

MALIPIERO

Symphony No. 6
'degli archi'

Ritrovati

Serenata mattutina

Cinque studi

Orchestra della
Svizzera italiana

Damian Iorio

Gian Francesco MALIPIERO (1882–1973) Symphony No. 6 ‘degli archi’ • Ritrovati • Serenata mattutina • Cinque studi

*‘Five studies for tomorrow? What does this title mean? That perhaps they’re not for today, which is not to say they’re for never. These days it’s impossible to live without doubting everything.’*¹

The Italian composer Gian Francesco Malipiero had a unique way of expressing himself, in both words and music. At the Giorgio Cini Foundation in Malipiero's native Venice in 1972, when the composer was 90, the linguist Gianfranco Folena (1920–1992) pointed out in a fascinating conference paper on *Malipiero's Voice and Writing Style* how Malipiero liked to begin with a question, ‘like an ignition key’, and to proceed ‘through oppositions and elliptical statements, rather than through proximity and homogeneity as in normal discourse’. Twenty years later the musicologist Giovanni Morelli (1942–2011) – based, like Folena, at the Cini Foundation – suggested that Malipiero's fundamental aesthetic outlook was ‘neither/nor’, articulated via ‘a melancholic, but also ironic, but also cynical, but also poignant (etc. etc.) series of unresolved confrontations’. The acute observations of Folena and Morelli not only illuminate the structural parallels between Malipiero's music and his statements about it, but also help us to extract the vital kernels of insight at the heart of those statements – however cryptic, or even deliberately obfuscatory, they may sometimes appear; as, for example, in my opening quotation, Malipiero's succinct programme note for his piano work *Cinque studi per domani* (‘Five Studies for Tomorrow’), whose orchestral version is the final work recorded here, *Cinque studi*.

But first, a *Symphony* – for string orchestra.

‘The Sixth Symphony might appear to be a Concerto grosso if it didn't have the same structural characteristics as my other symphonies. Conceived through and through for the strings, it is perhaps – in its sounding song and singing sound – a direct descendant of my string quartets, because here too the expression comes directly from the instruments. But in the Sixth Symphony the four movements are more highly

developed, and therefore have a genuinely symphonic character.’

Malipiero gave his *Sixth Symphony* of 1947 the subtitle ‘of the strings’, and it is indeed a rich, often buoyant celebration of multifarious string sonorities and moods – not to mention being every bit as songful as he suggests, above all in the beautiful slow second movement, whose main melody is also recalled in the slow sections of the finale. There is a clear parallel with the Baroque form of the *Concerto grosso* in the spotlighting of solo instruments against the main body of strings, particularly in the first and last movements; Malipiero's British biographer John C.G. Waterhouse hears a kinship with a far more famous Venetian composer born two centuries earlier, Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741) – much of whose music Malipiero edited for publication after becoming president of the Italian Vivaldi Institute in the very same year he composed the *Sixth Symphony*. But what does Malipiero mean when he describes its movements as ‘more highly developed’ than those of his string quartets? And what does he see as ‘the same structural characteristics as my other symphonies’ and ‘a genuinely symphonic character’?

Malipiero offered his most detailed explanation – or perhaps non-explanation – of his concept of the ‘symphony’ in a programme note which he wrote for a work composed in 1933 (originally entitled *First and Last Symphony*) and reused with revisions in the published scores of most of his first seven symphonies. Extracts from this programme note have frequently been quoted and translated, not least by John Waterhouse in his notes for the pioneering recordings of Malipiero's symphonies on Naxos 8.570878 to 8.570882. Here is part of a much earlier English language version of Malipiero's programme note, printed in the programme book for the *First Symphony*'s UK premiere by the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 1935 – the uncredited translator is likely to have been Malipiero's English second wife, Anna Wright:

‘If the Germans have chosen the Italian word ‘sinfonia’ to define one of their own forms, we Italians, nevertheless, cannot renounce our right to the title Sinfonia when we have conceived a musical work which it is impossible to name otherwise owing to its character, its form, etc.

