



MAXIMILIANO AMICI

PIANO WORKS

IGOR COGNOLATO

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PIANO PIECES (2017)

[01] I. *	2:35	[15] DEVELOPMENT 2	2:12
[02] II. INTERLUDE	1:30	[16] DEVELOPMENT 3	1:45
[03] III. FIGURED CHORALE	1:45	[17] DEVELOPMENT 4 (FUGUE)	2:48
[04] IV. INTERLUDE	1:02	[18] DEVELOPMENT 5	1:41
[05] V. CHORALE	4:48	[19] DEVELOPMENT 6	1:21
[06] VI. INTERLUDE	0:45	[20] FINALE	1:45
[07] VII. *	5:31		

ANCORA UN PURO GIORNO DI GIOIA (2020)

[08] I. MOLTO ADAGIO	2:36	[21] I. WHORLS OF COLOR	2:47
[09] II. ANDANTE MOSSO	2:26	[22] II. SERENE SPIN	3:00
[10] III. ADAGIO SOSTENUTO	2:43	[23] III. CLARET MOONLIGHT	2:13
[11] IV. ALLEGRO MODERATO	1:40	[24] IV. IRIDESCENCE	2:41
[12] V. CALM	2:52	[25] V. WAXING AND WANING	2:58
		[26] VI. NOCTURNAL GLARE	2:47
		[27] VII. NACREOUS CLOUDS	2:44

DEVELOPMENTS (2024)

[13] INTRODUCTION	1:57	[28] SOLO (2021)	6:02
[14] DEVELOPMENT I	3:00		



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PIANO



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Maximiliano Amici, disciple of Luciano Pelosi and Stephen Jaffe, earned his master's in music composition at the Santa Cecilia Conservatory in Rome. He also holds diplomas in electronic music and conducting from the same conservatory, as well as a diploma in piano performance from the S. Pietro a Majella Conservatory in Naples. He joined the doctoral program in composition at Duke University after a period of specialization in avant-garde music at the Hochschule

für Musik in Basel with Prof. Erik Oña.

He earned his Ph.D. in music composition in September 2021. His dissertation, available on all the major streaming platforms, is a dramatic cantata for baritone, large chamber ensemble, male choir, and electronics based on *The Pit* and the *Pendulum* by Edgar Allan Poe, for which he also authored the libretto and conducted the recording sessions.

The Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale RAI recorded his orchestral piece *Flowing* under the baton of Yoichi Sugiyama in 2014. The composition was broadcast. His music has since been played and recorded by several prominent chamber groups, such as the Ciompi Quartet, Imani Winds, JACK Quartet, Parco della Musica Contemporanea Ensemble, Ensemble Phoenix Basel, Deviant Septet, among others.

He began teaching at Duke Kunshan University in 2021, where he is currently an Assistant Professor of Music and Composition. His music is published by DoNeMus, Curci, and Ars Spolegium. Commercial recordings of his music are available through DoNeMus and Ars Spolegium.

INTRODUCTION

The pieces featured in this album showcase the most significant part of what I have written for piano between 2017 (the year *Solo* was composed) and 2024. My relationship with the instrument is deep-rooted: my mother was a concert pianist, and she used to give lessons at home. The pieces her pupils were playing during the lessons, which I heard from adjacent rooms, composed the soundtrack of my childhood.

During my adult years, while studying composition, I measured myself against some of the most challenging pieces in the repertoire, even without the ambition

of becoming a concert soloist. I believed that a solid proficiency in piano playing would be very beneficial for my composing. Even though I do not compose exclusively at the piano, I thoroughly enjoy improvising on themes and seeking various solutions to the compositional challenges I encounter, including those for works composed for other instruments.

A common thread among all the compositions on this CD is their structure: they consist of several smaller pieces, reminiscent of Robert Schumann's collections. In fact, Schumann is one of the composers who has most inspired my piano music. I look to him especially regarding my pursuit of clarity, brevity, and simplicity in music. I hope I found some of these qualities in the pieces presented in this collection.

The descriptions of each piece delve deeper into my artistic intent and some of the compositional techniques that I employed in each work. In general, I have explored ways to articulate the musical discourse formally in a manner that transcends tonality while remaining communicative. Sharing these creations with the world brings me great joy; I wish you an enjoyable listening experience.

