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GIAN FRANCESCO MALIPIERO

Cello Concerto

GIORGIO FEDERICO GHEDINI

L'Olmeneta

Nikolay Shugaev, Cello

Dmitrii Prokofiev, Cello

Rostov Academic Symphony Orchestra

Valentin Uryupin



Gian Francesco Malipiero (1882–1973)

Cello Concerto (1937)

16:47

- | | |
|------------------------------|------|
| 1 I. Allegro moderato | 4:09 |
| 2 II. Lento | 7:19 |
| 3 III. Allegro | 5:19 |

Giorgio Federico Ghedini (1892–1965)

L'Olmeneta ('The Elm Grove') –

concerto for orchestra and two concertante cellos (1951)

32:01

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 4 I. Allegro molto moderato e tranquillo – | 9:28 |
| 5 II. Caccia nell'olmeneta: Allegro vivace | 2:41 |
| 6 III. Molto adagio – | 11:42 |
| 7 IV. Allegretto quieto | 8:10 |

Alfredo Casella (1883–1947)

Notturmo e tarantella, Op. 54 (1934)

6:12

- | | |
|--|------|
| 8 Notturmo: Adagio, ma non troppo | 4:17 |
| 9 Tarantella: Allegro vivacissimo | 1:55 |

Nikolay Shugaev, Cello

Dmitrii Prokofiev, Cello **4-7**

Rostov Academic Symphony Orchestra

Valentin Uryupin

Gian Francesco MALIPIERO (1882–1973): Cello Concerto
Giorgio Federico GHEDINI (1892–1965):
L’Olmeneta – concerto for orchestra and two concertante cellos
Alfredo CASELLA (1883–1947): Notturmo e tarantella, Op. 54

A cello in the family

The three contrasting mid-20th-century Italian works for cello and orchestra on this release also have much in common. Although two of them have the word ‘concerto’ in their titles, they are all more akin to a Baroque concerto grosso than to a 19th-century concerto designed to show off a soloist’s prowess. In this music the solo cellos are ‘first among equals’, dialoguing with an orchestra which supports and seconds them, allowing them space to speak.

Each of the three featured composers wrote at least four complete works with cello solo parts, and if they show a special sympathy for the instrument’s unique character, that may be because they all, in one way or another, grew up with it. Gian Francesco Malipiero (1882–1973) is reported to have played the violin ‘badly’ in his youth, but his younger brother Riccardo (1886–1975) – father of the composer of the same name (1914–2003) – was an outstanding cellist who led the cello section in the orchestra of Milan’s renowned opera house, La Scala. Giorgio Federico Ghedini (1892–1965), the only one of the three composers who studied the cello to an advanced level, is appropriately represented by the longest work, written for not one but two soloists. The composer of the last and shortest piece, Alfredo Casella (1883–1947), in fact had the strongest family connection with the instrument, being born into a patriarchal line of gifted cellists – including his father Carlo, both his uncles and his grandfather (a contemporary and friend of Paganini). Carlo played Bach’s solo *Cello Suites* at home every day and was dedicatee of the *Second Cello Concerto* by the great Italian cellist-composer Alfredo Piatti (1822–1901), a close friend who later became godfather to the young Alfredo. Casella himself, though he inevitably started the cello as a child, proved instead to excel on his mother Maria’s instrument, the piano, and became a concert pianist as well as composer.

Gian Francesco Malipiero’s 1937 *Cello Concerto*, which opens this issue, is the fourth of his five works with solo cello. The others are an early *Sonata* (1907–08) dedicated to his cellist brother Riccardo; a version for cello and piano entitled *Canto nell’infinito* (‘Song into Infinity’) of a piece originally composed for voice, *Vocalise-Étude*, both dating from the late 1920s; a *Sonatina* written in 1942; and most intriguingly a lost ‘symphonic poem’ for cello and orchestra called *Arione* (1912), in which the soloist personified the legendary classical Greek kithara (lyre) player Arion, riding on the back of a dolphin: after hearing his beautiful song, the creature saved him from drowning. In 1952, Malipiero described all his concertos as ‘orations’: ‘a voice rises and the orchestra follows it like a crowd listening to “someone who has something to say” or who, putting it more modestly, would like to say something. There is no censorship to interfere with its discourse; each and every thought can be expressed, and in many different ways. Naturally rhetoric and virtuosity are avoided like the plague.’ As so often with Malipiero, this characterisation is both illuminating and misleading as regards his *Cello Concerto*. Its finale unquestionably demands a virtuoso soloist, especially in the imaginative extended cadenza that forms well over half of the movement. Here, four-note chords in the cello pitted against bass drum and

