

SGAMBATI

COMPLETE PIANO MUSIC

VOLUME 1

PIANO
CLASSICS



Gaia Federica Caporiccio

GIOVANNI SGAMBATI 1841-1914

COMPLETE PIANO MUSIC | VOLUME 1

Prélude et Fugue Op.6	Nocturnes Op.20	
1. Prélude	3'45 13. No.1 in B minor	4'01
2. Fugue	7'34 14. No.2 in G	2'36
	15. No.3 in C minor	5'47
Deux Études de Concert Op.10		
3. Tranquillo	4'48 16. Nocturne in B	
4. Agitato	7'22 "Per l'album di Bellini"	5'18
	17. Nocturne Op.31 in D-flat	4'18
5. Étude Triomphale in A	2'24 18. Nocturne Op.33 in E	4'17
	19. Nocturne in G	4'00
Six Pièces Lyriques Op.23		
6. Rapelle-toi!	3'02 Impromptus	
7. Á la Fontaine	2'07 20. Allegretto in E flat	4'03
8. Vox Populi	3'24 21. Allegro moderato in B-flat	3'14
9. Do-do	2'42 22. Allegretto grazioso in E-flat	4'39
10. Ländler	1'34 23. Animato allegramente in E	5'17
11. Gigue	1'44 24. Andantino in A	2'32
	25. Allegro appassionato ma	
12. Sérénade Valsée	3'29 non troppo mosso in F-sharp minor	4'55
	26. Gavotte Op.14	4'10

"Sgambati begins at a point that most never even reach"

F. Liszt

When **Giovanni Sgambati**'s parents first heard their son play the piano, they realized it was highly unlikely that he would become a lawyer, doctor or teacher, which were the professions they had previously had in mind for him. Clearly he had a vocation for music that would shape his life to come. Born in Rome in 1841, he initially studied music with Amerigo Barberi, then harmony under Tiberio Natalucci and counterpoint with Giovanni Aldega, obtaining a first-class diploma at the Accademia di Santa Cecilia.

A major turning point in his career came about when he was in his early twenties, and was beginning to make a name for himself as a musician. This was right at the time when Franz Liszt, who was by then a composer of international renown, was spending time in Rome, where he happened to witness Giovanni Sgambati's remarkable talent. The younger musician immediately became his favourite pupil and close collaborator: not only the faithful interpreter of his own compositions, but also a partner in the shared mission of increasing appreciation of classical music among Roman society of the period. Sgambati's home became the headquarters of Liszt's Roman school, and it was here that the great teacher and composer taught the foremost pianists of the time. Sgambati was the first musician to conduct Liszt's *Sinfonia Dantesca* and Beethoven's *Third Symphony*. Thereafter he accompanied Liszt on his travels, and was introduced to Richard Wagner, who so admired his compositions that he recommended him to the German publisher Schott. His fame thus grew apace, leading to concerts throughout Europe and in Russia. He received invitations and attestations of admiration from the foremost contemporary musicians. Apart from Liszt and Wagner, he also enjoyed the friendship of Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Grieg, Massenet, Busoni

Gaia Federica Caporiccio piano

and Alderighi. Thanks to his impetus, musical life in Rome grew richer and more lively. Following the death of Nikolai Rubinstein, Sgambati was invited to take over as director of the Moscow Conservatoire, a highly prestigious position that he ultimately turned down. His focus was to raise and enhance his own musical environment, rather than that of a foreign country.

In pursuing this mission, he strove to be more than an excellent performer and organizer. In 1874, along with the violinist Ettore Pinelli, he founded the Liceo di Santa Cecilia, a school that was free of charge for talented musicians who could not afford a fee. He was a skilled and popular teacher, training a generation of pianists who never forgot how much he was able to give them. He died in Rome in 1914, in his apartment in Piazza di Spagna.