We are all accustomed to the conventional form of the Beethovenian symphony: Allegro – Adagio – Scherzo – Finale, with a few themes developed to supersaturation. Even with the great masters, the playful game with themes often becomes an arid device which pleases the hearer because it is certainly entertaining to hear and hear again the same idea skilfully transformed in varying modes. The Italian ‘sinfonia’ is a very different thing. Without referring to the ‘symphonies’ which preceded cantatas, which were in fact ‘preludes for various instruments’, we can say that the Italian sinfonia is a free form of poem in several parts which follow one another quite capriciously and obey only those incomprehensible laws which the musician's instinct recognises and adopts in order to express a thought or a sequence of musical thoughts.’

We could be forgiven for thinking that Malipiero is going out of his way here to tell us not what his symphonies are but what they are *not*. Or even, in one respect, to mislead us: he claims his symphonies are ‘very different’ from Beethoven's, but in reality every one of them from *No. 2* (1936) to *No. 7* (1948) – including *No. 6* – has four movements that precisely follow what he calls ‘the conventional form of the Beethovenian symphony’: Fast – Slow – Scherzo – Finale. Malipiero's censure for what he calls ‘an arid device’, however, is an entirely honest expression of his aversion to the Austro-German compositional technique known as ‘development’ – which is usually defined (when it is defined at all) as something like ‘dynamic transformation of musical material’, but in practice generally amounts to little more than chopping themes up into bits and repeating them while changing their pitches but not their rhythm. There is almost nothing of remotely this kind in Malipiero's *Sixth Symphony*, and we must look elsewhere for an explanation of his description of its movements as ‘more highly developed’ than those of his string quartets.

‘Elsewhere’ begins with the final sentence I quoted from his programme note. At first sight it seems potentially very helpful: there is undoubtedly more than a grain of truth in Malipiero's view of the ‘free’ construction of the ‘Italian sinfonia’ that originated in (once again) the Baroque period. But it sheds little real light on the structure of Malipiero's own symphonies – except to warn us against having any structural expectations at all!

Maybe a broader assessment of Malipiero's own music can lead us towards a fuller picture of his intentions. Because

as more and more of his instrumental music is recorded, it becomes clearer and clearer that virtually every piece could be characterised in precisely the same way, as ‘a free form of poem in several parts which follow one another quite capriciously and obey only those incomprehensible laws which the musician's instinct recognises and adopts in order to express a thought or a sequence of musical thoughts’.

This is not at all to say that Malipiero's music is random. As he put it on another occasion:

‘It follows the natural law of connections and contrasts [...] both anti-symmetrical and balanced.’

There is, then, some inner thread to his music; it is just that it is *neither* traditionally developmental *nor* like a carefully planned journey from one place to another, with a definite goal. As listeners, we can perhaps imagine it as a tour – where what matters is not the destination (which may actually be a return to the starting point) but what happens along the way: a tour with occasional detours, by various means of transport, through the most diverse landscapes, where we sometimes see the same scenery from different vantage points, while other vistas may be more unexpected, at times incredibly beautiful, even breath-taking, and occasionally terrifying. Try it – not just in the *Sixth Symphony* but in all the pieces recorded here.

What of Malipiero's comparison between the *Sixth Symphony* and his string quartets? Well, although all of these thoughts apply just as strongly to his string quartets as to his symphonies, there is one significant difference: the quartets are mainly structured as mosaics of short, contrasted sections – often called ‘panels’, and usually running without a break; but the symphonies are mainly made up of separate, longer movements (albeit rarely as long even as the movements of Beethoven's symphonies, let alone those of his Germanic successors). So, strange as it may seem, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that for Malipiero – at least in the 1930s and 1940s – a symphony was just like any other piece without voices: that its ‘structural characteristics’, ‘its character, its form, etc.’, were that it consisted of four individual movements, usually in the time-honoured order; and that what he meant by ‘more highly developed’ and ‘genuinely symphonic’ was simply ... bigger!

