



Piatti

COMPLETE  
CELLO SONATAS

Lamberto Curtoni  
*cello*

Giovanni Doria Miglietta  
*piano*

**Alfredo Piatti 1822-1901**  
**Complete Cello Sonatas**

**Sonata No.1 Op.28 in C**

- |                       |      |
|-----------------------|------|
| 1. I. Allegro         | 7'55 |
| 2. II. Andantino      | 6'24 |
| 3. III. Presto        | 4'16 |
| 4. IV. Agitato vivace | 4'08 |

**Sonata No.2 Op.29 in D**

- |   |      |
|---|------|
| 5. I. Lento-Allegro spiritoso                           | 7'07 |
| 6. II. Adagio Lento                                     | 6'02 |
| 7. III. Allegretto moderato<br>(variazioni del 1 Tempo) | 3'51 |
| 8. IV. Presto ma non troppo                             | 1'52 |

**Sonata No.3 Op.30 in F**

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|---|------|
| 9. I. Allegro energico                    | 9'59 |
| 10. II. Romanza                           | 5'09 |
| 11. III. Finale- allegro ma<br>non troppo | 7'54 |

**Sonata No.4 Op.31 in G "Idillica"**

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|------------------------------------|------|
| 12. I. Allegro assai moderato      | 4'34 |
| 13. II. Intermezzo-Vivo ed agitato | 1'54 |
| 14. III. Allegro ma tranquillo     | 6'29 |

**Sonata No.5 Op.32 in A minor**

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|------------------------------------|------|
| 15. I. Introduzione Largo- Allegro | 7'53 |
| 16. II. Intermezzo-Adagio          | 3'40 |
| 17. III. Allegro Vivo              | 5'00 |

**Sonata No.6 Op.33 in E minor**

- |                           |      |
|---------------------------|------|
| 18. I. Allegro non troppo | 5'34 |
| 19. II. Andante religioso | 3'01 |
| 20. III. Canone           | 1'33 |
| 21. IV. Vivo              | 4'24 |

Lamberto Curtoni *cello*  
 Giovanni Doria Miglietta *piano*

**Alfredo Carlo Piatti** (Bergamo 1822 – Mozzo [Bergamo] 1901) was one of the greatest musicians of his time, an outstanding personality who lived music to the full, travelling far afield with his cello and taking Italian culture with him.

Although his fame as an exceptional cellist has survived to this day, few people are aware of the fact that his own musical output was not limited to virtuosic pieces and compositions conceived for teaching purposes.

Piatti was born in Bergamo and from a very young age attended classes at the famous Conservatoire in Milan, where he studied under Vincenzo Merighi. His talent was immediately so evident that Merighi soon felt he had nothing more to teach him.

A uniquely skilful virtuoso player, Piatti was well-rounded character who composed scores full of technical brilliance, but without forsaking a musical focus that transcended all exhibitionism.

He was widely admired, to the extent that Liszt described him as the Paganini of the cello and gave him an Amati. His career was full of important encounters, including one with Felix Mendelssohn which proved to be decisive. The two musicians first shared the stage for a symphony concert and later met up at a chamber music event that ultimately changed Piatti's life.

Mendelssohn was so enchanted by Piatti's remarkable musicality that he decided to write a concerto for cello and orchestra, a project that never came to fruition because the notes he had made were lost while travelling.

Later Piatti worked with some of the foremost musicians of his time, including Clara Schumann, Camillo Sivori (Paganini's only pupil), Giovanni Bottesini and Anton Rubinstein, as well as Henry Vieuxtemps, Edward Grieg and Joseph Joachim, with whom he formed a quartet, later retiring in favour of his pupil Robert Hausmann. He also came into contact with Giuseppe Verdi in London, and it was with Piatti in mind that Verdi wrote the cello solo in *I Masnadieri*, premiered in London in 1847.

At the time, London was the most populous city in Europe, offering plenty of concert opportunities, even though the cost of the tickets meant that not everyone could attend them. To correct this imbalance a number of eminent musicians, including Piatti, decided to hold a series of Popular Concerts, or musical events of the highest order open to all social strata. The idea was to contribute to the musical education and enjoyment of people from less wealthy backgrounds. Arthur Chappell took over the direction of these Popular Concerts in 1859, and the ensuing seasons proved to be highly rewarding for Piatti, with many new encounters and friendships. Held in St. James's Hall, an auditorium boasting 2000 seats, these Monday evening concerts were performed by virtuoso players who were free of other engagements on that day of the week.

Piatti was a regular feature of the Popular Concerts through to the 1891 season, when Whitehouse and Popper, two other superb cellists, began to take over. While Piatti's repertoire varied considerably over the years, it also included a number of earlier works by composers such as Boccherini, Valentini, Tartini, Marcello and Porpora that to this day are still performed in the versions he edited.

