



CHERUBINI 6 SONATAS
Andrea Bacchetti





Luigi Cherubini (1760–1842)

6 SONATAS

Andrea Bacchetti, *piano*

Sonata 1 in Fa maggiore / F major / Fa majeur / F-dur

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|------|
| 1. | Moderato | 6.28 |
| 2. | Rondò - Allegretto Moderato | 4.56 |

Sonata 2 in Do maggiore / C major / Ut majeur / C-dur

- | | | |
|----|-----------------|------|
| 3. | Moderato | 7.39 |
| 4. | Rondò - Allegro | 3.56 |

Sonata 3 in Si bemolle maggiore / B flat major / Si bémol majeur / B-dur

- | | | |
|----|-------------------|------|
| 5. | Allegro Comodo | 8.38 |
| 6. | Rondò - Andantino | 4.10 |

Sonata 4 in Sol maggiore / G major / Sol majeur / G-dur

- | | | |
|----|-------------------|------|
| 7. | Moderato | 6.50 |
| 8. | Rondò - Andantino | 6.59 |

Sonata 5 in Re maggiore / D - major / Ré majeur / D-dur

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------|------|
| 8. | Allegro con Brio | 6.53 |
| 10. | Rondò - Allegretto | 5.06 |

Sonata 6 in Mi bemolle maggiore / E flat major / Mi bémol majeur / Es-dur

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------|------|
| 11. | Allegro Spiritoso | 7.52 |
| 12. | Rondò - Andantino con moto | 6.06 |

Durata totale / Total time / Durée totale / Spielzeit: 75.35

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Andrea Bacchetti, pianoforte

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La Società Internazionale Luigi Cherubini si occupa dell'eredità artistica di Luigi Cherubini, curando scientificamente la sua opera ancora parzialmente sconosciuta e stimolando le esecuzioni delle sue partiture. Una particolare meta della Società è la diffusione dell'opera attraverso la Nuova Edizione Critica, che viene pubblicata dalla Casa Editrice Boosey & Hawkes, Bote & Bock GmbH & CO.KG e che comprende non solo le opere francesi, ma anche la musica da chiesa, la musica da camera e lo sconosciuto Cherubini Italiano. Inoltre La Società promuove conferenze ed altre attività internazionali che mettano in risalto l'importanza dell'opera del grande maestro nel contesto della storia della musica europea.

*Internationale
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The International Luigi Cherubini Society was founded with the aim of promoting the artistic heritage of this fine composer by preparing critical editions of his works, some of which are still unknown, and encouraging their performance. One of the Society's special aims is the distribution of his works through the New Critical Edition, published by Boosey & Hawkes Bote & Bock GmbH & Co. KG (Berlin), which includes not only his French operas, sacred music and chamber works, but also the little-known pieces he composed in Italy. The Society also promotes conferences and other international activities that highlight the importance within the historical context of European music of this great composer's works.

La Société Internationale Luigi Cherubini se consacre à l'héritage artistique de ce grand compositeur en préparant des éditions critiques de son œuvre, qui reste partiellement inconnue, et en encourageant l'exécution de ses partitions. L'un des objectifs spécifiques de la Société est la diffusion de son œuvre à travers la Nouvelle Édition Critique, publiée par Boosey & Hawkes Bote & Bock GmbH & Co. KG (Berlin), qui comprend non seulement les opéras français, mais également la musique d'église, la musique de chambre et les œuvres méconnues de jeunesse en Italie. En outre, la Société favorise les colloques et autres activités internationales destinées à mettre en évidence l'importance de l'œuvre de ce grand maître dans le contexte de l'histoire de la musique européenne.

Die Internationale Cherubini Gesellschaft e.V. dient der künstlerischen und wissenschaftlichen Pflege des musikalischen Erbes von Luigi Cherubini. Ein besonderes Anliegen ist die Förderung, Erschließung und wissenschaftliche Aufarbeitung sowie die Aufführung der Werke Cherubinis. Die Ergebnisse fließen in die Cherubini-Werkausgabe ein, die im Verlag Boosey & Hawkes, Bote & Bock GmbH & CO.KG erscheint und sowohl die frühen italienischen Opern, wie auch herausragende Werke der französischen Zeit und der Kammer- und Kirchenmusik umfasst. Internationale Symposien und Veranstaltungen, die Cherubinis Bedeutung für die europäische Musikgeschichte beleuchten, werden ebenfalls angeregt und durchgeführt.