Back in the 1920s, an apparently surprising friendship had sprung up between Malipiero, who was a rather private

¹ All passages in italics are quotations from Malipiero's own writings.

person, and the flamboyant, egotistical playboy Gabriele D'Annunzio, Italy's most famous (or infamous) writer. Nearly twenty years Malipiero's senior, D'Annunzio was by this time almost equally famed for his consecutive and concurrent love (or lust) affairs, his extravagant expenditure (and consequent debts), his daredevil airborne and seaborne military exploits during the First World War (which cost him an eye), and his year-long reign in 1919–20 as self-proclaimed *Duce* ('Leader') of the port city of Fiume (now Rijeka in Croatia) – heading a motley force of Italian nationalists who attempted to snatch Fiume for Italy against the claims of the then new state of Yugoslavia. The title '*Duce*' was by no means the only D'Annunzian idea copied by Mussolini, who cannily sidelined his potential rival by granting lavish funding for D'Annunzio's retirement on a grand estate by Lake Garda in northern Italy which became known as *Il Vittoriale degli italiani*: 'The Shrine of Italian Victories'. Here, D'Annunzio virtually adopted Malipiero as his house composer – and Malipiero came to appreciate another, less public aspect of D'Annunzio's multifaceted character: both he and his composing colleague Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880–1968) affirmed that D'Annunzio was one of the most attentive listeners their music ever found. Not least in the case of two pieces Malipiero wrote in 1925 and 1926 for a highly unusual combination of eleven instruments: a wind quintet (one each of flute [doubling piccolo], oboe, clarinet, bassoon and horn) plus four violas, a cello and a double bass. He called the first piece *Ricercari* – a plural pun that combines another reference to a Baroque musical form (often called a *Ricercar*) with an implication of 'seekings' or 'researches' – and the second piece, recorded here, *Ritrovati*, an invented word that suggests 'rediscoveries'.

'Who seeks, finds ... Gabriele D'Annunzio, after listening to my 'Ricerca' at the Vittoriale, wanted me to write a work using the same instruments, but with a heroic character, and he sent me the following outline, which I followed faithfully; later I changed only the title.

The Ship of Promise

- First movement warlike, with the appearance of the theme.
- Second movement of discordant violence, lacerating hatred, a sudden blow.
- Pause.
- Third movement a funeral march, on a simple theme

developed with heroic and religious solemnity.

- The fourth movement consists of the expression of solitude and sadness, of introverted premeditation, of complete dedication to the necessary task.
- The fifth and final movement flares up with the immortal will to vengeance, liberation and glory, and a mighty exaltation of the *Promise of Victory*.

Malipiero's *Ritrovati* does indeed follow D'Annunzio's plan very closely – though the version he quotes here (published after D'Annunzio's death) omits one word of the original, concealing the sole point where he diverges from it. The tone of the music also suggests that warmongering would-be heroics were less congenial to Malipiero than to D'Annunzio: *Ritrovati*'s first and last movements are surely more ebullient than martial; and, as so often with Malipiero, the heart of the work is to be found in its slow movements (the third and fourth). The third movement's sombre opening funeral march theme, sung by four violas and the cello, points to a further bond between Malipiero and D'Annunzio: the Italian Baroque master Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643), another of D'Annunzio's favourite composers, and whose music Malipiero had loved since he discovered it at the Biblioteca Marciana ('Library of St Mark's') in his native Venice at the age of 20. Between composing *Ricercari* and *Ritrovati*, Malipiero began work on what would gradually become the first-ever complete Monteverdi edition; and he also programmed Monteverdi madrigals in the private concerts he organised for D'Annunzio at the Vittoriale – performed not by singers but by that same ensemble of four violas and a cello.

Unusual chamber ensembles were something of a Malipiero speciality. Witness too the next work recorded here, his *Serenata mattutina*, 'Morning Serenade', which he composed in 1959, more than 30 years later, for ten instruments: flute, oboe, clarinet, two bassoons, two horns and two violas, plus celesta.

'Serenades are the music of evening; night too is their friend, but beware of letting them be overtaken by the light of dawn. In truth I was taken unawares and was forced, in spite of myself, to surrender to the fascination of the place where my serenade would be performed for the first time, the Cloister of St Francis of Assisi in Sorrento on the Gulf of Naples. Here there is a phosphorescent glow from light gathered in the depths

of the sea; there is no night, and serenades merge into aubades. So it is a miracle if I have been able to create a genuine serenade, because by the end the sun is already high in the sky. Serenades are to be heard, not seen: they are made of secret sounds, and there is no place in the Gulf of Naples for mists and mysteries, yet when we listen we look without seeing.'

