

The NAXOS logo is located in the top left corner. It consists of the word "NAXOS" in a white, bold, sans-serif font, centered within a blue square. Above the text are several horizontal lines of varying lengths, resembling a stylized architectural facade or a musical staff.The background of the entire image is a close-up, profile view of a marble bust of a man's head. The man has a full beard and is looking upwards and to the left. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the marble and the contours of his face.

GIAN FRANCESCO MALIPIERO

Sinfonia degli eroi

Dai sepolcri • Ditirambo tragico

Thessaloniki State Symphony Orchestra

Amaury du Closel

**Gian Francesco Malipiero (1882-1973):
Sinfonia degli eroi (1905) • Ditirambo tragico (1917) • Armenia (1917)
Grottesco (1918) • Dai sepolcri (1904)**

If Gian Francesco Malipiero were still alive, he would probably have tried to prevent us hearing any of the music recorded here. 'I wish I had not emerged from silence before 1911, with the first set of *Impressioni dal vero*', he said in a book about his work published in 1952'; and that I had followed them, even if six years later, only with the *Pause del silenzio*' [both these works, 'Impressions from Life', No. 1 (1910-11) and 'Breaks in Silence', No. 1 (1917), are available on Naxos 8.572409]. In the notes Malipiero contributed to the 1952 book's detailed catalogue of his works, *Grottesco* was the only piece on the present disc to escape censure: he condemned *Armenia* as 'insignificant', dismissed the *Ditirambo tragico* as 'liquidated' by the *Pause del silenzio*, and labelled both the *Sinfonia degli eroi* and *Dai sepolcri* simply as 'destroyed' – indeed, he had been telling people he had burnt them since at least the mid 1920s. But creative artists can (by definition) never be objective about their own works; and Malipiero is by no means the only one to be caught telling fibs. As the English scholar John C. G. Waterhouse discovered after Malipiero's death, the composer had in fact preserved the scores of most of the pieces he claimed to have destroyed – hidden away in boxes in the cellar of his house in the northern Italian hill town of Asolo. Fortunately, then, we can discover for ourselves the beauties of all the music on this disc: in the case of the *Sinfonia degli eroi* and *Dai sepolcri*, after more than a century of silence. And perhaps that is what Malipiero secretly, or subconsciously, wanted: otherwise, why keep them? He himself admitted that he had more than once happened across a score, or a performance, of one of his older works after many years, and (as he put it) 'found myself in it'.

The *Sinfonia degli eroi* ('Symphony of Heroes'), which Malipiero composed in 1905, is the earliest of the seventeen pieces he called 'Symphony', and the only one that has never previously been recorded [the others are available as the five-disc series Naxos 8.570878 to Naxos 8.570882]. It was also his earliest piece to enjoy several performances: the orchestra of the Vienna Konzertverein ('Concert Association') gave its world première in the Bavarian spa resort of Bad Kissingen on 29 May 1909, and played it elsewhere in southern Germany before – in December that year – taking it home to one of Europe's finest and most famous concert halls, Vienna's Musikverein. Malipiero himself travelled to hear it, despite the fact that he reportedly

hated Vienna. He had spent an unhappy year in 1898-99 studying at the Conservatory there (run, like the Musikverein, by the city's Society of the Friends of Music); but it seems to have made him contacts. The Austrian conductor Martin Spörr (1866-1937), who championed the *Sinfonia degli eroi*, also conducted more Malipiero at the Musikverein in 1911 – the first movement of the *Sinfonie del silenzio e de la morte* [Naxos 8.570879]; and the Viennese publishing house of Universal Edition later became one of Malipiero's major promoters. The *Sinfonia degli eroi* itself, however, was not heard again until 2010, its first modern performance being given by the orchestra that has recorded it here, the Thessaloniki State Symphony Orchestra, conducted on that occasion by Myron Michailidis.

The *Sinfonia degli eroi* is no conventional Symphony. Both the Vienna Konzertverein's programmes and the composer himself described it as a 'symphonic poem'; and, like the next piece Malipiero wrote, the *Sinfonia del mare* ('Sea Symphony', 1906) [Naxos 8.570878], it is in a single movement. But Malipiero was rarely conventional, and least of all in his idea of what constituted a Symphony: in later life he wrote Symphonies with 1, 3, 4 and 12[!] movements; and around 1950 he notoriously defined 'the Italian Symphony' – for which we should read 'the Malipieran Symphony' – as 'a free poetic form in several sections that follow one another capriciously, obeying only those unfathomable laws that instinct recognises'. Malipiero derived this concept from the origin of the word 'Sinfonia' in the great Italian instrumental music of the Baroque period – which Malipiero knew better than most, having started to study it as early as 1902, apparently entirely on his own initiative, at the Biblioteca Marciana (Library of St Mark's) in his native Venice; and it is as good a characterisation as any of the form of the *Sinfonia degli eroi*.