Giovanni Sgambati was a modern musician who would not have been out of place in today's musical scene. Far from being closed within the confines of his art, he was always interested in what his audiences wanted, adapting his concert programs to their tastes, making his performances essentially enjoyable and educating his listeners by introducing them to the great music of other European countries. He was not attracted by the idea of making a fine career for himself abroad, where he would probably have received even greater honours and gratification. His aim was to contribute to the awakening of musical life in his own environment, where his extraordinary technical skill (he was a superb virtuoso player) allowed him to share with his audiences the masterpieces he chose to perform. All this was a far cry from any form of musical exhibitionism. When he first started playing in public, audiences in Rome and Italy in general were somewhat hidebound in their tastes in piano music, appreciating little beyond fantasias on opera motifs. Thanks to his input, in time they also got to know and delight in many facets of the works of Beethoven, Schumann, Chopin and Bach.

There are three distinct aspects to Sgambati's professional activity that are intrinsically related and mutually influential: he was at one and the same time a pianist, a composer and a teacher, and in each of these three realms proved to be a true artist, a man of refined feelings, exquisite taste and unfailing love for music in its most elevated forms.

The piano music

Giovanni Sgambati's piano compositions largely consist of short pieces. Because he wished to make his concert programs accessible to the widest possible public, he paid special attention to dynamics and variety, such that the works are particularly enjoyable for today's audiences as well. Brevity does not imply simplicity, however, since they are the creations of an excellent pianist that call for great technical skill and insight on the part of the player. Full of echoes of the Liszt school, these short works last on average no more than 8 minutes, each one astounding in its solid, well-defined structure, innovative ideas, interesting harmonic solutions and overall mastery of musicality and expression. Alongside the numerous miscellaneous collections with their references to daily life, there are more classical genres such as the Prelude and Fugue, the Studies, Nocturnes and Improvisations. Sgambati could address a wide range of different types of music and was equally at home with more complex and refined compositions as he was with simpler pieces. From the technical point of view, he was able to reconcile the potential of the instrument with the physical reality of the hands, so that even when his works appear to be highly demanding they are actually comfortable to play.

Sgambati's compositions are detailed and precise, with plentiful indications for the pianist that reveal his desire to clarify all possible aspects of what he

had in mind. Although nothing is left to chance, since each annotation is the fruit of deep reflection, in some magical way each piece embodies a sort of immediacy that almost suggests improvisation.

Published and unpublished works

I would like to conclude this brief introduction with a note regarding Giovanni Sgambati's scores. Although Schott published the bulk of his works, when he died a considerable number of unpublished manuscript scores came to light. Some of these were later published by Boccaccini & Spada, as part of what was conceived as an edition of his complete piano works. However, the scores for this collection are not intrinsically complete, since a number of pieces are missing. Moreover, in many cases there are noteworthy differences between the two editions. I thus decided to acquire photographs of the manuscript scores kept in the Biblioteca Casanatense and in the Library of the Accademia di S. Cecilia in Rome, in order to provide listeners with the most correct version possible. Enjoy!

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Translation by Kate Singleton

"Sgambati comincia dove molti neppure finiscono"

F. Liszt

Quando i genitori di **Giovanni Sgambati** sentirono il loro figlio suonare il pianoforte per le prime volte, capirono presto che avrebbero dovuto rinunciare ai loro sogni di vederlo diventare avvocato, o medico, o professore di lettere: seguendo la sua vocazione, sarebbe sicuramente diventato un grande musicista. Nato a Roma nel 1841, dopo i primi studi musicali con Amerigo Barberi studiò armonia con Tiberio Natalucci e contrappunto con Giovanni Aldega. Con i massimi voti ottenne il diploma alla Accademia di Santa Cecilia.

La svolta della sua carriera e la sua consacrazione come musicista affermato avvennero quando aveva poco più che vent'anni. Fu allora che Franz Liszt, compositore di fama mondiale, cominciò i suoi viaggi a Roma e in uno di essi notò il talento di Giovanni Sgambati. Il giovane divenne immediatamente il suo allievo prediletto, fedele interprete delle sue composizioni e prezioso collaboratore per la missione che scaldava il cuore di entrambi: divulgare la musica classica nella società romana dell'epoca. La scuola romana di Liszt aveva sede proprio a casa di Sgambati, dove il grande maestro formava i migliori pianisti dell'epoca. Sgambati fu il primo a dirigere la sua *Sinfonia Dantesca*, così come la Terza Sinfonia di Beethoven. Liszt lo portò con sé nei suoi viaggi e lo presentò a Richard Wagner, che ammirò profondamente le sue composizioni e lo raccomandò all'editore tedesco Schott. La sua fama crebbe rapidamente, portandolo a tenere concerti in tutta Europa e in Russia. Ricevette inviti e segni di stima dai più importanti

