

The NAXOS logo is located in the top left corner, featuring the word "NAXOS" in white capital letters on a blue rectangular background. Above the text are stylized white lines representing a classical architectural facade with columns.

NAXOS

Vittorio RIETI
Piano Concertos

Alessandro Marangoni

Orazio Sciortino

Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano

Giuseppe Grazioli



ORCHESTRA
SINFONICA
DI MILANO

Vittorio
RIETI
(1898–1994)

	Piano Concerto No. 1 (1926) *	17:28
1	I. Allegro	5:59
2	II. Andantino	7:20
3	III. Allegro non troppo	4:09
	Piano Concerto No. 2 (1937) *	17:36
4	I. Allegro con fuoco ed energico	5:31
5	II. Adagio	6:38
6	III. Allegro	5:27
	Piano Concerto No. 3 (1955) (first version) *	23:47
7	I. Largo – Allegro vivace	10:14
8	II. Andantino poco mosso	9:14
9	III. Allegro	4:19
	Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra (1951) **	21:08
10	I. Allegro moderato	5:40
11	II. Tema con variazioni: Allegretto	9:54
12	III. Allegro fugato	5:34

Alessandro Marangoni, Piano
Orazio Sciortino, Piano **10–12**
Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano
Giuseppe Grazioli

Vittorio RIETI (1898–1994)

Piano Concertos

The *Critique* section of *The New Yorker* on 29 August 1925 had a recommendation to make: 'A composer whose work you might watch is young Rieti,' it read, 'whose *Concertino for Wind Instruments and Orchestra* Mr Reiner ushered into the Lewisohn Stadium.' The article noted Rieti's 'continuity of ideas', while complimenting his scoring for orchestra.

Here was confirmation of the Egyptian-born, Italian composer's ascent through the ranks in the 1920s, in which time Rieti had moved to Paris and immersed himself in the musical life of the French capital. The *Concertino* received further performances under Alfredo Casella and Willem Mengelberg, and a meeting with impresario Sergey Diaghilev ensued in 1925. Impressed by Rieti's music, Diaghilev enlisted the choreographer George Balanchine to produce the comic ballet *Barabau*, the first of numerous collaborations between the composer and choreographer over the next 35 years.

While writing for the stage Rieti continued to compose for his first instrument, the piano, writing initially in a solo capacity but soon completing his first piano concerto in 1926. He dedicated it to Francis Poulenc, who he met in Rome in 1921. The concerto is a likely result of orchestrating solo piano pieces for the ballet and looked set to capitalise on the success of Prokofiev, whose *Piano Concerto No. 3* received a rapturous reception when performed under Serge Koussevitzky in Paris four years prior.

The concerto's high spirits reflect Rieti's recent marriage to Elsie Rappaport and the birth of his son Fabio, while the economy of thought and balletic poise is consistent with neo-Classical works of the time. A steady tread from the bass strings introduces C major – the key used by Prokofiev for his third concerto – but here the theme is taken up with conviction by the orchestra and welcomed with bright keyboard figurations as Rieti asserts his own distinctive style. An air of impudence remains in spite of the distracted reveries in the second movement *Andantino*. These are brushed aside by the finale, whose wit and syncopated rhythms are aided by perky bassoon and strident piano.

Rieti's musical profile continued to rise in Paris, in the company of Poulenc and the composers of Les Six. In 1928 Stravinsky asked him to join Francis Poulenc, Georges Auric and Marcelle Meyer as the quartet of pianists performing *Les Noces* in Diaghilev's production. Rieti began a *Harpichord Concerto* in 1930 for Wanda Landowska, but communication became difficult with the increasingly fractious political climate in Europe. As a result the work was recast as the *Piano Concerto No. 2* and was dedicated to Meyer, who gave its premiere at the International Festival of Contemporary Music in Venice after its completion in 1937.

Its bustling first movement features bold piano writing, alternating between bittersweet lyricism and more percussive sections, while the colourful accompaniment gives prominence to the timpani. The *Adagio* reveals a darker centre, the piano often left alone with its thoughts, yet after a steely cadenza the orchestra powers forward into the finale. With positive energy restored the piano leads a series of breezy conversations, often with solo woodwind and brass, before a colourful cadenza leads to a final outburst.