By the late 1950s Malipiero's musical language had become significantly less mellifluous and more chromatic, even acerbic, in comparison not just with the 1920s idiom of *Ritrovati* but also that of the *Sixth Symphony* in the 1940s. His 'Morning Serenade' offers only fleeting snatches of seductive melody, and a few plucked notes on the violas to hint at the strumming of a guitar. Fragmentary themes emerge and are submerged; the ever-changing textures may occasionally suggest the glinting light of the Mediterranean Sea; but nothing is seen clearly in the shadows; and the sunshine Malipiero seems to promise never blazes. The celesta is silent for almost ten minutes before taking the lead in the shimmering final section; but even its bright, tinkling timbres – which perhaps induced John Waterhouse to translate as 'morning bells' the Italian word 'mattutini' that I (and the published score) render as 'aubades' – herald no more than half light. Malipiero's *Serenade* keeps its secrets, melting into the mist.

'These days it's impossible to live without doubting everything.'

And so we come full circle to the final work recorded here, which Malipiero first composed as *Cinque studi per domani* ('Five Studies for Tomorrow') for solo piano in 1959, just before the *Serenata mattutina*, and then orchestrated just after it, at the beginning of 1960, truncating the title to *Cinque studi* ('Five Studies'). This designation, which has a considerably less 'academic' feel in Italian (or French) than it does in English (or German), seems to have been a favourite with Malipiero. I've recently discovered that in the 1930s he proposed to call a five-movement work of his *Cinque studi per una sinfonia* ('Five Studies for a Symphony'), until he was wisely persuaded that such a title would not exactly

encourage performances outside Italy; the work in question was the one that ran through the most names of any Malipiero piece: composed in 1925–26 between *Ricercari* and *Ritrovati*, it was originally published as *The Exile of the Hero* (another D'Annunzio idea), and also variously labelled *The Book of Hours*, *On the River of Time* and *The Singing Cricket*, before finally becoming *Pause del silenzio II* – 'Breaks in Silence II' [world premiere recording on Naxos 8.572409]. Just as with that work, it is impossible to know in what sense Malipiero considered these five pieces of 1959/60 to be 'studies', or why he chose to replay them – almost uniquely among his piano works – on other instruments (his sole relevant programme note is for the solo piano version). Possibly part of the reason was simply to take the music on a tour through the kaleidoscopic soundworld he could colour with no more than a small orchestra, which is effectively an expanded form of the chamber ensembles already heard on this recording: it juxtaposes orchestral strings with a wind group of a single flute, oboe, clarinet and bassoon and two horns, and a percussion group of cymbal, bass drum and tambourine, joined by the *Serenata mattutina*'s celesta, plus the piano for which the pieces were first conceived. The range of contrasting moods is astonishing, even within individual *Studies* (especially the second and third), setting moments of lightheartedness against anger, mystery against clarity, and with another particularly poignant slow movement as the fourth *Study* – its opening melody, a more angular but no less beautiful counterpart to those in *Ritrovati* and the *Sixth Symphony*, returns near the movement's close to balance its structure; and, analogously, the whole work is balanced by the fifth *Study*'s fleeting echoes of the first. Among the rare but always powerful new instrumental lines that Malipiero adds to those of the solo piano original are the leaping horns that launch the climax of the third movement, and – most telling of all – an extra dissonance in the very final chord. A hint that Malipiero, approaching the age of 80 as he entered the 1960s, was 'doubting everything' yet more intensely? His *Cinque studi* may not have had many performances in the further 60 years since he created them – and 'tomorrow never comes', as the old English adage says; but this world premiere recording could at last prove that they are indeed 'not for never'.

David Gallagher



Orchestra della Svizzera italiana (OSI)

The Orchestra della Svizzera italiana (OSI) is Italian Switzerland's premier musical ensemble. It works with internationally renowned conductors and soloists such as Martha Argerich, programming fresh and creative concerts, operas and dance co-productions, open air concerts, cine-concerts and summer festivals. The orchestra also facilitates numerous education and outreach programmes. The OSI is resident orchestra at the Sala Teatro – Lugano Arte e Cultura (LAC), with Markus Poschner serving as principal conductor since 2015. The ensemble is renowned throughout Europe for its innovative performances and multi-award-winning discography, which includes a 2018 ICMA award. Founded in 1935 as the Radio Orchestra of Italian Switzerland, the orchestra assumed its current name in 1991. It has been directed by eminent conductors such as Ansermet, Stravinsky, Stokowski, Celibidache and Scherchen, and has collaborated with many composers including Mascagni, Richard Strauss, Honegger, Milhaud, Martin, Hindemith, and, more recently, Berio, Henze and Penderecki. The OSI is mainly supported by Repubblica e Cantone Ticino – Fondo Swisslos, the City of Lugano, the Associazione degli Amici dell'OSI and its principal sponsor BancaStato. www.osi.swiss