musicisti suoi contemporanei: oltre a Liszt e Wagner, era amico di Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Grieg, Massenet, Busoni, Alderighi. Sotto il suo impulso, la vita musicale romana divenne fervida e viva. Gli fu proposto di diventare direttore del Conservatorio di Mosca succedendo al defunto Nikolaj Rubinstein, forse l'incarico più prestigioso per un musicista, ma egli rifiutò: la sua missione era arricchire l'ambiente musicale a cui apparteneva, il Paese in cui era nato, e non uno straniero.

Ma il suo impegno in questo senso non si limitò esclusivamente all'essere un eccellente interprete e un eccellente organizzatore. Nel 1874, insieme con il violinista Ettore Pinelli, fondò il Liceo di Santa Cecilia, una scuola gratuita per i musicisti talentuosi che non potevano permettersi di pagare una retta. Fu un insegnante competente e amato, che ha formato un'intera generazione di pianisti lasciando ricordi di affetto e di stima. Si spense a Roma nel 1914, nella sua casa in Piazza di Spagna.

Giovanni Sgambati fu un musicista moderno, una figura che potrebbe tranquillamente far parte del panorama musicale contemporaneo. Per niente chiuso nella sua arte, volle costantemente andare verso il pubblico, capirne i gusti, adattando i programmi dei concerti in modo che risultassero di facile ascolto e allo stesso tempo educando la società in cui viveva con la musica più bella e grandiosa che veniva composta in Europa. Non si fece tentare da una facile carriera oltre i confini dell'Italia, che forse gli avrebbe riservato ancor più onori e soddisfazioni: la sua missione, forse la più difficile di tutte, era di contribuire a risvegliare la vita musicale intorno a lui. Il suo merito sta specialmente in questo: che egli si servì della tecnica (e fu un virtuoso di prim'ordine) non a scopo di acrobaticismo e di facili effetti, ma come mezzo per fare conoscere al pubblico le opere d'arte più nobili ed elevate, di cui fu interprete squisito e fedele. Quando egli cominciò la sua attività, il pubblico

romano ed italiano apprezzava solamente le fantasie su motivi d'opera: si deve a Sgambati se il nostro pubblico ha conosciuto Beethoven, Schumann, Chopin, Bach, se è divenuto ormai capace di comprendere e gustare ogni forma e gradazione di musica.

L'attività di Giovanni Sgambati può essere considerata sotto tre aspetti, che, pure essendo distinti fra loro, si compenetrano, si integrano e si completano a vicenda: il pianista, il compositore, l'insegnante. In ciascuno di questi tre aspetti si ritrovano le qualità fondamentali di Sgambati artista, ovvero la nobiltà di sentimento, la squisitezza di gusto, l'amore per le forme di musica più elevate.

La musica per Pianoforte

La musica per Pianoforte di Giovanni Sgambati è essenzialmente composta da brani brevi.

Seguendo la strada del rendere i programmi dei concerti accessibili al pubblico, ha scelto di privilegiare la dinamicità e la varietà, ciò che rende le sue composizioni di facile ascolto anche per il pubblico di oggi. Non bisogna pensare però che alla brevità corrisponda la semplicità. Essendo state scritte da un eccellente pianista (e la scuola di Liszt si fa costantemente sentire), le musiche di Sgambati richiedono all'interprete grandi capacità tecniche e ancor più grandi doti interpretative. Proprio per via della caratteristica del non superare in media gli 8 minuti, i brani di Sgambati si rivelano ancora più magistrali: struttura solida e ben definita, idee innovative, interessanti scelte armoniche, padronanza del discorso musicale e una inconfondibile e onnipresente espressività, il tutto concentrato in pochi minuti. Accanto alle numerose miscellanee ricche di titoli che richiamano la vita quotidiana, troviamo i generi più classici come il Preludio e Fuga, gli Studi, i Notturni,

gli Improvvisi. Sgambati non si tira indietro e dimostra di saper comporre la musica più colta e quella più semplice. Tecnicamente, le sue musiche sono scritte tenendo conto delle peculiarità della mano e dello strumento, risultando talvolta molto ardue ma allo stesso tempo comode da suonare.