It is impossible to know what exactly the name 'Symphony of Heroes' is intended to signify – especially since, as the two surviving manuscripts of the piece unearthed by John Waterhouse reveal, Malipiero had previously tried out two very different titles: first *Armonie della vita* ('Harmonies of Life'), then *Karma* (a Sanskrit word for action and for the positive influence of good deeds). Moreover, clearly unafraid of aiming high, Malipiero also gave the music an enigmatic motto taken from the greatest of all Italian poetic sources, the *Commedia*

('Divine Comedy') of Dante Alighieri (c. 1265-1321): 'All things created before me are eternal, and I am eternal' – some of the terrible words written in black that Dante sees over the gates of the Inferno (the following line, which Malipiero does not quote, is the famous conclusion of the inscription, 'Abandon all hope, you who enter'). So is this music hellish or heroic – or both? Driven by positive or negative forces – or conflict between the two? Positive, certainly, in the fanfare figures on horns and trumpets that propel the *Sinfonia degli eroi*'s main, fast sections, and in the long, lyrical, late Romantic string melody of the slower central section. But the overall mood is far more ambivalent – and the work's most typically Malipieran features, as John Waterhouse observes, are also the most disturbing: the 'rugged chromatic instabilities' of the ominous slow introduction; the passage built from a 'stark juxtaposition of mournfully stabbing dissonances and an improvisatory modal arabesque on the cor anglais – already evidently one of his favourite instruments'. The powerful yet equivocal conclusion brings no reconciliation.

Even before Sir Henry Wood conducted the first performance of the *Ditirambo tragico* ('Tragic Dithyramb', 1917), in London in 1919, Malipiero worried that it had been 'superseded' by his *Pause del silenzio* – despite the curious fact that, though he composed the two works side by side, he actually finished the *Pause* first. His explanation for his statement (quoted above) that the earlier work had 'liquidated' the later was that, while both were 'driven by the desire to write an orchestral work different from my previous ones ... it was in the *Pause del silenzio* that this was fully realised'. *Pause del silenzio* undoubtedly has a more individual structure, with its recurring trumpet call, rising by a semitone each time, that links the seven different sections (albeit, as the English expert on Italian music Ben Earle has recently pointed out, this idea only occurred to Malipiero late in the composition process); but the *Ditirambo tragico* is a remarkable and original piece of music in its own right. Again the title raises more questions than it answers: a dithyramb was a wild ancient Greek choral song in honour of Dionysus, god of wine and fertility; but a *tragic* dithyramb...? Malipiero's friend Henry Prunières reported what appears to be the composer's own conception of the work as 'a frenzied but vain search for happiness, pursued bitterly, relentlessly, with rare glimpses of rapture and brutal returns to reality; at the end, drunk with sorrow and joy, humankind believes it has triumphed over Destiny, but collapses, vanquished, annihilated by Death'. The *Ditirambo tragico*'s distraught, searing dissonances are among the most extreme Malipiero ever composed – above all at the very end of the piece, which leaves ferociously unresolved the

clash, established at the start, between the tonalities of B and F, a tritone apart. If we sometimes hear echoes of Debussy, and especially of Stravinsky's ballet *The Rite of Spring* (1911-13) – at whose Paris première in 1913, Malipiero said, he 'awoke from a long and dangerous lethargy' – the *Ditirambo* is surely most closely allied with the still more violent *Elegia eroica* ('Heroic Elegy') [Naxos 8.572415] that Malipiero's friend and compatriot Alfredo Casella had composed in 1916 as a memorial to Italian soldiers killed in the First World War. 'In 1914 war shattered my whole life [Malipiero wrote in 1942, in the darkest days of another World War] which, until 1920, was a never-ending tragedy. The music I wrote then may reflect my agitation, yet I feel that if I have created something new in my art (formally and stylistically) it was precisely in that period.'