Photo: Annalise Photography

Damian Iorio

Born in London into a distinguished family of Italian and English musicians, Damian Iorio is a dynamic and gifted conductor, and enjoys an international career. Having begun his professional life as a violinist, following studies at the Royal Northern College of Music and Indiana University, Iorio went on to study conducting at St Petersburg State Conservatory while serving as a member of the Danish National Radio Symphony Orchestra. Iorio has worked with some of the world's greatest orchestras and opera companies, including the London Philharmonic Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and the BBC Symphony, Philharmonic and Scottish Orchestras. His most recent credits include engagements with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the Philharmonia Orchestra. In summer 2018 Iorio returned to the Opéra national de Paris for *Boris Godunov*, also conducting Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*. He has conducted Verdi's *Macbeth* at Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Puccini's *Turandot* at the Bonn Opera and regularly appears at the Helikon-Opera in Moscow. He recently made his debut with the Welsh National Opera conducting *Die Zauberflöte*. In 2014 he became music director of the Milton Keynes City Orchestra, helping the orchestra build a strong reputation as an integral part of cultural life in the city and surrounding region. Iorio was previously artistic director and chief conductor of the Murmansk Philharmonic Orchestra where he was the catalyst of its success and growth in both opera and concert performances. Iorio is a passionate advocate for music education and has been involved in education projects with international orchestras. He is currently music director of the National Youth String Orchestra of the UK. A champion of new music, Damian has conducted several world premieres, and has collaborated closely with composers including Tan Dun, Huw Watkins and Silvia Colasanti. He conducted the Russian premiere of Michael Nyman's *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, which received a nomination for Best Opera Production at the Golden Mask Festival. Iorio's recording of Ghedini and Casella on Naxos (8.573748) was highly acclaimed by *The Guardian* and was awarded the prestigious 'CHOC' accolade by *Le Monde de la Musique* magazine. A recent release on Naxos with the Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della Rai (8.573613) was highly praised by *Records International* online. In 2006 Damian received the Knight of the Order of Sant'Agata from the Republic of San Marino in recognition for his services to music. www.damianiorio.com

The unconventional structure of Gian Francesco Malipiero's music takes us on a journey through unexpected, sometimes incredibly beautiful vistas. The *Sixth Symphony* is a rich and songful celebration of string sonorities and moods, while the heroic *Ritrovari* and evocative *Serenata mattutina* display Malipiero's expertise in writing for unusual chamber ensembles. The *Cinque studi*, heard here in their premiere recording, demonstrate an astonishing range of contrasting moods – a kaleidoscopic sonic tour with no more than a small orchestra, which juxtaposes orchestral strings with a wind group of a single flute, oboe, clarinet and bassoon and two horns, and a percussion group of cymbal, bass drum, tambourine, celesta and piano.



Gian Francesco
MALIPIERO
(1882–1973)



	Symphony No. 6 ‘degli archi’ (‘of the strings’) (1947)	21:37
1	Allegro	3:37
2	Piuttosto lento	6:06
3	Allegro, vivo	2:44
4	Lento, ma non troppo – Allegro – Lento – Allegro – Molto triste (Lento)	9:44
	Ritrovari (‘Rediscoveries’) (1926) *	11:13
5	Allegro energico, non troppo mosso	2:24
6	Allegro mosso	1:13
7	Lento e triste	3:49
8	Andante	1:58
9	Allegro vivace, ma non troppo mosso	1:49
10	Serenata mattutina (‘Morning Serenade’) (1959)	12:26
	Cinque studi (‘Five Studies’) (1959/60) *	12:22
11	Mosso moderatamente, ma gagliardo	1:42
12	Un poco allegro	1:47
13	Non troppo mosso, ma fluido	2:32
14	Lento	4:13
15	Non troppo mosso	2:08

*** WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

Orchestra della Svizzera italiana
Damian Iorio

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