PIANO PIECES (2017)

Piano Pieces is a collection of four closely interrelated pieces, interspersed with three interludes. All the pieces are built around a two-voice motif. This motif, the central idea of the collection, speaks of love. It can be heard for the first time at the very beginning of the first piece, which has no title (symbolizing incommunicability). The theme emerges after some seconds from a midst of chords. The main motif can also be perceived clearly in the bass of the first piece once a rapid, whirling figuration begins. The theme

can then be heard again, with many variations, in the following chorales. The figured chorale (figuration is a technical term that refers to the practice of embellishing melodies) uses a contrapuntal line that combines a traditional use of rhythm with unconventional melodic repetitions. The second chorale, the central piece of the collection, presents the motif in three versions. It is bareboned at first, presented with a rapid and changeable figuration in the bass the second time, and finally ends with a superimposed counterpoint. The last piece, also untitled, synthesizes the preceding ones and presents the central theme several times, concluding with a sort of transfiguration. The interludes are meant to create mental space between the compositions and are constructed with a different set of themes and harmonic materials.

ANCORA UN PURO GIORNO DI GIOIA (2020)

The composition, written during the summer of 2020, a time plagued by the COVID-19 pandemic, is a reflection on healing. The piece's title is inspired by a passage from Beethoven's *Heiligenstadt Testament*, in which he longs for respite from his physical torments. He writes, "O Providence — grant me *at least but one day of pure joy* [laß einmal einen reinen Tag der Freude mir erscheinen]." The title translates from Italian as At least but one day of pure joy.

A reference to Beethoven's musical writing is also present. I employed melodic fragments taken from the *canzona di ringraziamento offerta alla divinità da un guarito, in modo lidico* [Holy song of thanksgiving of a convalescent to the Deity, in the Lydian mode], contained in his Quartet Op. 132, as a thematic basis for the piece. While the fragments are not aurally recognizable, they do constitute the frame around which

the composition is built. In fact, *Ancora un puro giorno* is more broadly inspired by Beethoven's exploration of contrapuntal purity and by the alternation of terse atmospheres with sudden élan of joy, both aspects also present in the *canzona*.

The piece is divided into five movements, which should be played seamlessly.

DEVELOPMENTS (2024)

Developments is a collection of eight short pieces that are part of a research on coherence in music by means of motivic transformation.

The first piece, *Introduction*, presents, at the very beginning, a handful of musical ideas: namely, a slow movement in the very high register (which vaguely reminds of Chopin's accompaniment to his Prelude Op. 28 n°2), a short melodic idea, a sudden plunge, and a subsequent rapid ascension towards the highest register. The remainder of the first piece begins to re-elaborate on those ideas.

The second piece, *Development I*, is divided into three parts. The first part starts deconstructing the very initial idea; the second presents it in a more melodic fashion, below a fast, breeze-like accompaniment. Finally, harmonies that synthesize the melodic material of the first part conclude the piece.

Developments II to V restart from similar premises as *Development I* but unfold in different directions. Those are, respectively, a short toccata (*Development II*), an adagio (*Development III*), a fugue (*Development IV*), and a virtuosic episode (*Development V*). *Development VI* reveals the full harmonic potential hidden in the very four chords of the introduction. The *Finale* synthesizes all the previous movements in a short, self-contained adagio that – similar to the initial rapid ascension

(slowly, elongated, this time) – fades into the highest register of the instrument as a transfiguration.

KALEIDOSCOPIC MUSIC (2023)

Kaleidoscopic Music consists of seven pieces that investigate the same musical challenge—maintaining a constant yet ever-changing flow of sound—from different perspectives. Constant rotations in the order in which musical material is presented and progressive permutations characterize all the pieces. The first composition, *Whorls of Color*, presents a steady yet ever-changing pattern, over which a melody emerges for a moment before fading again, disappearing into the meshes of the texture. The second piece, *Serene Spin*, is partially inspired by Olivier Messiaen's *Visions de l'Amen*. It features a slow, constant texture in the high register over which long, bell-like chords resonate. I imagined the slow rotation of a kaleidoscope, with stones falling one at a time, then in small bunches. *Claret Moonlight*, the third episode, is conceived as a nocturne in which a counterpoint is constructed over a bassline formed by constant permutations of an initial idea. The fourth piece, the central composition of the collection and perhaps among the more technically challenging, is built around a long, repeated bass line over which harmonies develop in a circular narrative. Its title, *Iridesence*, evokes a texture of everchanging light. The second part of the collection begins with *Waxing and Waning*, a piece in which two melodic lines, one ascending and the other descending, constantly interweave. The sixth composition, *Nocturnal Glow*, is written in the spirit of Felix Mendelssohn's *Romances Without Words* and once again elaborates on the idea of circularity, with waxing lines surfacing from the low register of the piano and waning lines emerging from the upper register. The final

