Gui Competition in Florence and the International Chamber Music Competition in Caltanissetta. The brothers have appeared in concert either together or as soloists since 1982, with engagements that have taken them to musical centres throughout Europe, to the United States, Japan and Turkey. In their various recordings they have given particular attention to Italian repertoire and the works of composers such as Martucci, Casella and Petrassi, among others.






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 Playing Time  
67:52


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BUSONI: Complete Works for Cello and Piano

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Increasingly recognised as one of the most important 20th century composers, Busoni combines German and Italian strains in his music, reflecting his own ancestry and life. His early study of Bach, a continuing influence on his work, led to the famous series of piano transcriptions that coupled his own name with that of Bach, and to the rare transcription of the *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue* for cello and piano. The early *Little Suite*, written in 1886, suggests the more indirect influence of the same composer, while *Kultaselle* recalls Busoni's association with Finland. Respighi's *Adagio con variazioni* for cello and piano is among his early works, which he later arranged for cello and orchestra.

1 **Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936): Adagio con variazioni** 13:28

**Ferruccio Benvenuto Busoni (1866-1924):**

**Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue**  
(transcription from J. S. Bach)

14:00

2 **Chromatic Fantasia**

7:40

3 **Fugue**

6:20

**Kleine Suite (Little Suite), Op. 23 (Kind. 215)**

19:40

4 **Moderato ma energico**

2:46

5 **Andantino, con grazia**

4:14

6 **(Altes Tanzliedchen) Mässig, doch frisch**

2:17

7 **Sostenuto ed espressivo**

4:43

8 **Moderato ma con brio**

5:40

9 **Serenata, Op. 34 (Kind. 196)**

7:27

10 **Kultaselle: Ten Variations on a Finnish Folk Song (Kind. 237)**

9:44

11 **Valse oubliée (transcription from Franz Liszt)**

3:34

### Duo Pepicelli

Angelo Pepicelli, Piano • Francesco Pepicelli, Cello

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