La sua scrittura è molto dettagliata e precisa, ricca di indicazioni per l'interprete che denotano la volontà di rendere il più chiaro possibile il suo pensiero. Nessuna scelta è lasciata al caso: dietro ogni segno si nasconde una lunga riflessione, che magicamente non impedisce al brano di dare l'impressione di essere stato composto sul momento, quasi improvvisando.

Editi ed inediti

Desidero terminare queste righe introduttive con un ultimo accenno riguardo agli spartiti di Giovanni Sgambati. Gran parte dei suoi brani sono stati pubblicati dalla casa editrice Schott, ma alla sua morte il Maestro ha lasciato una grande quantità di manoscritti inediti. Una parte di questi manoscritti è stata successivamente pubblicata dalla casa editrice Boccaccini&Spada, nell'intento di pubblicare l'integrale per pianoforte. Gli spartiti di questa raccolta non costituiscono però l'integrale, mancando diversi brani; inoltre, in molti casi le due edizioni discordano fra loro. Ho provveduto quindi a procurarmi le fotografie dei manoscritti, custoditi nella Biblioteca Casanatense e nella Biblioteca dell'Accademia di S. Cecilia a Roma, per poter offrire una versione il più corretta possibile dal punto di vista musicologico.

Buon ascolto!

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GAIA FEDERICO CAPORICCIO

Born in Florence in 1988, Gaia Federico Caporiccio first encountered the piano at the age of 5, showing at an early age an undeniable musical gift. When she was 18 she graduated from high school and received her Bachelor Diploma at the "Cherubini" Conservatoire. Two years later, she obtained her M. Mus. with full marks in Music Performance. Over the following years, she attended classes held by Pietro De Maria, Marian Mika and Vovka Ashkenazy, performing in many concerts. At the same time, she pursued her passion for chamber music by playing in various ensembles, from duos to chamber ensembles, and in 2011 played with the Italian Youth Orchestra for the 78th Edition of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino.

In 2003 and 2004, she recorded some pieces live for Tele 37 and Tele Italia. In 2006 she played on Sky TV and in 2009 on Vatican Radio. In 2017 and 2018 in Lausanne, she performed live on Radio RTS Espace 2. Between 2020 and 2022, she recorded for Brilliant Classics the complete piano works by Giovanni Sgambati and the Concerto Gregoriano by P. A. Yon with organist Tommaso Mazzoletti in Lausanne Cathedral.

Aware of the importance of experience with other musicians, Gaia has taken part in many competitions, achieving first prize in 2014. She also attended the Sommerakademie at the Mozarteum in Salzburg and performed as a soloist with the Michail Jora Philharmonic (Bacau - Rumania), Collegium Tibertinum Orchestra, Calabria Youth Orchestra, Musici di Parma Orchestra.

From 2015 to 2017, she organized musical events and managed the press office of the Florence University Choir. In 2017, she was appointed artistic

director of Festival Santa Croce, whose three editions have attracted major audiences. In 2019, she founded the association Les Concerts Vaudois, organizing classical music concerts in Canton de Vaud, Switzerland. Since the age of 19, Gaia has also devoted considerable time to teaching, achieving an award and full marks in 2015 in her Master's Diploma in Musical-Pedagogy. The encounter with the pianist and conductor Jean-François Antonioli led her to Lausanne, Switzerland, where, in June 2017, she obtained a further Master's Degree in Musical Interpretation and Concert Performance. Since September 2017 she has been teaching piano at the "Arts d'Essence" music school in Etoy (VD) and at the Conservatoire de l'Ouest Vaudois.

I would like to thank a number of people
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