piece, *Nacreous Clouds*, is an elaboration of the first. It presents rapid arabesques that lead to the global climax of the collection, which concludes with a dissolution of the sound in the high register, as light does in the iridescent polar stratospheric clouds.

SOLO (2021)

One of the infinite ways of composing music consists of sitting at the piano, alone – hence the title *Solo* – starting to dream and exploring endless combinations of sounds, letting the mind flow, and then fixing on paper the best results from those sessions. With this piece, I aim to capture the magic of some of those moments while also recounting something about the creative process itself in a self-reflective way.

In fact, the actual creative unfolding is often not as linear as what you will hear. I "cut out the dull bits" and chose not to include in the final composition the countless interruptions, temper tantrums, and dead ends that often pervade such sessions. Nonetheless, as you will hear, I did describe some 'failed attempts,' and the piece does mock some hitches and glitches of the creative process. In writing this music, I sought to create something unique and poetic.

IGOR COGNOLATO, Pianist

Born in Treviso, Italy, in 1965, Igor Cognolato began his music career at the age of five. He obtained his bachelor's diploma, magna cum laude, in piano performance from the University for Music "Benedetto Marcello" in Venice, where he currently teaches. He continued his musical education at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hanover, Germany, achieving

the Concert Examination Diploma of Music in piano performance under Brazilian pianist Roberto Szidon. Igor Cognolato's debut took place with the NDR Symphony Orchestra, featuring a live recording and broadcast of Franz Liszt's Second Piano Concerto. Among his piano teachers were Aldo Ciccolini and Paul Badura-Skoda. He studied composition under Ugo Amendola.

Igor Cognolato has performed throughout Western Europe and the USA as a soloist with numerous orchestras, such as Radiophilharmonie Hannover, Sofia Chamber Orchestra, Orchestra di Padova e del Veneto, Orchestra del Gran Teatro La Fenice di Venezia, and Tallinn Chamber Orchestra, among others. He has recorded for RAI, Eurovision, NDR Radio, and Norwegian National Radio, along with CDs for Simax, Blue Serge, Rivoalto, and other French and Italian labels.

Since 2009, he has regularly performed with the Athenaeum Berlin Philharmonic String Quartet. They participated in the Aix-en-Provence Chamber Music Festival; their performance of Schumann's Piano Quintet Op. 44 was broadcast live on ARTE TV. His activity as a chamber music musician includes performances with dozens of musicians (string and woodwind players, and singers) from all over Europe. In 2013, he performed as the lead actor in the documentary film "Richard Wagner, diario della sinfonia ritrovata," presented that same year at the "70° International Mostra del Cinema di Venezia," as well as at the Bayreuther Festspiele, and at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC (USA). Since 2017, he has served as the Vice President of the Richard Wagner Association in Venice.

He has been invited to give masterclasses at many

European universities, including, but not limited to, Kunstuniversität Graz, MUK – Musik und Kunst Universität Wien, Universität Mozarteum Salzburg (Austria), Musikhochschule Lübeck, Hochschule für Musik Dresden (Germany), Trinity Laban College in London (UK), Conservatorio Superior de Música Salvador Seguí de Castelló (Spain), Estonian Academy of Music Tallinn (Estonia), Romanian National Academy of Bucharest, and West University of Timisoara (Romania). In addition, he has been invited to give a masterclass at the Central Conservatory of

Music in Beijing (China). He is regularly invited to hold masterclasses also by private institutions such as the Carinthian Music Academy (Austria), the Euro Arts Festival in Szczecin (Poland), the Talent Music Summer Courses in Brescia, and the Miami Piano Festival in Brioso (Italy).

In 2016, he made a successful debut at the Berliner Philharmonie with Milan Svoboda's Concerto Grosso for the Berliner Philharmonic's official concert series.





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