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Luigi Cherubini

(Born Florence, 1760, died Paris, 1842)

SIX SONATAS FOR THE KEYBOARD

Cherubini's "Opera prima" and his successful Italian debut

Mario Marcarini

"It is brought to the attention of music lovers that six harpsichord sonatas by Sig. Luigi Cherubini will go to press towards the end of the month of June. The cost of the abovementioned sonatas will be 7 paoli per copy. Anyone wishing to subscribe to the same can register their names with Anton Giuseppe Pagani."¹

It was with this simple advertisement that, in 1783, the *Gazzetta Toscana* announced the imminent publication of six keyboard works by a promising young Florentine composer: Luigi Cherubini. In actual fact, the gifted twenty-three-year-old, spurred on by the gratifying successes achieved during the previous decade in his native country, was on the point of making a name for himself throughout musical Europe, having completed a musical apprenticeship in Florence and honed his remarkable talents at the school of the famous opera composer Giuseppe Sarti² in Bologna. Many years after his debut, the composer was to recall these early beginnings in the weighty autograph *Catalogue* written towards the end of his life and artistic career, between 1840 and 1842³:

"Around 1777 or 1778, I obtained a pension from Grand Duke Leopold to continue my studies and improve my skills under the famous Joseph Sarti, with whom I worked for three or four years. I learned all about counterpoint and dramatic music from the great maestro as a result of his tuition and good counsel."

Always detailed and precise, despite the spare, direct prose style that mirrored the writer's personality, the *Catalogue* provides an account of a key period in Cherubini's life. He was born in 1760 to a fairly large family which, although not well-to-do, was supported with great dignity by his father, Bartolomeo, a harpsichordist at the Teatro della Pergola. With commendable far-sightedness, the latter, realising his young son's ability, did not force his hand, but kindly indulged his inclinations, initially teaching him the basic rudiments of music at home, then sending him – when he was nine – to the school run by Alessandro and Bartolomeo Felici. Here, the young boy revealed his true calibre, particularly in mastering the golden rules of ancient counterpoint. At the age of thirteen, Cherubini began composing the first of various *Masses*⁴ that, together with the two *intermezzi buffi* – *L'Amore artigiano* (staged in Fiesole in 1773) and *Il Giocatore* (1775) – represent the first important successes in a promising career that might never have transcended local boundaries but for the intervention of a generous patron and – as we will see – his influential "Chamberlain".

In 1774, Cherubini was given the task of composing a eulogistic cantata entitled *La Pubblica Felicità*: its performance in the Duomo of Florence was destined to have a lasting impact on the musician's future career, because it was probably on that occasion that the young composer had the privilege of being presented to Grand Duke Leopold by the intercession of the Marchese Antonio Corsi. This Florentine nobleman, a first-rate "amateur" musician, must also have assiduously followed the young Cherubini's progress in subsequent years because it was through his kind offices that the Grand Duke decided to grant Cherubini a pension that would allow the composer to complete his training with one of the most renowned musicians of the period, the abovementioned Giuseppe Sarti, who visited Florence in 1777 to stage *Medonte Re d'Epiro* and again the year after to put on *L'Olimpiade*. This was a truly fortunate meeting for Cherubini: Sarti accepted him as a pupil in Bologna from 1778 but, realising very soon how talented he was, the Maestro invited Cherubini to accompany him as his "general assistant" when he obtained the coveted position of Maestro di Cappella of Milan Cathedral (1779). With each passing day, Sarti's commitments became more onerous and more demanding, and increasingly often Cherubini was asked to compose arias and recitatives for his teacher's operas, as well as motets, antiphonies or short compositions for the liturgy, proof that he had assimilated his style and now had the ability to begin an independent career of his own. In 1780, Sarti personally went to great efforts to ensure that Cherubini – whom he now held in very high esteem – succeeded in obtaining the commission of his first *opera seria*, *Il Quinto Fabio*, which was later staged in Alessandria (Piedmont). In the same year, Sarti took advantage of a long leave of absence from the Cappella del Duomo in Milan to visit Florence, where he was commissioned to write an opera for the winter season (*Achille in Sciro*). Cherubini naturally accompanied him and again enjoyed the privilege of an audience with the Grand Duke, arranged by Chamberlain Antonio Corsi. Soon after, Cherubini showed his gratitude to the nobleman, who continued to be of great service in the composer's professional advancement, by dedicating to him the *Six Sonatas* for harpsichord or fortepiano (an instrument already widely in use in Florence at that time). The scores were composed in 1780 while the composer was working in Milan, and he may have revised them during his stay in Tuscany to bring them into line with current tastes and also, probably, to gear them to Corsi's performance capabilities, although, according to contemporary accounts, the nobleman was a fine keyboard player. These six works were therefore ready to go to press (six was generally the required minimum for publication) and were presented by the publisher Poggiali in an elegant volume with the following title page:

