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CARPE DIEM

piano music from Italy

Arabella Tenniswood-Harvey

CARPE DIEM Arabella Tenniswood-Harvey | piano

The beauty of Italy captured in sound

1 Franz Liszt (1811-1886)
"Les jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este" (1877)
from *Années de Pèlerinage* vol. III 7'59"

Charles T. Griffes (1885-1920),
Roman Sketches, op. 7 (1915-16)

- 2** The White Peacock 4'52"
- 3** Nightfall 7'53"
- 4** The Fountain of the Acqua Paola 3'26"
- 5** Clouds 3'52"

Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)
Tre Preludi (1919-21)
Per pianoforte sopra melodie gregoriane

- 6** No. 1 (Molto lento) 5'09"
- 7** No. 2 (Tempestoso) 6'16"
- 8** No. 3 (Lento) 5'00"

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895-1968)
Onde: 2 Studi per pianoforte
(*Waves: 2 Studies for piano*), (1935)

- 9** No. 1 Onde corte 2'19"
- 10** No. 2 Onde lunghe 2'52"

Pierre Petit (1922-2000)
Rome, l'unique objet... (c. 1946)
Suite pour le piano

- 11** Pincio 3'06"
- 12** Néréides 4'38"
- 13** San Carlo 2'30"
- 14** Galoppatoio 2'42"

Michael Kieran Harvey (born 1961)

- 15** *Carpe Diem* (2015)
Italian Gothic "Bas-Relief" for Solo Piano
after Respighi's "The Pines of Rome" 6'17"
Con moto – Meno mosso, con rubato –
A tempo

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This recording celebrates the ongoing attraction of Italy and especially Rome as a place of artistic pilgrimage and inspiration. It premieres Australian composer Michael Kieran Harvey's *Carpe Diem* (2015) in context with Italian-inspired solo piano works by significant composers of the past, including the Italian composers Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936) and Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895-1968), the Hungarian Franz Liszt (1811-1886), the American Charles Griffes (1885-1920) and the Frenchman Pierre Petit (1922-2000).

Liszt's life-long love of Italy inspired numerous works for solo piano including the complete second book of his *Années de Pèlerinage* (inspired by his first visit in 1837-39) and also most of the third book - the Italian pieces in this later volume composed during his 1877 stay. In 1886, the final year of his life, he was again in Rome where he met the young Debussy on a number of occasions.

"Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este" is from the third book of *Années de Pèlerinage* and reflects the solace and artistic inspiration that Liszt gained from the sumptuous gardens and fountains at the Villa d'Este in Tivoli, near Rome, which he had visited for the first time in 1868.¹ In 1851, Cardinal Hohenlohe (Liszt's host) had rescued the villa and gardens, created in the 16th century by Pirro Ligorio, from over a century of neglect.² In the 17th century the Villa d'Este was regarded as

one of the treasures of Italy, renowned for its spectacular harnessing of water, but in the 18th and early 19th centuries the whole complex fell into decay.³ As renowned Liszt scholar Alan Walker notes, "By the time Liszt arrived, the spectacular water-displays were once more functioning as they had in Ligorio's time. Liszt would certainly have sat inside Ligorio's masterpiece, the Fontana dell' Ovato (the so-called Queen of Fountains), and contemplated from inside the marble chamber the wall of water rushing over him."⁴

In 1877, the year he composed "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este", Liszt was suffering depression,⁵ and would "sit for hours gazing at the fountains, spellbound by the play of their cascading waters."⁶ As I practised the piece I felt very moved by this image of Liszt at the age of 66, and sought an interpretation of the music that would convey the fragility of his mental health: my aim being to recapture the original meaning of a piece that has so often been simplistically reduced to a vehicle for virtuosic display.

Essentially, the musical material describes the play of water: the rising and falling of the water is established through repeated ascending and then descending arpeggio motives in the introduction; and the relaxing and somewhat hypnotic sounds of water are imitated through staccato figures, rapid movement and tremolo. Yet as Walker has noted:

1 Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: Volume three, the final years, 1861-1886* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1997) 165.

