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Poesia e Mitologia, musica da camera di Tiziano Bedetti,

© Phoenix Classics PH 99523 (1CD).

Emmanuele Baldini (violin), Tiziano Bedetti (piano), Cristina Biagini-Marco Marzocchi (piano four hands), Cristina Bianchi (harp), Achille Gallo, (piano), Bruno Ispiola (Cello), Umberto Leonardo (guitar), Sergio Zampetti (flute), Tiziana Zoccarato (soprano).

Playing time: 76'26"

## TIZIANO BEDETTI

### *The power of contemplation*

Certain composers are able to make the space of sound a setting of sentiments. Tiziano Bedetti belongs to this 'baroque' poetic conception, which chooses to animate the backdrop of the mind with impressions and recollections in the memory of a shadow. What the vision beyond things has left in the mind, with the clear outlines of its shape.

Hence, the first of the **Due Preludi per la mano sinistra** (Two Preludes for the left hand) for piano (*Remoto*) denies the very idea of development. Bedetti merely fills in the space with a chromatic bichord of echoes and rhythmic and dynamic variants whose ups and downs end with the clarity of a simple augmented chord. The perception of an event is ineffable; its tale is deformation – Bedetti seems to say – and thus approaches the twentieth-century idea of music as pure sound, cleansed of any dramatic 'characterization'. In the second Prelude, the fluttering between duple and triple time

recalls an event which the writing tends to restrict to an inexpressible inspiration or a kind of stairway of light leading to where thought stops being sound. The semitone progression leading to the final bar by augmentation and reduction of rhythmical values, from 10/4 to 9/4 then 8/4, is not an ending but the entrance to a world which forgoes the course for excessive glare.

In Salvatore Quasimodo, pantheism becomes a way of finding the shape of things within the perception of time. **Nell'antica luce delle maree** (In the old light of the seas) for piano, has the rhythm of a Pavane: a ceremonial dance whose regular base is constantly disregarded by free flourishes in the upper parts. The piece proceeds in a semitone sequence characterized by a melody almost 'tied' to the inner part of a series of chord inversions. The regular beat is interrupted by an episode *Poco Più Mosso* where the notes of the tonic chord are free in pure melody: the release of harmony in freely flowing melody is like a frost-stiffened rose-bud revealed by the first rays of dawn. In this piece, the two scenes – the relentless march of time and the glances of the freed subject – face each other without resentment in a gradual splitting of mind and nature, making this parody of the Baroque a 'sentimental' lament in the Schillerian sense, i. e. the grief for lost candour, obliging man to consume his vital impulse in the lures of the language. The progressive reduction with which the piece ends leaves a curious impression whereby the fading sound landscapes seem to keep ringing in the imaginary perception of an inner ear; or perhaps it is the *Anima Mundi*. **Velut Laurens**, for piano, is built on haunting triplets that wrap the subject like myrtle around the trunk. The melodic figure running through the piece is frail and slender, like the venation of a leaf where the vital sap also flows. And it is the chromatically altered roots that give the piece its dual perspective, almost as though the happy shedding of the vital sentiment expressed by the right hand were the scenario of illusion, and the rigid 'Bachian' progression in the left hand (almost a two-part Invention) the whimsical flow, free of any tie with the hidden meaning, (without rhythm, but always syncopated) of life. The middle episode, *Più Lento*, is a charming mirror canon where the hypnotic fixedness of the beginning is recovered while the gradual return to earth of the final dialogue between the two hands, ever more in unison, acquires the manner of a suffered reconciliation.

Salvatore Quasimodo's naturalism is of course all built on the loss of association between the senses and earthly fluids in whose immediacy the Greek culture existed. The first of the **Due Liriche** (Two Lyrics) for voice and piano, on his verses, *Ora che sale il giorno* (Now the day is breaking), attempts a singular operation where the music develops on the 'foreign' notes of the harmony, creating a hazy view of a wheatfield under the scorching Sun in the undulating breeze. The fading lines give the idea of night stopping the view at a point where the memory sinks, crushed under its own weight. This is followed by a Chopinesque Chorale (a homage to the *Nocturnes* of the great Polish composer) giving rise to a gradual breaking of the voice finally reduced to contracted syllabizing. An episode in '*recitar cantando*' ends a return of the 'nocturne' Chorale creating the feeling of loneliness in the universe, because, paradoxically, there is no key centre corresponding to its regular beat. The second Lirica, **Autunno** (Autumn), follows a 'naive' and light-hearted scansion of the text translating into an estranging disarticulation of its meaning while the piano's constant marking of the rhythm introduces timeless failles (like the faceless ghost of a dream after awakening too early) from which bits of previous subjects peep through, consumed by the necrosis of the base. With the words "*caduto nell'ombra di un profondo baratro*" (fallen in the shadow of a deep chasm) the piano breaks its song into a series of finds like pieces of old pots, whereas the voice clearly utters the stages of descent to the Underworld. Here the music makes a ritual gesture without lime for reascending, until a series of diminished thirds evokes the idea of a prisoner contemplating the light coming from a fissure water has opened up in the stone. On the final words "*che la terra raccoglie*" (that the earth gathers), the piano, with happy insight, joins all the fundamental melodic intervals in a note cluster firmly rooted to the sameness of the accents.