SEI SONATE PER CIMBALO

Dedicate

Al merito singolare

DELL'ILL. SIG. RE ANTONIO CORSI

Patrizio Fiorentino Marchese della Città di Caiazzo
Signore di Dugenta, Millazzano, Raiano, delle Castella, e
Ciamberlano delle LL.AA.RR.

DA LUIGI CHERUBINI

Fiorentino

Incise da Giuseppe Poggiali

Firenze 5

Cherubini made his intentions very clear in his dedication whose sentiments and succinct reverential wording, although written in line with the most highly respected 18th-century conventions, provide an insight into the introverted personality of the Florentine musician, who was not overly partial to rigid protocol and lengthy expressions of praise.

"Most Noble Lord,

If this poor work, which I venture to dedicate to you, has the good fortune to be received kindly by your generous heart and, more than that, to meet with honest approval from your most faultless intelligence, I will have occasion to hope that it also will not appear unworthy in the eyes of the public who, knowing all too well your mastery of the fine arts, particularly Music, will be obliged to align its judgement with your own. But, however it pleases you, Most Noble Lord, to judge it, I will have, if nothing else, the satisfaction that my work has provided me with a propitious occasion to show, according to my power, the genuine, most legitimate esteem that I have for the venerable qualities that make you so well-beloved by all; and at the same time as being able to pride myself on being in the sight of the world one who is full of respect I declare myself to be your Most Illustrious Lordship's
Most Grateful Servant,
Luigi Cherubini."⁶

As we have already pointed out, this was Cherubini's first publication and no other instrumental music was published by the Florentine composer until 1836 (in other words, not for more than fifty years), when the publisher Kistner & Pacini brought out the first three *String Quartets*. A new edition of the *Sei Sonate* was printed in 1792 in London by Longman & Broderip (this was largely a reprint using the same plates as Poggiali had done, with no corrections to the musical text. It can be noticed that the details of the original publisher on the title page have merely been scored out and superimposed with

the stamp of the English publisher along with the relevant address). The first complete modern edition of the six works (*Six Sonatas* by Luigi Cherubini revised by G. Buonamici, Venturini, Florence, 1903) was not brought out until the 20th century: in 1958, the edition revised by T. Alati (Carisch, Milan) appeared, followed by the seminal critical edition (packed with background information, notes and including an erudite preface) by Giovanni Carli Ballola (Ricordi, Milan, 1983). Unfortunately, during Cherubini's long life, typographical fortune did not smile kindly on the other works comprising the Florentine composer's rather sparse keyboard output, namely the *Sonata for Two Organs* (contemporary with the *Sonatas* and probably written during the time he spent in Milan in 1780), the bizarre, brilliant and extensive *Capriccio ou Etude pour le fortepiano* (*Capriccio in C major for fortepiano*, 1789), and finally the *Fantaisie pour piano ou orgue* (*Fantasia for pianoforte or organ*, 1810). Although they form a very meagre list when compared to the composer's large body of sacred music and operas, and one that was restricted to the early part of his career, these works are no less interesting and packed with ideas. As historiographers have rightly pointed out, the keyboard was not Cherubini's instrument of choice for the expression of his talents: although technically very competent, the Florentine composer was no virtuoso and his notoriously shy nature, retiring to the point of gloomy introversion, conspired to keep him away from the concert halls throughout his life, unlike his contemporary Mozart who, from boyhood, enchanted the courts of Europe with his breathtaking keyboard performances. However, numerous accounts refer to Cherubini as a skilled keyboard performer (he much preferred playing to singing, despite his fine voice), and the *Six Sonatas* are clear proof of this.