Malipiero composed *Armenia* – one of his shortest and seemingly most relaxed orchestral works, subtitled 'Armenian songs translated to the orchestra' – in Asolo in October 1917. In the 1952 note where he described the piece as 'insignificant', Malipiero added that it was a 'token of sympathy for an Armenian friend'. He appears never to have named the friend nor revealed the reason for his sympathy, but it is unlikely to have been unconnected with the genocide of more than a million Armenian people in Ottoman Turkey in 1915, which was immediately condemned as a 'crime against humanity' by Britain, France and Russia. However easy-going Malipiero's *Armenia* may feel on the surface, then, it too cannot escape the sombre undercurrents that pervade so much of his music: the performance indication at the start is 'slow and sad'; a later cor anglais solo is marked is 'slow and nostalgic'. Malipiero told his friend the musicologist Guido M. Gatti that he had woven the work from 'four really beautiful songs' – and it is no mystery that he found these traditional tunes so attractive, as they share many common features with his own characteristic melodies and motifs: modal shapes that circle around one note, with many fleeting grace notes and falling semitones, and underpinned (as John Waterhouse notes) by Malipiero's customary 'imaginatively colourful use of drones and ostinatos'.

The title of *Grottesco* ('Grotesque', 1918) reflects its affinity with a fantastical, uniquely Italian dramatic form credited to the writer Luigi Chiarelli (1880-1947), who introduced the term as a subtitle for his play *La maschera e il volto*, 'The Mask and the Face', written in 1913 (though it did not reach the stage until 1916). Italian theatre at that time was astonishingly innovative, most famously in *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* ('Six Characters in Search of an Author', 1920-21) by Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936). Malipiero would later collaborate directly with

Pirandello on the opera *La favola del figlio cambiato* ('The Fable of the Changeling Son', 1932-33); he was also close to two other groundbreaking playwrights of the First World War period, Pier Maria Rosso di San Secondo (1887-1956) and Massimo Bontempelli (1878-1960); and Malipiero's own stage works from the ballet *Pantéa* (1917-19) and the operatic trilogy *L'Orfeide* ('The Orpheid', or 'The Tale of Orpheus', 1918-22) to the end of the 1920s are themselves radically experimental, foreshadowing the 'music theatre' of the late twentieth century. Malipiero wrote the music of *Grottesco* for another avant-garde stage production, the *balli plastici* ('plastic dances') for puppets created by the Futurist artist and writer Fortunato Depero (1892-1960), whose one-and-only run of twelve performances opened at Rome's Teatro dei piccoli (Children's Theatre) in April 1918. Audiences of all ages experienced the gamut of emotions from utter bewilderment to delirious delight as weird, anti-naturalistic lighting illuminated the swaying and strutting of large angular marionettes painted in bright metallic colours. Alfredo Casella was in the pit, conducting a small orchestra in his own music as well as Malipiero's, plus contributions from the eccentric English composer Lord Berners (Gerald Tyrwhitt, 1883-1950) and no less a figure than Bela Bartók – albeit concealed under the pseudonym 'Chemenow'. Depero had also wanted to use some music by Stravinsky, and Berners wrote to Stravinsky for permission, but nothing came of the idea – though, as John Waterhouse points out, Malipiero's 'variegatedly inventive' use of the few instruments at his disposal often has a 'sardonic cutting edge' that is 'pungently Stravinskian'. The Malipiero ballet, *I selvaggi* ('The Savages'), concluded the evening. Against a tropical backdrop, two tribes of puppet male savages danced a skirmish for possession of an enormous lurching Great Female Savage. In a sudden blackout, a huge snake with glittering green eyes slithered around the stage, before battle was reengaged by two savages in single combat for the Great Female. During another blackout, a silver baby savage danced in her giant belly, then jumped out on to the stage... and was gobbled up by the snake. Malipiero's description of his music for the final general dance could be applied to pretty much the whole piece: 'slightly dramatic, but never less than grotesque'.