snare drum could certainly be heard as both rhetorical and reflecting the cut and thrust between soloist and orchestra inherent to the 19th-century concerto tradition. Elsewhere, though, the orchestra does indeed sustain and converse with the solo cello – most amicably in the sunlit reverie of the central slow movement, one of Malipiero's loveliest.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, it was Ghedini, the only really skilled cellist among the three composers represented here, who wrote the most music with solo cello – a total of six works. There are two early pieces for cello and piano, *Elegia* (1923) and *Sonata-fantasia* (1924); three mature concertante works for cello with orchestra or string orchestra, *Invenzioni* (1940–41), *Vocalizzo da concerto* (1957) and *Musica concertante* (1962); and the fourth of the six, recorded here, *L'Omeneta* ('The Elm Grove', 1951), which he called a 'concerto for orchestra and two concertante cellos'. *L'Omeneta* is the largest and most powerfully individual of all Ghedini's cello compositions, and evidence suggests it was particularly special to him: it was one of only three of his works he ever conducted for commercial recordings [all three are now available on Naxos 8.111325], and he wrote an unusually detailed programme note for it. This note, published on page 6 in a new English translation by kind permission of the composer's granddaughter Laura, affords a fascinating insight into the concerto and its context. Ghedini characterises *L'Omeneta* as an autumnal counterpart to two earlier spring-inspired concertos: the *Concerto detto 'Il Belprato'* for violin and strings (1947), whose subtitle could be translated as 'The Beautiful Meadow' (or even, to match the single word of the Italian, 'The Fairfield'); and the *Concerto detto 'L'Alderina'* for flute, violin and small orchestra (1950–51), the meaning of whose subtitle is unclear (it may be worth noting both that 'Alderina' is unrelated to the English word 'alder' and that it can – albeit rarely in Italy – be used as a woman's name). In the same period Ghedini also composed an analogously-titled vocal work, *Concerto detto 'Il Rosero'* for women's voices and small orchestra (1950), 'Rosero' probably being related to the Italian word 'roseo' – 'rosy' or 'rose-coloured'. The subtitles of these concertos will probably forever remain a puzzle. Ghedini's daughter Maria Grazia once suggested that they could be the names of farmsteads or Alpine pastures that the young composer knew and loved; in his programme note Ghedini himself confirms that *Il Belprato*, *L'Alderina* and *L'Omeneta* were the names of real places, but maintains that they were places he had never visited, and that his sole inspiration was the names themselves.

Perhaps as a legacy of too many hours of practice as a teenager, Ghedini sets himself against soloistic virtuosity even more decisively than Malipiero – witness not only his programme note but also a letter he wrote to his lifelong friend Giorgio Negri while composing *L'Omeneta*: 'I'm making it playable by the first desk of orchestral cellos: that's much more practical, and it will stop any of those exhibitionist "tenors of the bow" using it as a vehicle to show off their technical tricks, which I don't like on the cello!' (So it may be significant that when making a new version of his *Vocalizzo da concerto* in 1959, Ghedini gave the cello's solo line not to a tenor but to a baritone!) In his *L'Omeneta* programme note Ghedini also quotes lines from a play by the Italian writer Gabriele d'Annunzio which inspired both the intimate relationship between the two solo cellos and – fused with an imagined autumnal scene – the often mysterious and introspective, even brooding atmosphere of the whole concerto. Among its four movements, the first two and last two of which run continuously, only the brief second movement reflects an exterior rather than interior world, with sunshine breaking through the overcast skies as the cello duo jockey with two whooping horns and other instrumental pairings in a *Hunt in the Elm Grove*. As the hunt recedes, we find ourselves at the concerto's heart, the long, slow third movement – a true heir to the *Adagietto* of the *Fifth Symphony* (1901–02) by Gustav Mahler (1860–1911) and the slow