2 Villa d'Este, Tivoli (Italy)-official site, "History", <http://www.villadestetivoli.info/storiae.htm>

3 Walker, *Franz Liszt: Volume three*, 164, 165.

4 Walker, *Franz Liszt: Volume three*, 165.

5 Walker, *Franz Liszt: Volume three*, 369.

6 Walker, *Franz Liszt: Volume three*, 372.

Liszt transcended simple visual imagery and turned his streaming fountains into mystical symbols, associating them with the well-known verse from the Gospel according to St. John (4:14), which he quotes in Latin on the score: *Sed aqua quam ego dabo ei, fiet in eo fons aquae salientis in vitam aeternam* (“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst [but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life]”). As if to confirm that this is really a religious piece, Liszt enshrines it in his “divine” key of F-sharp major.⁷

In this way, Liszt continued the artistic tradition of associating fountains with religion: a fountain being a “source of water hence, symbolically, of spiritual life and salvation”.⁸ It is interesting that Liszt places the religious quotation not at the opening of the composition, but about half-way in (bar 144), when a modulation to D major and a change of texture (the chordal melody marked *pp dolcissimo* now in the right hand, supported by a flowing, arpeggiated sextuplet accompaniment in the left hand) create a serene mood in contrast to the shimmering lushness of the developmental, demisemiquaver passage that precedes it. It is as if Liszt is conveying through sound the calming (and uplifting) effect of his prolonged ‘looking at’ and ‘listening to’ the fountains. Eventually, the music builds to a *fff* climax

marked *brioso*. Knowing the state of Liszt’s mental health at this time, we might presume he had overcome his depression had he ended the composition here - but the material soon dissipates, and instead we are reminded of his fragility by the return of the material from an earlier section, now recalled with the tremolo in a very high register. Having been transformed by the energy of the preceding climax, the tremolo is infused with the chaos of natural processes and becomes increasingly delicate. Taking Walker’s account of Liszt’s own tremolo technique as my guide – that is, an effect created by the *trembling* of the hand⁹ – I have interpreted this recurring device as a symbol of the vulnerability of emotional well-being, and thus subject to change and variation - as is, indeed, the flow of water itself.

The influence of Liszt’s “Les jeux d’eaux à la Villa d’Este” provides a thematic link with **Charles Griffes’** set of four *Roman Sketches* composed in 1915 and 1916: “The White Peacock”, “Nightfall”, “The Fountain of the Acqua Paola” and “Clouds”. Griffes had studied piano and composition in Berlin from 1903 to 1907 and was initially influenced by German Romanticism, but from 1911 he moved towards Impressionism.¹⁰ His admiration for Debussy is reflected in “Clouds” in which the *pp* dynamic, *tranquillo* marking and repeated chordal motif of regular crotchets at the opening are reminiscent of the opening of Debussy’s *Nuages* (the first of the three orchestral nocturnes

composed in 1897-99): both use these devices to create an atmosphere that suggests the very slow shifting and dissolving of clouds. Like Debussy and Liszt, Griffes was influenced by poetry and each of the *Roman Sketches* is prefaced by excerpts from *Sospiri di Roma* (*Sighs of Rome*) by Scotsman William Sharp (1855-1905, also known as Fiona Macleod), who had visited Italy in 1891.¹¹ Thus Griffes’ ideas of Rome are gleaned from poetry rather than direct experience.

The first piece, “The White Peacock” is prefaced by an abbreviated version of Sharp’s poem of the same title. It describes a dream-like, languid garden setting flooded with sunlight and coloured with blossom and flowers, through which a white peacock moves: marked *languidamente e molto rubato* the music evokes the lushness of this environment and the hauteur of the peacock. In “Nightfall” Griffes refers to the typical ternary format of the Chopin nocturne by recalling introductory material at the end of the piece, but the intervening music has a more complex structure with its restless ebb and flow that leads to two climax points surrounding a poignant *tranquillo* section. The excerpt from Sharp’s poetry describes the progression from day to dusk to night.

“The Fountain of the Acqua Paola” shares with “Les jeux d’eaux à la Villa d’Este” compositional devices that have come to be associated with the genre of fountain piano music (Ravel’s *Jeux d’Eau* being another

9 Walker, Franz Liszt: Volume three, 247, note 55.

10 Donna K. Anderson, “Griffes, Charles T.,” Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (accessed December 14, 2015).

11 Taylor A. Greer, “The Unfolding Tale of Griffes’s ‘White Peacock,’” in *A Music-Theoretical Matrix: Essays in Honor of Allen Forte* (Part II), ed. David Carson Berry, Gamut 3/1 (2010): 175.

7 Walker, Franz Liszt: Volume three, 372.

8 James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* (Rev. ed.; London: John Murray, 1996) 128.

example) - the use of a soft dynamic to begin, a lively tempo, rapid passagework, repetition of patterns, and a preference for the middle and high registers of the piano. But Griffes departs from Liszt's model by employing frequently changing metres. Opening in 4/4, the 70-bar piece undergoes sixteen changes before returning to 4/4 for the final four bars: the intermediary metres including 3/4, 4/8, 9/8, 7/4, and one bar of 5/4 for the climax point. This rhythmic flexibility gives liquidity to the music and captures the capricious, shifting qualities of Sharp's poetic imagery that highlights the play of light and colour, the bubbles and the foam. The stunning Fontana dell'Acqua Paola, built in the 17th century, is situated on the Janiculum Hill and offers commanding views across the city. When we visited it on a hot summer day I was struck by its magnificence and the sheer noise of the water that gushes from the five spouts and collects in an impressive semicircular pool – creating polyrhythms that are captured in Griffes' music. Despite the constant traffic of modern-day Rome, watching and listening to the fountain is an uplifting and refreshing experience – a reminder of the perpetual importance of water to this city.