The symphonic poem *Dai sepolcri*, with which Malipiero graduated from the Bologna Music High School in 1904, is the earliest original work of his that is known to survive. Once again, its title is somewhat opaque; a strictly accurate rendering should probably follow the form printed on labels preserved with Malipiero's manuscripts: *Dai 'sepolcri' di Ugo Foscolo* – 'From "Tombs" by Ugo Foscolo'. *Tombs* ('Sepolcri'), also known as *Of*

Tombs ('*Dei sepolcri*'), is a long and complex poem that the great Italian patriot author Ugo Foscolo (1778-1827) wrote in 1806 as a protest against a Napoleonic edict decreeing a standard form for tombs and forbidding people (on health grounds) to visit them. In what became a key text for the Italian unification campaign in the mid nineteenth century, Foscolo passionately proclaims the power of tombs to inspire imitation of the virtuous and noble actions of dead heroes, exhorting his fellow Italians to learn to love their country from memorials to their illustrious compatriots, just as the ancient Greeks did. The impulse behind Malipiero's music appears to be not Foscolo's poem as a whole, but a single passage from it – a vivid evocation of a hallucinatory night-time re-enactment of the famous battle of Marathon in 490 BCE, kindled by the giant, awe-inspiring monument commemorating the Athenians who gave their lives repelling the Persian invaders: 'The voyager who sailed on the Eubaeian sea [Malipiero quotes on the title page of *Dai sepolcri*] would see, in the vast darkness, sparks flashing from helmets and clashing swords, the smoke and flames of funeral pyres, the glittering iron armour of ghostly warriors pursuing the fray; while through the terrible nocturnal silence spreads across the battlefield the din of the phalanxes, trumpet blasts, and the press of charging horses trampling the helmets of the dying, and wailing, and hymns, and the song of the Fates.'

The première of *Dai sepolcri*, at the Bologna Music High School on 12 June 1904, is also the first known public performance of any piece by Malipiero; but what the Bologna audience heard that day was not quite what is recorded on this disc. No fewer than three manuscripts of *Dai sepolcri* survive, presenting the music in three significantly different forms – study of which sheds intriguing light on the student Malipiero's already well-developed independence of mind. The earliest manuscript version, dated as being completed in Bologna on 10 February 1904, is for piano duet, though it contains some notes for orchestration – and both the later versions are for full orchestra. The Bologna performance used the first orchestral score, which is labelled as being completed in that city on 17 March 1904, and which is still held at the library of the Music High School's successor, the Bologna Conservatory: that version is somewhat shorter than the piano duet original, and has a more conventional structure – basically a fast movement with a slow introduction. But for his final orchestral version, rediscovered (like the *Sinfonia degli eroi*) by John Waterhouse, and dated both 'Bologna-Venice, 2 April 1904' and 'revised Venice, 29 July 1904', Malipiero added more than two hundred bars of music, much of it slow, virtually doubling the work's duration. It is hard

to avoid concluding that he made the abbreviated Bologna orchestral version to satisfy his rather traditionalist and German-inspired teacher, Marco Enrico Bossi, who doubtless found the piano duet version too indisciplined; but that then, back home in Venice, Malipiero revised the music into a form that would probably have horrified Bossi, but which is far more personal. In the Venice orchestral version of *Dai sepolcri*, on which the present recording is rightly based, Malipiero's voice emerges clearly amid echoes of German and Russian composers: witness, among other things, the way the work ends, not on a strong beat but on the final quaver of a triple-time bar (an inspired development from the ending of both earlier versions); the dotted rhythms of the faster sections, more pointed than in the Bologna versions; the winding, plangent cor anglais solo late in the slow introduction (itself greatly extended in the

Venice version), which is heard again late in a poignant new slow passage Malipiero added towards the end of the work; and most of all the wayward but highly original structure created by these revisions, archetype of the quintessentially Malipieran 'free poetic form in several sections that follow one another capriciously, obeying only those unfathomable laws that instinct recognises'. Even at the age of just 22, and notwithstanding his own later misgivings, Malipiero evidently had more than an inkling of the things that make his music unique.

David Gallagher

¹ *L'opera di Gian Francesco Malipiero* ('The Works of Gian Francesco Malipiero'), ed. Gino Scarpa, published by Canova (Edizioni di Treviso), Treviso, 1952.

This production would not have been possible without the dedicated support of a number of people and institutions. They include the late Giovanni Morelli, Francesco Fanna, the Archivio Gian Francesco Malipiero, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice, Myron Michailidis and the T.S.S.O who gave the first modern performance of the *Sinfonia degli eroi* at the Thessaloniki Concert Hall on January 15th 2010, Peter Bromley, Amaury du Closel, Mark Fitz-Gerald and the Farnborough Symphony Orchestra.