In 1940 Rieti emigrated to New York with Elsie and Fabio, a move made possible through his Egyptian ancestry. Tragically his family were not so fortunate, and his mother, uncle and aunt were killed in the concentration camps. Recovering in America, Rieti found himself on sure musical ground. His close friend Stravinsky had already emigrated, Milhaud and Hindemith too. Rieti became an American citizen in 1944, working with fellow émigré Balanchine on a number of ballets, notably *La Sonnambula* in 1946.

After a few private attempts Rieti decided against following Stravinsky into twelve-tone music. Instead he continued working with tonality in compact forms, building his keyboard portfolio alongside his ballet work. In 1954 he turned once again to the concerto format, dedicating the *Piano Concerto No. 3* to Marcelle Meyer on its completion the following year. This is the first recording of the urtext edition.

A stern pedal note from the soloist's left hand begins the first movement *Largo*, before the right-hand part blossoms in a recitative. The orchestra interrupt this private conversation and a crisp, witty dialogue ensues. The extended *Andantino* is

deeply felt and, in its central section, attains an air of mystery with higher passage work from the soloist. This leads directly into the finale, whose ideas unfold quickly, with a brisk pace set by the piano with weighty punctuation from the orchestra. The two unite for a convincing sign-off.

While in New York Rieti wrote a number of works for two pianos, led by the *Second Avenue Waltzes* of 1942, which impressed Balanchine on their Washington premiere in 1944. The *Waltzes* were taken up by Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale, the famed duo who had been given Rieti's name by Virgil Thomson. Rieti wrote the *Suite champêtre* for them in 1948, and completed the *Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra* in 1951 while teaching at the Chicago Musical College. This is its first commercial recording.

Although marked *Allegro moderato*, the first movement is something of a moto perpetuo, its ideas driven by the steely countenance of the pianos, with dashes of wit and virtuosity. The second movement, a substantial *Tema con variazioni*, takes a gently lilting theme through a wide spectrum of moods, its quieter variations featuring cameos for solo flute and clarinet. A central repose features improvisatory cadenzas for solo viola and the two pianos, before a brisk variation replete with convincing cadences. A final slow section dispenses briefly with any obvious tonality, acting as an upbeat for the finale. An insistent, cinematic theme takes hold, remarkably prophetic of the main material from John Williams' score for *Jaws* in its ominous tread. Soon the mood lightens, and a fugal episode with full orchestra encourages music of ever greater exuberance, the concerto winding up in a heady mixture of display and rhythmic drive.

Ben Hogwood





Alessandro Marangoni

Alessandro Marangoni studied piano with Maria Tipo. A winner of several national and international awards, including an International Classical Music Award (ICMA) and the Franco Abbiati Prize, he has appeared throughout Europe, America and China as a soloist and a chamber musician, collaborating with leading performers including Daniel Barenboim, Mario Ancillotti, Aldo Ceccato, Valentina Cortese, Enrico Dindo, Quirino Principe, Massimo Quarta and Milena Vukotic. Marangoni is artistic director of Almo Collegio Borromeo in Pavia and professor of piano at the Conservatorio Guido Cantelli in Novara. He collaborates with music publishers Edizioni Curci, Éditions Alphonse Leduc and G. Schirmer, and is an ambassador for the International Labour Organization's campaign "Music against Child Labour". His discography includes an album of the piano works of Victor de Sabata for the 40th anniversary of Sabata's death. For Naxos, he has recorded the complete piano works of Rossini (*Péchés de vieillesse*) (8.501306), Clementi's *Gradus ad Parnassum* (8.572325 through to 8.572328), and Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Piano Concertos* (8.572823) and *Works for Cello and Piano* with Enrico Dindo (8.573881). www.alessandromarangoni.com