No one is likely to deny their singular expressive atmosphere, which is a close reflection of the independent, "social" circumstances under which these scores were written. Also, given that Cherubini's teacher was much in demand around 1780 in the best salons in Milan as a composer of chamber ariettas and "passatempi" for the harpsichord, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that sometimes (or often) Sarti's twenty-year-old pupil might have been entrusted with the execution of such duties that, being linked to aristocratic commissions, were difficult to evade, with the effect that Cherubini's body of works could be – at least theoretically – much larger than officially reported today. However, even the most inattentive listener will not be left unmoved when listening to the *Six Sonatas* of 1780, as it is impossible not to notice that, beneath their "gallant", fashionable veneer, these pieces are frequently and irrepressibly

"embryonic documents of a musical sensibility whose content, in terms of imagination and inventiveness, seems in many respects disruptive with regard to the sparse formal framework into which it has been forced. The typically sensual, slightly superficial fluidity of the harpsichord writing of the time repeatedly appears to be compromised by an experimentalism and a quest for alternative solutions that [...] are the expression of a tension that gains in incisiveness what it loses in fluency."⁷

In the first place, from a structural point of view, the *Six Sonatas* seem to be an extremely coherent collection, marking a move away from the subtle variety of dance rhythms presented by works in the contemporary style *galant*, composed of minuets, gavottes and polonaises. All the scores have a basic bipartite structure, developed in major keys (F, C, B-flat, G, D and E-flat). The first of the two movements into which each sonata is subdivided ("Moderato" in the case of I, II and IV, and "Allegro" in the others) is in sonata form. The second movement is always a Rondo with "da capo" in an A B A pattern (the first section being repeated after the middle section), which is usually sparkling and full of virtuosic passages that not only require sound technical skills on the part of the performer but also the ability to improvise ornaments and impromptu variations. There is also a certain unity in the length of each sonata, with a performance time of between ten and fifteen minutes. On the whole, it can be seen that the technically more demanding figures are given to the right hand, often "relegating" the left hand to an Alberti bass or an accompaniment in beated octaves. Anyone looking at these six youthful works might regard them as evidence of the Florentine composer's flawed manual technique (about which he himself made no mystery), but what is more important for the composer in these inspired works is the strength of the melodic and rhythmic ideas, sometimes interwoven with unexpected remnants of ancient counterpoint, sometimes forcefully propelled towards highly original resolutions, often ready to interrupt the flow of the discourse with sudden modulations or unexpected pauses. The variety of these ideas bears close similarities to Mozart's style, to such an extent, in fact, that some historiographers have wondered how Cherubini might have gained any knowledge of the keyboard works of his Salzburg contemporary (who, it is known, was in Florence in 1770 and worked on several occasions for the Teatro Ducale in Milan from that date to 1772, in other words, only a few years before Cherubini arrived in the Lombardy-Veneto region). Given that it is impossible to establish with certainty any contact between the two musicians (who probably never met in person), the following comment by Giovanni Carli Ballola on this subject is enlightening, when he states that, for Cherubini, there were

"[...] various convenient examples represented by Johann Christian Bach's sonata output in particular and, more generally, by contemporary *galant* harpsichord literature from the Anglo-French-Italian region [...] intended *pour les amateurs* and widely distributed by English and French publishers towards the end of the century and, after the English Bach, he modelled himself on active, prolific figures like Tommaso Giordani, Giuseppe Cambini and Ignaz Joseph Pleyel, not to mention works by Boccherini and the young Clementi, which were deeply influenced by fashions and the marketplace." ⁸

In short, these were the same well-known masters from whom the young Mozart, in the course of his studies in Italy, had (like Cherubini in Florence) learned not only the secrets of the ancient school of Palestrina and Corelli (thanks equally to the efforts of a tireless defender of tradition such as Padre Martini in Bologna), but also the rudiments of the modern craft of the Sammartini brothers and Hasse.

These powerful influences made a significant impact on both the Austrian and the Tuscan composer, who knew how to make them their own, transcending and outclassing them in quite different ways. Circumstances and personal taste made the former an extrovert and a brilliant keyboard exponent, while the latter elected (or was compelled) to take a different path in order to nurture his own talent and follow his own muse. The early proof of the *Six Sonatas* unfortunately remains an isolated episode in the Florentine composer's aesthetic career and the subsequent *Capriccio ou Etude pour le fortepiano (Capriccio in D major for fortepiano)* of 1789 is a unique and in some senses still enigmatic open door, allowing a glimpse of the marvels that Cherubini might have achieved, had he chosen to devote himself more diligently to this world.