Famous for his three symphonic poems celebrating Rome (*Fontane di Roma*, 1915-16, *Pini di Roma*, 1923-24, and *Feste romane*, 1928) **Ottorino Respighi** wrote only a small amount of solo piano music, most of which is unpublished. Yet his own arrangement of *Fontane di Roma* in 1918 and *Pini di Roma* in 1924 for piano duet, along with his subsequent arrangement of the piano solo recorded here

- *Tre Preludi: sopra melodie gregoriane* (1919-21) - to provide material for the first three movements of his orchestral work *Vetrata di chiesa* (1925-26), indicates not only a surprising flexibility to instrumentation but also the transferability of his musical ideas. Respighi had moved from Bologna to Rome in 1913, when he was appointed composition professor at the Liceo Musicale (later Conservatorio) di S Cecilia, and remained based there until his death. Rome had a vibrant orchestral music scene, and this along with its prevalence of churches no doubt impacted upon Respighi's output.¹²

Respighi's affinity with orchestral music, gained from experience as an orchestral viola player as well as through his own composition, is evident in the *Tre Preludi*: his frequent use of arpeggiated chords to decorate and emphasise particular notes in a melodic line is particularly reminiscent of string writing; his attention to part-writing creates clear, interesting and varied textures; and the development and refashioning of limited, repeated melodic material through changes in texture, harmony, tempo and dynamic resembles an orchestrator's use of varied instrumental timbres. While it is often stated that it was Respighi's wife Elsa who introduced him to the study of Gregorian chant, it has been noted that this influence is felt in much earlier compositions, such as his cantata *Christus* (1898-99) and his orchestral Suite in E (1903). Following the *Tre Preludi*, Respighi continued to use plainsong-like

12 John C.G. Waterhouse, et al., «Respighi, Ottorino», Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (accessed December 15, 2015).

material in a number of works composed during the 1920s.¹³

In ternary form, the first prelude is unashamedly lyrical and Romantic in expression. The 5/4 time signature (which reappears in the third prelude) gives fluidity to the melodic material, enhanced further by improvisatory flourishes that would not be out of place in a Chopin nocturne. The energy and rhythmic drive of the second prelude provides a stark contrast. In the opening section, marked *ff* and *tempestoso*, a majestic octave theme in the bass cuts through the tumultuous triplet motion in the right hand, before reasserting itself triumphantly in a higher register in the following *più vivo* section. A new and more lyrical theme is then introduced by the left hand in the subsequent *vivo non troppo* section. Following a restatement of the opening section, the first theme reappears transformed in a *Largo* passage in which Respighi presents the melody almost unadorned, allowing us to appreciate its simple but haunting beauty, before the *moto perpetuo* spirit returns to bring the prelude to an impressive close. In the third prelude, a meditative mood is created by a hypnotic rhythmic ostinato on a single note, and shifting phrase lengths across a 5/4 metre. Building to an impassioned climax, the music fades away at the end creating a poignant close to this exquisite set.

Composer, pianist and writer **Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco** was an important figure

13 John C.G. Waterhouse, et al., «Respighi, Ottorino», Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (accessed December 14, 2015).

in early 20th-century Italian musical life. Born in Florence, his surroundings were a frequent source of inspiration. James Westby explains that “Music for him was above all a means of expression, going as far as to claim that everything could be translated into musical terms: ‘the landscapes I saw, the books I read, the pictures and statues I admired.’”¹⁴ The titles of a number of his piano compositions refer to nature. *Onde: 2 Studi per pianoforte* (1935) are dedicated to Oscar Levi. The first – “Onde corte” or short wave – evokes the sun-lit ripples of a gentle sea through the repetition of a short wave-like motif in the pianist’s right-hand. A mostly soft dynamic and a preference for the middle and upper registers of the keyboard contribute to the sparkling character of the music, connecting this piece with Liszt’s “Les jeux d’eaux à la Villa d’Este”. In contrast, the second study – “Onde lunghe” or long wave – traverses the full keyboard with repeated one-bar arpeggio figures that recall the études of Chopin, animating a majestic melody in the middle register often strengthened with octaves. With a wide dynamic range, this is music of grandiose Romantic gestures, evoking the full splendor of a powerful sea.