Moreover, the Sonatas that Alfredo Piatti himself composed were also performed for the first time in London at the Popular Concerts, where they unfailingly met with huge acclaim. Period accounts describe how enthusiastic audiences repeatedly called Piatti back onto the stage after his rendering of the first Sonata, and that much the same thing happened again in the following weeks. Piatti dedicated these works to people who were close to him at the time, such as his pupil Hugo Becker, dedicatee of the first Sonata.

The Sonatas were written over an eleven-year period starting in 1885, during the last part of Piatti's creative life. Within the general framework of compositions by coeval virtuosos, especially cellists, the Sonatas for cello and piano certainly stand out. In choice of themes and development, all six of them reveal a confident musical personality. In his deep understanding and knowledge of the cello, Piatti always aimed

to write meaningful music that went well beyond any superficial display of technical brilliance. Moreover, far from being simple supports for the cello, his piano scores had a musical personality of their own, undergoing developments that made them an integral part of the overall work.

All the Sonatas embody qualities associated with the composer, especially in the handling of melody, which is distinctly operatic in its lyricism, and virtuosic brilliance. The slow movements share the passion that Verdi put into the lead characters of his operas, and little wonder: Piatti was a singer and a virtuoso able to express his inner being through these works. The body of the 6 Sonatas reveals a wide range of timbre and dynamics as well as extensive use of different keys. In terms of construction they are also highly varied, while remaining true to the *cantabilità* and *virtuosismo* typical of the Italian tradition. Although Piatti conceived his musical phrases with embellishments and variations, his aim was never to astound his audiences with technical bravura.

The style of these cello scores is rich and colourful, with plenty of bow strokes and passages in double notes. It is almost as though in his latter years the composer wished to keep a sort of "musical diary", a personal account of his perceptions, mastery and musical encounters. With its distinctive, individual character, each of these Sonatas met with resounding acclaim, to the extent that they were often included in concert programs only a few weeks after the premiere performance.

In what he described as a "sketch" of Alfredo Piatti written in 1901, Morton Latham suggested that the composer considered the Cello Sonatas his most satisfactory work; I would add that they are certainly also the work in which he was best able to express his personality.

The first is the *Sonata Op.28 in C Major*, composed in 1885. It opens with a highly melodious, serene phrase entrusted to the cello in the tenor range. Following the exposition, the musical discourse grows more complex, developing through different spheres of the instrument's *tessitura* in a manner typical of the whole cycle.

The second *Sonata Op.29* was written in 1886 during convalescence from a ruinous accident that befell Piatti when travelling. The form, which differs from that of the previous work, involves a structure in three movements, although the second flows directly into the third movement. This latter is an *Allegretto Moderato* consisting of a theme with variations developed using ideas borrowed from the first movement. The musical material undergoes constant metamorphoses, achieving some absolutely brilliant solutions and ending with a highly virtuosic coda, which was also a feature of the later Sonatas.

The momentum of the third *Sonata Op.30* is distinctly reminiscent of the almost symphonic nature of the Brahms Sonata No.2, written just 23 years earlier and published by Simrock in 1887. Piatti's work, which met with enormous success when it was performed in London in 1889, opens with a bold first theme that gives way to an extremely melodious second motif. Tripartite in form, the Sonata includes a slow *Romanza* that is also extremely lyrical. The last movement presents some noteworthy scoring for the cello, which underpins the motifs played by the piano: a sort of reflected imitation in which the cello plays a virtuoso role despite the fact that it is effectively accompanying the other instrument. The movement ends with a grand coda full of virtuoso brilliance.

The fourth *Sonata Op.31 "Idillica"*, the only one bearing a title, was the last of the collection of 4 published by Schott in the first edition of 1894. In three sections, it is relatively short, with a highly lyrical first movement, a brisk intermezzo and a last movement with plenty of harmony development and imitation between the two instruments. Well received by audiences and critics alike, the work featured twice in the January 1892 concert programs.

The fifth *Sonata Op.32* was written in 1895, following a period in which Piatti was forced to stay for a while at Crocette di Mozzo, near Bergamo, on account of bad health. He nevertheless premiered the work in London in October 1895. It consists of three movements, with a distinctly operatic middle section.

The sixth *Sonata Op.33* is the last of the series and comprises four movements that include a chorale in C major heralding a highly virtuosic and richly textured last movement. It was written between September and October 1896 at the Villa in Cadenabbia on Lake Como where his publisher, Giulio Ricordi, also had a house, and was performed in December of the same year in London. Neither of these latter two Sonatas was published during the composer's lifetime.

