



**ROSSINI • DONIZETTI
VERDI • PUCCINI • MASCAGNI**

ITALIAN OPERA

transcribed for wind ensemble

European Wind Soloists

PATRICK DE RITIS

Italian Opera transcribed for Wind Ensemble

Musical transcription has a long and auspicious history, from the keyboard and lute intabulation of vocal polyphonic music in the fourteenth century to the booming market for musical arrangements in the nineteenth century. The practice of transferring musical material across ensembles and idioms, and the range of possible approaches to this task – seeking to retain the original exactly, adapting to new instrumentation, creating a free arrangement in which musical material was reordered and developed – was apparently as creatively appealing to composers as performers as it was of practical benefit in disseminating their works.

From the 1800s onwards transcriptions fell primarily into one of two types. The first of these was transcriptions made by performers, usually of well-known melodies, often from popular operas, as a means of enticing the public and providing a platform by which they could demonstrate their virtuosity. Nicolò Paganini, Henri Herz, Sigismond Thalberg and Franz Liszt were among the greatest exponents of the fantasia, paraphrase and variation set on themes recognisable to their adoring audiences. And since Italian and French works dominated European opera houses for many decades, these themes included arias from works by Paisiello, Auber, Rossini, Meyerbeer, Donizetti and Verdi.

The second type of transcription emerged as a result of the growing number of amateur musicians who were anxious to have the opportunity to perform their favourite pieces themselves. Thanks to innovations in the printing industry, the rise of mass production, and improved transport and communication networks across Europe and beyond, publishers were able to offer an ever-larger selection of music suitable for the burgeoning, entertainment-hungry middle classes. From piano duets (by far the most popular and robust of mediums) to string ensembles, male voice choirs and harmonium players, catalogues of music were produced for all, with most major publishers employing in-house arrangers to make their best-loved pieces available in as many different forms as possible. This included a lively market of music for wind ensemble, often called 'Harmonie' (a reference to the small groups of oboes, clarinets, flutes and horns which worked for many eighteenth-century courts). The majority of the repertoire produced for such groups was operatic in origin – indeed, the entirety of Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* and Beethoven's *Fidelio* were transcribed for Harmonie. The transcriptions on this disc have

all been produced for the European Wind Soloists by Michele Mangani, but several are based on earlier arrangements of opera excerpts. With just eleven musicians – two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two horns, two bassoons and a double bass – Mangani strives to recreate full orchestral textures, and the players are often confronted with extended virtuosic lines. Yet good arrangements are also idiomatic, and thus the strengths and limitations of the new instrumental ensemble need to be borne in mind (not to mention, in the case of a wind ensemble, their need to have time to breathe in the midst of often continuous and relentless passages previously intended for string players). In a sense, Mangani's arrangements occupy a place somewhere between the two nineteenth-century models of arrangement: they require great performative skill in the manner of public concert pieces (including prominent solo rôles), yet they are also a means of allowing those performers to take the lead in the shaping of this music, in a way that they simply could not if playing from the original scores. This recording therefore allows Mangani, the players of the European Wind Soloists, and all listeners, to experience these well-known operatic excerpts in an entirely new way.

The works featured here span some 77 years of Italian operatic history, from Rossini's *L'Italiana in Algeri*, given its première in May 1813, to Puccini's *Tosca*, first heard in January 1900. We begin with the *Overture to Il barbiere di Siviglia*, first performed in 1816. This music is particularly brilliantly suited to the ensemble, with its light, bouncing textures and prominent wind solos. Here, as in all of his transcriptions, Mangani retains much of the wind and brass orchestration of the original work, using a combination of oboe, clarinet and bassoon to render string textures. He does, however, pass the composer's piccolo parts to a flautist, perhaps to balance the lighter bass sound of bassoons.

This is followed by the *Prelude and Intermezzo* from Pietro Mascagni's famous verismo work, *Cavalleria rusticana* (1890). The full operatic *Prelude* is 'interrupted' by Turridu's off-stage song to Lola; this is simply excised here, since the music then continues from the point it broke off at his appearance. Mascagni's texture is heavily reliant upon strings, harp and, in the case of the *Intermezzo*, organ (this music also appears as a hymn, sung by the villagers at their Easter service). The pairings of wind instruments within the new ensemble allows for one clarinet, oboe and bassoon to render the moving harp

quavers of the *Intermezzo* accompaniment whilst the remaining instruments provide both the soaring melody, and the warm, sustained sound of strings and organ. The double bass, adding depth and sonority, also provides tremolos to imitate the timpani in Mascagni's original.

We then return to Rossini for the *Overture to La Cenerentola* (Cinderella), dating from 1817. Once again, wind and horn solos have a prominent rôle in the original – so prominent, in fact, that for the purposes of arrangement, Mangani has reassigned certain solo lines in order to allow for sufficient variety of timbre across sections. One further work of Rossini's also features here: a *Fantasia concertante on L'Italiana in Algeri*, a transcription by Mangani of a trio version for oboe, basson and piano by Eugène Jancourt and Charles Triébert. Jancourt (1815-1901), a distinguished French bassoonist, was a leading performer and teacher from the late 1840s onwards, and also composed and arranged a considerable amount of music to build a suitable repertoire for his instrument (including further free operatic transcriptions of Bellini's *Norma* and *La Sonnambula*); Triébert (1810-1867) was an oboist of similar standing and reputation. Mangani retains the solo oboe and bassoon lines, referring back to Rossini for the textures and voicing of the full orchestra.

From the generation following Rossini, Donizetti is here represented in a *Divertimento on Lucia di Lammermoor*. Once again, this is an arrangement of a pre-existing transcription – a work for bassoon and piano by Antonio Torriani (1829-1911).