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I would particularly like to thank Professor Giovanni Carli Ballola, eminent musicologist, fervent supporter and advocate of research on Luigi Cherubini, who was generous both in his advice and in providing access to rare materials on the life and work of the composer. This short piece is dedicated to him with sincere friendship and high esteem.

M. M.

Translation: Sue Rose for Byword, London

1 Gazzetta Toscana, 1783, N. 2, p. 88. 2 Giuseppe Sarti (1729–1802) left his native Faenza to study in Bologna with the famous Padre Martini. After a short and successful career in Italy, he moved to Copenhagen, then Rome and Venice. He was appointed Maestro di Cappella del Duomo in Milan. He was then invited to Saint Petersburg, where he spent many years at court. He died in 1802 in Berlin while returning to his native country. 3 *Catalogue Général par ordre chronologique des ouvrages composés par moi Maria-Louis-Charles-Zenobi-Salvator Cherubini, né à Florence le 14 Septembre l'an 1760*, in A. Bottée de Toulmon, *Notice des manuscrits autographes de la musique composée par le feu M. L.C.Z.S. Cherubini, ex-surintendant de la musique du Roi*, Paris, 1843, p. 8. - 4 For a long time believed lost, the autograph scores are now held in the Biblioteka Jagiellonska in Cracow. - 5 Paleographic transcription of the title page of the first edition of the *Sei Sonate per Clavicembalo*. Florence, Poggiali, undated, but 1783. A copy is held at the Biblioteca del Conservatorio "Luigi Cherubini" in Florence. - 6 Paleographic transcription of the dedication to the first edition. 7 Marco Ravera, *Invito all'ascolto di L.C.*, Mursia, Milan, 1996, pp. 183–184. - 8 Giovanni Carli Ballola, Preface to: *L.C. Sei Sonate per Cimbalo*, critical edition edited by G.C.B. Ricordi, Milan, 1983, p. IV.

Andrea Bacchetti

Nato a Genova nel 1977, Andrea Bacchetti a soli quattro anni rivela un'affinità straordinaria con la musica ed inizia precocemente le prime lezioni di pianoforte. Diplomatosi in Conservatorio a Genova frequenta i corsi estivi del Mozarteum a Salisburgo, dove incontra Herbert von Karajan che gli dimostra attenzione e simpatia regalandogli consigli preziosi. Negli stessi anni incontra il M^o Baumgartner a Lucerna; suona sotto la sua guida con i Festival Strings Lucerne ai Festival di Lucerna del 1996 e del 1998 e via via in altre prestigiose sale da concerto e Festival. Sempre a Lucerna incontra Mieczyslaw Horszowsky: un rapporto subito ricco di emozioni e di preziosi consigli. Completano la formazione le frequentazioni con Nikita Magaloff e Luciano Berio con il quale nascerà un rapporto particolarmente emozionante che inciderà in modo indelebile sulla sua crescita artistica e umana. Conseguito il Diploma Master all'Accademia di Imola, inizia una carriera con presenze concertistiche già di rilievo sia in Italia che all'estero.

Born in Genoa in 1977, Andrea Bacchetti showed a precocious talent for music and took his first piano lessons at the age of four. After gaining his diploma from the Genoa Conservatory, he was noticed by Herbert von Karajan at the summer course held at the Mozarteum in Salzburg and with warmth and generosity the great conductor gave him precious guidance. Around about the same time he met Rudolf Baumgartner and appeared with the Festival Strings Lucerne under his baton at major festivals, including the Lucerne Festival in 1996 and 1998, and at prestigious venues. Also in Lucerne, he met and felt an immediate affinity with Mieczyslaw Horszowsky (1892-1993); the brilliant Polish pianist coached him and they spent moments of great emotion together. Nikita Magaloff and Luciano Berio also gave him the benefit of their experience, and the latter had a lasting influence on his development both as an artist and a human being. After completing his advanced studies at the Piano Academy of Imola 'Incontri col Maestro', Andrea Bacchetti embarked on a brilliant international career as a concert pianist.



Photo: Vico Chamla

FAZIOLI



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