Piatti lived in an age that was full of innovation in many different fields, including music. Although these Sonatas were written in different times and circumstances, they all share a number of features that reflect the way Piatti absorbed and digested a wide range of musical experience. As such they provide us with a fascinating insight into the refinement of the virtuoso milieu in Europe during the late 1800s as well as a valuable testimony of the creative brilliance of one of the foremost musicians of the period. They capture the sound-sphere of a lifetime, with echoes of Mendelssohn, allusions to the *cantabilità* typical of Verdi and the Italian school and intimations of the great virtuoso violinists, such as his good friend Joachim.

First performed for London audiences, the Cello Sonatas stand out as a collection within the framework of Italian chamber music of the period: they are both quintessentially Italian, and at the same time thoroughly European. Untarnished by passing time, there can be no doubt that they deserve to return more frequently in today's concert programs.

In this recording we have maintained Piatti's original phrasing and fingering.

© Lamberto Curtioni

Translation by Kate Singleton



**Lamberto Curtoni** is an Italian cellist and composer. He graduated from the Giuseppe Verdi Conservatoire in Turin with full marks, and later studied with Giovanni Sollima. He performs in Italy's foremost concert venues, playing works from the classical repertoire as well as new compositions by musicians such as Carlo Boccadoro, Mauro Montalbetti, Enzo Pietropaoli, Giorgio Mirto, Giovanni Catelli and Roberto Bocca, who have all written scores for him. He has worked with a wide range of musicians and ensembles, including Gidon Kremer and Kremerata Baltica, Yuri Bashmet and the Moscow Soloists, Simone Rubino, Franco Battiato, Enrico Rava, Diego Fasolis, Gavin Bryars, Graduale Nobili female choir, Julius Berger and Enrico Fagone; and with numerous orchestras, including the Philharmonic Orchestra Arturo Toscanini of Parma, Orchestra della Toscana, I Pomeriggi Musicali Orchestra of Milan, the Chamber Orchestra of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, the Orchestra of Padua and the Veneto, and with different chamber ensembles belonging to the Italian National Radio Symphony Orchestra (RAI). His music is performed all over the world in concert seasons such as the Martha Argerich Present Project, Sochi Winter Festival (Russia), Teatro El circulo (Rosario, Argentina) etc.

Lamberto also devotes time and effort to younger audiences, working with Piergiorgio Odifreddi, Concita De Gregorio, Federica Fracassi, Philippe Daverio, Peppe Servillo and other directors and choreographers interested in connecting music with other arts. He has written and performed several ballets for Les Italiens de l'opera, for the New York Choreographic Institute with dancers from the New York City Ballet and for Balletto Teatro di Torino. He made his debut as soloist and composer in July 2020 with *Il Ritmo della Terra*, commissioned by Simone Rubino and the Borletti Buitoni Trust, a chamber opera on texts by Mariangela Gualtieri for voice, vibraphone, cello and ensemble together with Simone Rubino and the Filarmonica Toscanini of Parma. He has recorded for Universal, Stradivarius, Egea and Warner and his compositions are published by Casa Musicale Sonzogno of Milan.

**Giovanni Doria Miglietta** was born in Imperia, Italy, in 1979. He started studying the piano with his father, and then with Lidia Baldecchi Arcuri at the Genoa Conservatoire. In 2005 he earned a Master's Degree at the Pinerolo Academy of Music under Laura Richaud, with whom he also obtained a further Academic Diploma with distinction at Turin Conservatoire. He then furthered his studies with Carlo Balzaretto and Arnulf Von Armin, and attended master classes with Alexander Lonquich, Philippe Entremont, Maria Joao Pires and Jean Bernard Pommier. Meeting the pianist Enrico Pace at the Pinerolo Academy in 2008 marked a fundamental step in his career. Winner of awards in numerous international piano competitions, he has performed in Italy, France, Spain, Germany and Australia for organizations such as the Società dei concerti and the Teatro Dal Verme in Milan, Unione Musicale and Polincontri in Turin, MITO Settembre Musica Festival, Festival of Portogruaro, Ravello Festival, Chamber Music Festival of Cerro, Piano Festival of Carrara, Società dei concerti in Piacenza, Amici della Musica in Palermo, Bellini Association in Messina, Ascoli Piceno Festival, Philharmonic of Trento, International Festival of Castel Rigone, Concerti del tempietto in Rome, Ibiza Piano Festival, Altdorf Spring Festival (Switzerland), Stadthalle in Tuttlingen (Germany), Salle Panopée in Paris, Auditorium Rainier III in Monaco, Chevalier College of Bowral (Australia). He also performs as a soloist with the Milano Classica Orchestra, the Philharmonic Orchestra of Turin, the European Youth Chamber Orchestra, the Canberra Symphony Orchestra, 900 Philharmonic Orchestra of Turin and the Donetsk National Philharmonic Orchestra. He has recorded the complete works of Earl Wild for the Piano Classics label. He teaches piano at the Pinerolo Academy of Music.



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