movements of his *Ninth* (1908–09) and unfinished *Tenth* (1910) – as the first violin section and first solo cello share a yearning, endless melody in which Ghedini’s genius for profound simplicity touches its zenith.

Ghedini concludes his programme note by hinting that he might in future complete a cycle of concertos reflecting all four seasons; but he never did. Could he conceivably have been first encouraged then discouraged by the work of Gian Francesco Malipiero? A year earlier, in 1950, Malipiero had published an edition of the *Four Seasons* violin concertos by Vivaldi – now world-famous, then only just being rediscovered. But at exactly the time Ghedini was working on *L’Olmeneta*, Malipiero was composing his own *Sinfonia dello zodiaco* (‘Symphony of the Zodiac’, 1951) [Naxos 8.570882], with twelve movements and the subtitle ‘Four Partitas: from Spring to Winter’. This may have been Malipiero’s definitive representation of the cycle of the year, but a very similar idea had in fact inspired his *First Symphony* almost two decades earlier (1933), subtitled ‘In Four Movements, like the Four Seasons’ [Naxos 8.570879]. Interestingly, it seems that no other 20th-century Italian composer ever attempted to emulate Vivaldi’s *Winter*; but Malipiero’s frenemy Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880–1968), whose music exerted a powerful influence on the young Ghedini, had already composed a purely orchestral *Summer Concerto* (*Concerto dell’estate*) in 1928 [Naxos 8.572013].

And while Alfredo Casella was never explicitly inspired by the seasons, the sun definitely comes out again – dissolving Ghedini’s autumnal mists – in his *Notturmo e tarantella* (1934). This is the third of Casella’s four pieces with solo cello, preceded by two sonatas (1906 and 1926) for cello and piano, and immediately followed by his *Cello Concerto* (1934–35) [Naxos 8.572416]. He wrote both the short *Notturmo e tarantella* and the significantly longer *Concerto* for his cellist colleague in the Trio Italiano, Arturo Bonucci (1864–1964); and it appears that he worked on both pieces simultaneously, using the *Notturmo e tarantella* as a kind of orchestration practice for the *Concerto*, with an almost identical instrumental line-up – the *Concerto* dispenses with one clarinet but calls for a few extra percussion instruments and strings. Casella later wrote in his autobiography that combining solo cello with orchestra was a ‘problem which had interested me for years: the balance between cello and orchestra is one of the greatest challenges a composer has to face’. And this was evidently his foremost preoccupation in the *Notturmo e tarantella*, which was almost entirely a work of orchestration rather than actual composition. It is an orchestral version of two pieces for cello and piano that the Italian (later naturalised American) cellist Luigi Silva (1903–61) had created out of two vocalises Casella composed in 1929. Silva made some significant modifications to Casella’s original music, most notably composing a new, extended ending for the *Tarantella* – which, however, clearly met with the composer’s approval: not only did Casella himself often perform Silva’s version, usually with Bonucci but even with Silva himself, but he adopted it virtually wholesale (including the new ending) for the orchestral *Notturmo e tarantella*. The atmosphere throughout is close to that of the *Cello Concerto*: the rapt triple-time *Notturmo* parallels the concerto’s central aria, which Casella reckoned as ‘one of my best melodies’; and the concerto’s finale, which he boastfully called ‘the flight of the improved bumblebee’, has a kinship with the *Tarantella* – the flight of the *improving* bumblebee, perhaps?