In **Una Lirica di Mario Luzi**, (A Lyric of Mario Luzi) for voice and piano, once again we see Bedetti the 'deconstructionist' of the *Preludes*. In fact, the entire piece is built on inversions of a single interval, suggesting that "swinging" feeling on which the Lirica is built. In this case, space

(the place in the mind) asserts its reasons on the perspective of time as the narrative dimension of music. The uneven resolution of the rhythm into flowing triplets accentuates the idea of a germinal nature in a fast-growing world under the radiant influence of a single Sun. Then, with the words “*un desiderio*” (a wish), everything reassembles and the melodic course mirrors the progression of the voice but varying the line in semitones. Lastly, a Cadence in *Precipitando* – like an opening that the fall has revealed between the two peaks – leads to a sinking of the form where long note values whiten as fossil skeletons in the moonlight while, with the rites of “sensible respite”, the voice celebrates the new genesis of life.

The following Toccata relaxes the tensions in a circular forma arc.

The **Interludi Elegiaci** (Elegiac Interludes) for guitar have the hearty intrusiveness of a baroque Ricercare. In the first of these Bedetti celebrates the consonance of melody and harmony where freely flowing arpeggios derive from the fullness of the initial chords, finally giving rise to a doleful subject whose protean nature originates from the continual rhythmic variants, thus gradually expanding its obsessive immanence. The second piece explores the expressive possibilities of the Siciliana, in that obsessive rocking seeming to come from an instant before the world was created. Here too Bedetti uses one of the favourite devices of baroque polyphony, i. e. specular symmetry between the two parts. The third Interlude is a Toccata where an imaginary orchestra of full chords sustains a part whose melody is built on passing notes and harmonic padding, suggesting a silk staircase descending from the clouds and spanned by a glorious rainbow. With his typical need for formal coherence, Bedetti sums up the entire meaning of the collection in the fourth piece where the upper part develops a subject built on ‘*note di volta*’ of all the melodies contained in the collection; whereas, in its relentless course, the bass outlines the harmonic framework of the six pieces. Subsequently, the fifth Interlude combines the characters of the first with those of the second: the first bars establish the fundamental intervals on which a two-part progression is grafted, concealing a ‘ghost’ melody. In the last piece, the formal quest becomes pure rarefaction and the solid foundation of the melodic progression in successive inversions of the same chord expands into a sequence where the bass reveals ever greater interest by reversing the mood of the first Interlude and clearly illustrating the innermost specular reasons of the entire collection.

**Marsia e Apollo** (Marsyas and Apollo), for ‘flute and harp, exemplifies one of Bedetti’s, favourite stylistic choices: the creation of two separate instrumental settings, with the flute poised in a free improvisation expressing the march of Nature, and the harp endeavouring to constrain it in the gnarled needs of Art; thus, as in the Greek myth the piece alludes to, Marsyas the musician, with unpredictable insight, defeats the measured language of Apollo. In the middle section, the manner by which Bedetti suggests the competition between the two instruments is of stunning refinement: the flute always just ahead of the inventions of the harp which, due to its growing rhythm, according to the irrevocable reasons of Form, is seen as the inevitable winner right from the start; and the harp seeming to suggest the obtuse persistence of fate on the irresistible flight of the Spirit.

In the Poetry of Eugenio Montale, metaphor seeks a new relationship between man and nature. In **L’ Agave su lo scoglio** (The Agave on the crag), for cello and piano, Bedetti pursues the path of naturalism where a series of augmented chords, supporting the lyrical and warm melody of the solo instrument, evokes the idea of an illuminated microcosm. In the first piece everything occurs in an infinitely small world where a sunbeam is almost a catastrophe. Hence, the outcome of the melody is a section *Con Fantasia* where the theme is reabsorbed in the chord intervals of the bass; almost suggesting the idea of an inorganic life ended in just a few minutes. The second Studio is an operatic Arietta ‘*di bravura*’ whose brilliant idea is that of reverse motion: from its variations to the conclusive immanence of the root intervals.

The first of the **Tre Ricreazioni** (Three Recreations) for violin and piano uses a favourite formula of Bedetti where the play of contrasts between the two instruments - in this case due to the recurring fourth in the subject - is almost kaleidoscopic. The device of growing rhythmic multiplication suggests a breaking of space to become meditation on the mystery of time. In the second piece,

*Adagio Cantabile*, the parody of baroque *melos* reaches its apotheosis: the culture of the Venetian *Concerto Grosso* suggests the full symphonic nature of an imaginary orchestra. The final piece pursues an opposite principle where, in the unrestrained invention, harmonic clusters gradually spread through the free vaults of the melodic web until the wild flash of the final throws.

**L'Auriga Celeste** (The Celestial Charioteer), for piano four hands, sees Bedetti once again coming to terms with Mythology; in this case Phaethon challenging the Sun on the burning chariot. **Il carro del sole** (The chariot of the sun) is a *Ricercare* proceeding towards ever closer consonances, indicating the dangerous tension by which the hero provokes the resplendent star. The following **Implorazione** (Supplication) is a *barcarolle* expressing human fear of the unknown. In **Il volo di Fetonte** (Phaethon's flight) the gradual elusion of regular accents expresses the lack of any support and the fearful advance towards a hasty fate, followed by a multiplying of the same material expressed by **I fulmini di Giove** (Jupiter's thunderbolts); as though Bedetti were alluding to the free choice whereby Phaethon goes to his end. **Il pianto delle Eliadi** (The tears of the Eliadi), Phaethon's sisters, is brilliantly built on the previous idea in retrograde: i.e. glory is in Heaven, mourning is with mortals. Lastly, in **L'Ascesa di Fetonte** (Phaeton's Ascent), divination of the hero is evoked through resolution of the harmonic progression of the first piece, indicating Bedetti's subtle skill in giving formal coherence to his instrumental works in order to narrate the inner events of the human soul. And, all things considered, this is precisely the poetry that tinges his world as a composer.

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*Translation: Jan Filip*