Pierre Petit won the *Prix de Rome* in 1946: his suite for piano dates from around this time. Through four short, contrasting movements prefaced with excerpts from historic poetry, Petit alludes to the unchanging aspects of this eternal city whilst sharing something of his own experiences. The first three have brief

14 James Westby, “Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Mario”, Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (accessed December 8, 2015).

texts by the 16th century French poet Joachim du Bellay, who recorded his own impressions of Rome in two collections entitled *Antiquités de Rome* and *Regrets* (1558), written during a four-year stay in Rome. *The Oxford Companion to French Literature* describes Du Bellay as “a master of the sonnet... whether he employed it to satirize the life of Rome, to call up the melancholy of its ruins, or to lament his own exile.”¹⁵ In the title of the first movement, Petit refers to the Pincio Hill, the site of the Villa Medici which was home to the French Academy and winners of the *Prix de Rome*: the accompanying words by Du Bellay tell us that despite such prestige, the area was frequented by many lascivious women!

‘Néréïdes’ are sea-nymphs of Greek mythology, which Petit imagines inhabiting Rome’s river Tiber: the quotation from Du Bellay refers to the river as a transient yet enduring symbol of Rome. Effective use of the sustain pedal and constant quaver movement evokes the flowing water, whilst a soft dynamic, the shimmering overlay of harmonies, and simple yet mysterious melodic material captures the beauty of the nymphs. In the third piece Petit evokes the meditative beauty of Rome’s many churches, perhaps referring in this case to Borromini’s stunning San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane. Following a free, bell-like introduction, four-bar harmonisations are reminiscent of church music. Du Bellay writes of ‘making love with our eyes’ in holy places. In the final piece, *Galoppatoio*, Petit refers to the riding track located within the Villa Borghese

15 *The Oxford Companion to French Literature*, compiled and edited by Sir Paul Harvey and J.E. Heseltine (London: Oxford University Press, 1959) 227.

gardens, not far from the Villa Medici. For this light-hearted finale set in 5/8, Petit quotes the Classical poet Virgil – ‘Hence the warrior-horse with stately port advances into the field’¹⁶ – an image at humorous odds with the mostly soft dynamic and quirky nature of this music.

The étude *Carpe Diem* (Latin for ‘seize the day’) by my husband **Michael Kieran Harvey** (b.1961) – a renowned pianist who studied at the Liszt Academy in Budapest - is an Italian Gothic ‘bas-relief’ for solo piano, a rumination on Respighi’s *Pini di Roma*. It was composed for me as a birthday gift, following our trip to Italy mid 2015. In Rome we admired the distinctive pines in the Villa Borghese gardens, and discussed their translation into musical ideas. As in the technique of bas-relief sculpture, the undulating septuplets of the opening of *Carpe Diem* suggest the ‘umbrella’ shape of the intermingling pine canopies, while the stark octave theme hints at the majestic yet sensual curving pine trunks. The work is in a miniature sonata form, with a central section reminiscent of moonlight summer nights in the garden of the Villa Borghese, disturbed by a gentle melancholy breeze. Such beautiful and romantic surroundings irresistibly lead to passionate urges to grab life while one can, to ‘seize the day’, to make the most of one’s existence.

16 Benjamin Apthorp Gould, *The Works of Virgil: Translated Into English Prose ... with the Latin Text and Order of Construction on the Same Page, and ... Notes in English ...*, Volume 1 (London: G.B. Whittaker, 1826) 92.



Arabella Tenniswood-Harvey is an Australian pianist and art historian, interested in the interrelationships between music and visual art. Born in Hobart, Arabella studied piano in Melbourne where, in 1999, she was one of the few elite young musicians awarded full scholarship for the Australian National Academy of Music's inaugural Advanced Performance Program. Her solo piano recording *The Ring of Bone: The Piano Music of Elisabeth Lutyens* (MD 3354); and her duo recordings with British violinist Edwin Paling - *Lennox Berkeley: Complete Music for Violin and Piano, and Solo Violin* (MD 3361); and *Kenneth Leighton: Music for Violin and Piano* (MD 3358) - have been critically acclaimed in forums including Gramophone magazine. Arabella holds degrees in music performance, art history and education. Her PhD research considered the impact of music on James McNeill Whistler's art. She has presented lecture-recitals on this topic in the USA and UK, using solo performance to illuminate her discussion and analysis of visual art, and

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Cover photo: The Pantheon, Rome
Page 3 and above: Villa Borghese gardens, Rome
Photo left: detail of Fontana dell'Acqua Paola, Rome
Page 8 photo: Bologna
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