David Gallagher

The Elm Grove – seasonal concerto

Programme note by Giorgio Federico Ghedini¹

There is a singular power of suggestion, a subtle magic, in the sound of certain names, such as to awake in us, in addition to an imagined impression of the locality or person the name refers to, the state of mind in which we would presumably find ourselves when face-to-face with the person or in the living reality of the place conjured up by our imagination. This power of fascination, which is impossible to define more precisely, is the sole explanation for the titles I have given to some of my recent works. *Il Belprato*, *L'Alderina*, *L'Olmeneta*: all names of real places, but ones I have never seen; very beautiful names, which have each in their turn sparked in me a specific vision and set in vibration a note – whether of colour or of sound, I cannot say – that then became the germinal 'keynote' of the composition born under that sign. So in the concerto called *Il Belprato* the fundamental colour is that of the exuberant early springtime in woods and grassy glades; and the voice of the solo violin which moves against the backdrop of the string orchestra is asked to convey the sensation of 'green on green' and to sing the Panic joy of Nature's reawakening, rich in rising sap. The *Concerto dell'Alderina* (for flute and violin soloists, strings, celesta and timpani) also breathes springlike air; but this is a milder, more human spring: in the distance there is a farmstead, and from the gentle surrounding countryside rise echoes and birdsong. Here, perhaps more than elsewhere, I allowed myself to be guided by the direct, concrete evocative power of things observed from the outside with detached serenity; and this explains the amiable, immediately accessible character of the piece.

The concerto 'of the Elm Grove' sprang from a wholly autumnal atmosphere. The name, perhaps that of a large farmhouse set among elm trees, suggested to me images of surrounding walls, and of old trees with roots deep in the soil – soil on whose surface the golden colours of innumerable autumns have built up and darkened. In transplanting the poetry of this silent world into music, I was inspired and aided by the following lines of Gabriele d'Annunzio:

There is a red herb called Glaspi
and a white one called Egusa,
and they grow far apart from one another;
but their roots come together
beneath the blind earth and intertwine
so subtly as to be imperceptible even to
St Lucy. Their leaves differ
but they put forth a single flower, every seven years.
And this too is in the Writings.²

Glaspi and Egusa. Two protagonists, two voices of the same kind which harmonise, each speaking the same language in their own way; sometimes moving apart, sometimes coming together, but always striving towards the same poetic goal, the same 'flower'. Starting from this premise, I then allowed the laws of music to determine the entire form of the work, as a concerto for orchestra and two concertante cellos.

I gave to the first movement (Allegro molto moderato) a fundamental character of ‘seeking’, the dialogue of the two soloists rising and falling in arpeggios whose spiral tends to touch ever higher notes, and which eventually settle down into a second theme, a sensuous oscillating figure, twisting back on itself,³ which becomes very significant to the construction of the movement. Meanwhile the orchestra, limited at first to providing a spare harmonic bassline, begins to make an increasingly active contribution to the musical discourse, drawing material for evolution and development from new rhythmic and melodic ideas, which gradually lead back to the tranquillity of the opening.

The second movement, the *Hunt in the Elm Grove*, in some ways parallels the *Pavane of the Alderina*:⁴ both serve to validate the title and establish it as characterising the whole concerto. The difference is that, while in the *Concerto dell’Alderina* the *Pavane* marks the point of greatest inwardness, here the *Hunt* sees the only parting of the clouds, the only return to the world of external events. So there is nothing problematic in either its form or content, with the traditional metre of quavers in groups of six, and typical horn fanfare motifs, which are answered by the solo cellos and orchestra, all joining together in the joyous chase.

But immediately after this interlude of light and air, the two protagonists isolate themselves again in concentrated dialogue, intimate and meditative. The first voice softly presents its song; the second just barely makes its presence felt with a single note, analogous to an apt expression of assent by a sympathetic listener who agrees with what is being said. The ring of distant horns briefly carries in from outside the echo of the voices of the woodland, but without disturbing the concentration of the duet – rather, sweetening it with the living image of the contemplated object.