Amaury du Closel

Amaury du Closel studied composition with Max Deutsch and conducting with Alexandre Myrat. He has collaborated with numerous orchestras in London and Warsaw (Polish Radio and Television), at the Festival de Menton (Sinfonia Varsovia), in Greece (La Kamerata), in Suwon, Korea, and in Qatar, as well as with the Nürnberger Symphoniker, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg, the North Czech Philharmonic in Teplice, the Enescu Philharmonic in Bucharest and the Budapest Symphony Orchestra MÁV. He is currently guest conductor of several orchestras in Italy, Germany, Romania and Bulgaria, Music Director of Opéra Nomade, a French nationwide opera touring company, and is also Artistic Director of the Silenced Voices Festival in Strasbourg. In 2005 he published a prize-winning book about European composers who were victims of the Nazi regime. Since 2003 he has revived numerous works of these composers in the concert series Forum Voix Etouffées, throughout Europe. He has recorded with the Nürnberger Symphoniker for Deutsche Grammophon and Sony.



Photo: Nektarios Baxedakis

Thessaloniki State Symphony Orchestra

The Thessaloniki State Symphony Orchestra is one of the leading symphonic ensembles in Greece. The orchestra's extensive repertoire includes works from the baroque to the avant-garde. Apart from the weekly concert performances of symphonic music, the T.S.S.O. covers a wide range of artistic activities performing opera, ballet, music for silent films etc. and is involved in a number of educational programmes promoting its goal of moulding the future audience of music-lovers. One of the T.S.S.O.'s basic aims is to promote the Greek musical heritage, giving many Greek and world premières. The T.S.S.O. has also performed abroad in Valencia, Beijing, Prague, Florence, Pistoia, Berlin, Strasbourg and elsewhere. The orchestra was founded in 1959 by the Greek composer Solon Michaelides. Many important Greek musicians became directors of the T.S.S.O. such as Solon Michaelides, Georgios Thymis, Alkis Baltas, Karolos Trikolidis, Leonidas Kavakos, Myron Michailides, Alexandre Myrat. Today the orchestra numbers approximately 110 musicians and its current artistic director is Georgios Vranos.



**ARISTOTLE
UNIVERSITY OF
THESSALONIKI**

The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH)

The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki is a state institution, which was established in 1925. It covers a wide range of humanities and applied sciences and its 23 hectare campus is located in the city centre. The university's structure, range of activities and size make it the largest and most comprehensive institution of higher education in Greece. AUTH consists of 7 faculties with a total of 33 schools, 5 single-school faculties and 4 independent schools. More than 65,000 undergraduate and 10,000 postgraduate students are enrolled at the University, which has a teaching and research staff of 2,250. The University is supported by a 1,500 strong multi-dimensional administrative and technical service. Issues relating to international educational programmes for the mobility of faculty members and students are administered by the Departments of International Relations and European Educational Programmes.

Five vividly contrasting works, four of them in world première recordings, make up this latest issue in the Naxos series of orchestral music by the Italian composer Gian Francesco Malipiero. Visions of heroism and death form the cornerstone of the release, in the *Ditirambo tragico* (Tragic Dithyramb) composed during the First World War, and in Malipiero's two earliest surviving pieces, *Dai sepolcri* (From 'Tombs') and the *Sinfonia degli eroi* (Symphony of Heroes). They are heard alongside the deceptively relaxed charm of *Armenia*, based on traditional Armenian melodies, and the varied, pungently Stravinskian moods of the aptly titled *Grottesco* (Grotesque).



Gian Francesco
MALIPIERO

(1882-1973)

Playing Time
57:03

- | | | |
|----------|---|--------------|
| 1 | Sinfonia degli eroi (Symphony of Heroes, 1905) * | 17:56 |
| 2 | Ditirambo tragico (Tragic Dithyramb, 1917) * | 8:04 |
| 3 | Armenia (1917) * | 4:30 |
| 4 | Grottesco (Grotesque, 1918) | 8:02 |
| 5 | Dai sepolcri (From 'Tombs', 1904) * | 18:31 |

*** WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDINGS**

Thessaloniki State Symphony Orchestra
Amaury du Closel

Recorded in Aristotle University Concert Hall, Thessaloniki, Greece, 25th-30th June and 2nd-3rd July 2012

Producer and Editor: Martin Nagorni • Engineer: Fabian Frank • Booklet notes: David Gallagher

Release editor: Peter Bromley • Cover Photo: *Hero marble*, Costantino Conti (Milan)

Publishers: Editions Salabert (3); Chester Music, London (2, 4); Performing editions by the T.S.S.O. from manuscript sources kindly provided by the Archivio Gian Francesco Malipiero, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice, Italy (1 and 5)

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