Torriani was the principal bassoonist at the Teatro alla Scala for several decades in the late nineteenth century, and many of Verdi's operas featured prominent bassoon solos written with Torriani in mind. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Torriani's considerable output as an arranger and composer should include fantasias and divertimenti on operatic melodies by Verdi himself, and earlier writers such as Rossini and Donizetti. The bassoon solo is retained in Mangani's transcription – a particularly virtuosic part involving fast passagework, lyrical legato melodies and stratospheric tenor notes pushing at the top extreme of the instrument's register.

The *Overture to Verdi's Luisa Miller* (1849) is a work of high drama and dense orchestral textures, and here the transcription allows for a pragmatic realisation of the music for the forces at hand. The double bass and bassoon evoke the dark writing of full low strings, whilst the pulsing quavers and frantic diving lines of the violins are lightened out and shared between high winds.

Finally, dating from 1900, comes Puccini's *Tosca*, here presented as a *Fantasy* by Mangani, and featuring some of the best-loved melodies from the opera – in particular '*Non la sospiri a nostra casetta*' and '*Ah, quegli occhi!*', in which Tosca and Cavaradossi declare their love for each other; and the music announcing Cavaradossi's imminent execution in the final act.

Katy Hamilton

European Wind Soloists • Patrick De Ritis (Director)

Dante Milozzi and Sacha De Ritis, Flutes
Paolo Grazia and Giovanni Pantalone, Oboes
Alfonso Giancaterina and Antonio Di Vittorio, Clarinets
Marco Panella, Andrea Caretta and Alessandro Monticelli, Horns
Patrick De Ritis and Vincenzo Felicioni, Bassoons
Massimo Di Moia, Double Bass



Photo: Antonio Angelozzi

European Wind Soloists

The European Wind Soloists was founded in 1993 by Patrick De Ritis, the principal bassoonist of the Vienna Symphony Orchestra. The ensemble is composed of the principal wind players from the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI, Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala di Milano, Orchestra Filarmonica del Comunale di Bologna and other major orchestras of Europe. The core of the ensemble consists of two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, and two horns; two flutes, doublebass and cello may be added if required by the concert programme. The ensemble is devoted to the presentation of little known virtuoso repertoire for wind instruments, ranging from Mozart, Dvořák, Beethoven, Schubert, and Richard Strauss to the contemporary. The European Wind Soloists has been invited to perform in numerous prestigious concert events around the world, winning the acclaim of audiences and critics alike.



Photo: Antonio Angelozzi

Patrick De Ritis

The bassoonist and conductor Patrick De Ritis started his musical education at a very early age with piano and bassoon lessons. For many years he played both instruments and when he was seventeen dedicated himself fully to the study of the bassoon. He studied bassoon at the Santa Cecilia Conservatory in Rome with Marco Costantini, at the Salzburg Mozarteum with Milan Turkovic, and with Klaus Thurnemann, and conducting with Franco Ferrara and Michael Dittich, among others. Winner of various prizes and honours, he has served as principal bassoonist of the Vienna Symphony Orchestra since 1990, after holding similar positions in Rome at the Teatro dell'Opera and the Orchestra Sinfonica della RAI. He has been invited to play with many international orchestras appearing as a soloist with Georges Prêtre, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Vladimir Fedoseyev, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, among others. He is Artistic Director of the European Wind Soloists, Vice-President of the Concertino Wien and Professor of Chamber Music and Bassoon at the Luisa D'Annunzio Conservatory in Pescara.

Also available



8.553410



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Musical transcription has a long and auspicious history, and Michele Mangani's arrangements follow a tradition of recreating popular operatic tunes for small groups of oboes, clarinets, flutes and horns, supplemented on this recording by double bass. These works span some 77 years of Italian opera, from Rossini's *L'Italiana in Algeri* to Puccini's *Tosca*, taking in the *verismo* of Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* and the *bel canto* tragedy of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* on the way.

ITALIAN OPERA

transcribed for wind ensemble by Michele Mangani

Playing Time
62:58

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|----------|--|--------------|
| 1 | Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868): Il barbiere di Siviglia
Overture | 6:52 |
| 2 | Pietro Mascagni (1863-1945): Cavalleria rusticana
Prelude | 5:43 |
| 3 | Intermezzo | 3:14 |
| 4 | Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1845), arr. for bassoon and piano by Antonio Torriani (1829-1911):
Divertimento on <i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i> , arr. for bassoon and wind ensemble | 11:03 |
| 5 | Gioachino Rossini: La Cenerentola
Overture | 8:00 |
| 6 | Michele Mangani (b. 1966):
Tosca Fantasy (Fantasia on themes from Puccini's <i>Tosca</i>) | 12:08 |
| 7 | Gioachino Rossini, arr. for oboe, bassoon and piano
by Charles Triebert (1810-1867) and Eugène Jancourt (1815-1901):
Fantasia concertante on <i>L'Italiana in Algeri</i> , arr. for oboe, bassoon and wind ensemble | 9:52 |
| 8 | Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901): Luisa Miller
Overture | 6:06 |

European Wind Soloists

Dante Milozzi and Sacha De Ritis, Flutes • Paolo Grazia (soloist on **7**) and Giovanni Pantalone, Oboes

Alfonso Giancaterina and Antonio Di Vittorio, Clarinets

Marco Panella, Andrea Caretta and Alessandro Monticelli, Horns

Patrick De Ritis (soloist on **4** and **7**) and Vincenzo Felicioni, Bassoons • Massimo Di Moia, Double Bass

Patrick De Ritis

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