Then the atmosphere of reverie gradually melts away; in order not to shatter it too abruptly, I have the two solo instruments linger a little longer, playing a free ‘Andante’ introduction to the final movement, an ‘Allegretto quieto’ in 3/4 time, subdued and flowing, in which the poetic visions of my autumnal scene come together and conclude.

In creating this concerto my constant aim was clarity of communication; I therefore took great care over the simplicity and significance of my musical language, systematically eliminating every element that did not serve the expressive goal I intended to achieve. I abstained, for example, from any virtuosity in the treatment of the solo instruments, giving them no chords or bravura passages, while seeking to make the best possible use of the unique expressive resources of the cello, its capacity for soft playing and songfulness; just as I strove to give the two protagonists a very specific reason to exist and a distinctive personality to make them worthy of their role as ‘first among equals’ in the musical discourse.

These are some objective facts concerning the genesis and character of the *Concerto dell’Olmeneta*. Its place in my orchestral output is not for me to judge; and the question is in any case premature, not least because it is not impossible that I may in future complete the cycle of ‘seasonal’ concertos – thus exhausting, in my own way, the interpretation of this time-honoured and inexhaustible subject.

Giorgio Federico Ghedini

¹ Translation by David Gallagher of Giorgio Federico Ghedini’s article ‘L’Olmeneta – concerto stagionale’, in *La Biennale di Venezia – rivista trimestrale dell’Ente della Biennale*, October 1951, No. 6, p. 35. By kind permission of Laura Savio Ghedini.

² Words spoken by the herb gatherer Anna Onna in Act II Scene 2 of the play *La figlia di Iorio* (*Giorgio’s Daughter*, 1903) by Gabriele d’Annunzio (1863–1938). On the first page of the score of *L’Olmeneta* Ghedini goes so far as to label the two solo cello parts ‘Glaspi’ and ‘Egusa’.

³ Introduced at 2:50 in the first movement.

⁴ *Pavana dell’Alderina*, the second movement of the *Concerto detto ‘L’Alderina’*.



Nikolay Shugaev

Nikolay Shugaev leads an active performing career as a soloist, chamber musician and conductor, making major concert appearances throughout Europe, North and South America and Asia. He completed his master's degree at Moscow State Conservatory with professor Natalia Shakhovskaya and his soloist diploma at the Conservatorio della Svizzera Italia in Lugano with professor Enrico Dindo. He is principal cello of Ensemble NEO (Sweden), principal cello of Norrbotten Chamber Orchestra, and teaches cello at Luleå University. He makes regular appearances at international festivals such as Ceresio Estate, Società dei Concerti di Milano, Lugano Festival, Rome Chamber Music Festival, Mantova Chamber Music Festival, Lucerne Festival, LAC Lugano and many others. Since 2017 he has been deputy artistic director of Habana Clásica festival in Cuba. He also performs regularly in such prestigious halls as the Great Hall of Tchaikovsky Moscow State Conservatory, La Sala Verdi Milano, LAC Lugano, Concertgebouw Amsterdam and Carnegie Hall. Shugaev plays a cello made by Igor Moroder especially for this recording.



Dmitrii Prokofiev

Dmitrii Prokofiev graduated from Moscow Conservatory and in 2005 passed a postgraduate course with Professor Natalia Gutman. He has been a prize winner at several international competitions, including the Tansman (Poland, 1998), Tchaikovsky (Russia, 2002), and Antonio Janigro Cello Competition (Croatia, 2008). Since 2000 he has been a soloist with the State Chamber Orchestra 'Moscow Virtuosi'; in 2008 he joined the Tchaikovsky Moscow State Conservatory as cello tutor; and from 2018 he has been artistic director of the platform Ars-Industria in Montenegro.

Dmitrii Prokofiev has appeared in recital in cities across Russia and worldwide, including the Auditorium du Louvre in Paris, the Philharmonie de Paris, the Rudolfinum in Prague, the Philharmonie Luxembourg, and the Berliner Philharmonie. As a soloist he has performed alongside symphony orchestras conducted by Vladimir Spivakov, Alexander Rudin, Yuri Bashmet, Gintaras Rinkevičius and Ariel Zuckermann. As a chamber player he has performed with Jessye Norman, Eliso Virsaladze, Denis Matsuev, Nikolai Lugansky, Ilya Gringolts, Elena Revich, Ratimir Martinović, Nikolai Sachenko, Andrey Gugnín and many others.



Rostov Academic Symphony Orchestra

The Rostov Academic Symphony Orchestra (RASO) was founded in 1935 by Bruno Berman, who was also its first conductor. The orchestra's inaugural season featured performances with Andrés Segovia, David Oistrakh, Emil Gilels and other luminaries. Such outstanding composers as Dmitry Shostakovich, Krzysztof Penderecki, Rodion Shchedrin, Valentin Silvestrov, Tikhon Khrennikov and many others were frequent guests at the orchestra's concerts. Formerly called the Rostov Symphony Orchestra, in 1994 the orchestra was awarded the honorary title of 'academic'. Touring highlights include all the important halls of Moscow and Saint Petersburg, Palau de la Música Catalana in Barcelona, Suntory Hall in Tokyo, the philharmonic halls of Osaka, Nagoya, Koriyama and Yokohama in Japan, Polish Radio Hall, Brucknerhaus Linz and many others. Among the soloists and conductors who have performed with the RASO are Mstislav Rostropovich, Leonid Kogan, Vladimir Krainev, Denis Matsuev, Eliso Virsaladze, Dmitry Hvorostovsky, Viktor Tretyakov, Kirill Kondrashin, Teodor Currentzis and Thomas Sanderling. In 2015 Valentin Uryupin was appointed as the orchestra's principal conductor. Today the Rostov Academic Symphony Orchestra has 105 musicians and performs up to 70 concerts in a season.



Valentin Uryupin

Valentin Uryupin is chief conductor and artistic director of the Novaya Opera in Moscow. Highlights of the 2021–22 season include debuts with Oper Frankfurt, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, MÁV Symphony Orchestra Budapest, and Philharmonie Zuidnederland. He returns as guest conductor with the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra, and at the Bregenz Festival where he will conduct Umberto Giordano's opera *Siberia*. In Russia, Uryupin makes regular guest appearances with major orchestras, including the State Academic Symphony Orchestra 'Evgeny Svetlanov', Saint Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra, Ural Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Russian National Youth Symphony Orchestra. He has fulfilled guest conducting engagements with the New Japan Philharmonic, Tapiola Sinfonietta, Janáček Philharmonic Orchestra Ostrava, Orchestra della Toscana, Filarmonica del Teatro Comunale di Bologna, and Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano 'Giuseppe Verdi', among others. Formerly an international clarinetist, he completed his studies in clarinet and conducting at the Moscow State Conservatory where his teachers included Gennady Rozhdestvensky and clarinetist Evgeny Petrov. In 2017 he won First Prize at the 8th Sir Georg Solti International Conductors' Competition.

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The composers of these 20th-century Italian works were all associated with the cello from a young age. Their deep understanding of the instrument reveals itself in three contrasting concertante pieces where soloist and orchestra collaborate to explore a wide range of colours and moods, and whose slow movements are among the most beautiful each composer ever wrote. Malipiero viewed the soloist in his concerto as a voice rising in a crowd; the mysterious and autumnal *L'Olmeneta* is the largest and most individual of Ghedini's cello works; and Casella's *Notturmo e tarantella* is a sunny piece, expertly orchestrated.

Gian Francesco MALIPIERO (1882–1973)

1–3 Cello Concerto (1937) **16:47**

Giorgio Federico GHEDINI (1892–1965)

4–7 L'Olmeneta ('The Elm Grove') – **32:01**
concerto for orchestra and two concertante cellos (1951)

Alfredo CASELLA (1883–1947)

8–9 Notturmo e tarantella, Op. 54 (1934) **6:12**

Playing Time: 55:19

Nikolay Shugaev, Cello
Dmitrii Prokofiev, Cello **4–7**
Rostov Academic Symphony Orchestra
Valentin Uryupin

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