Orazio Sciortino

Orazio Sciortino (b. 1984, Siracusa, Italy) is a pianist, composer and conductor, and was nominated as Composer of the Year at the 2024 International Classical Music Awards. He collaborates with major musical institutions in Italy and abroad, including Teatro alla Scala, MITO SettembreMusica, Teatro La Fenice, Festival dei Due Mondi di Spoleto, Bologna Festival, Sociedad Filarmónica de Lima, Konzerthaus Berlin, Megaron Athens Concert Hall and Orquesta de València, among others. He has recorded for Dynamic, La Bottega Discantica, Limen Music, Claves Records and Sony Classical, including an album of Verdi/Liszt complete piano paraphrases. In 2016 he was appointed as an ambassador for Krug, with the prestigious champagne house commissioning a work dedicated to the Krug Grande Cuvée for the first time in its history. The resulting piano work, *Lives Through a Glass*, was included in his album *Self Portrait*, alongside other original piano compositions (Sony Classical). Sciortino is a professor and head of the piano department at Brescia Conservatory. www.oraziosciortino.com

Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano

The Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano was founded in 1993 by Vladimir Delman and Luigi Corbani to give Milan and Lombardy a focal point for symphonic repertoire. The orchestra was initially based in the Sala Verdi of the Milan Conservatory before moving to the Teatro Lirico, and finally found its permanent home in the Milan Auditorium, inaugurated in October 1999 with Mahler's *Symphony No. 2 'Resurrection'* conducted by Riccardo Chailly. The orchestra has been led by many eminent conductors such as Carlo Maria Giulini, Peter Maag, Georges Prêtre, Vladimir Fedoseyev, Helmuth Rilling and Riccardo Muti. www.sinfonicadimilano.org



Photo © Marco Borrelli

Giuseppe Grazioli

Conductor Giuseppe Grazioli has specialised in recording less-often-heard music from his native Italy. He has a long track record as a conductor of both orchestral music and opera. Grazioli earned a degree in piano with Paolo Bordoni and in composition with Niccolò Castiglioni. He then switched to conducting, in which field he had a variety of prestigious teachers that included Leonard Bernstein, Peter Maag, Gianluigi Gelmetti, Leopold Hager and Franco Ferrara. He made his recording debut, leading the Harmonia Ensemble on three albums, featuring works by Casella, Malipiero and Rieti. After conducting a performance of Nino Rota's rarely heard opera *La visita meravigliosa*, he has often championed Rota's music. Grazioli has a large repertory of Classical, Romantic and contemporary music. He has conducted many rare Italian operas by Gino Marinuzzi, Licinio Refice, Franco Faccio as well as the world premiere of Marco Tutino's opera *Vita* with the Orchestra della Scala. In 2019, he became the principal conductor and casting manager of the Opéra de Saint-Étienne in France and conducts extensively in that country.

www.giuseppegrazioli.com

Dedicated to Francis Poulenc, Vittorio Rieti's *First Piano Concerto* formed part of his early success in Paris during the 1920s, the work's high spirits reflecting Rieti's recent marriage and the birth of his son Fabio. The *Second Piano Concerto* started out as a harpsichord concerto for Wanda Landowska but was later recast. The *Third Piano Concerto* is notable for its deeply felt central *Andantino*, while the *Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra* is exuberant with cinematic themes. All of these works feature witty passages for orchestral soloists in dialogue with the piano, imbued with Rieti's original and unpredictable style.

Vittorio RIETI

(1898–1994)

1–3	Piano Concerto No. 1 (1926) *	17:28
4–6	Piano Concerto No. 2 (1937) *	17:36
7–9	Piano Concerto No. 3 (1955) (first version) *	23:47
10–12	Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra (1951) **	21:08

* **WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

****FIRST STEREO RECORDING**

Alessandro Marangoni, Piano

Orazio Sciortino, Piano 10–12

Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano

Giuseppe Grazioli



A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

Recorded: 20–21 August 2022 1–6 and 17–20 August 2023 7–12 at the Auditorium di Milano, Italy

Producer and engineer: Stefano Barzan (Tranquilo Studio – Milano) • Assistant: Cinzia Guareschi

Music consultants: Andrea Dandolo 1–6, Stefano Ligoratti 7–12 • Release coordinator: Peter Bromley

Booklet notes: Ben Hogwood • Publishers: Universal Edition 1–3, E.C. Schirmer 4–12

Cover: Domenica Regazzoni: *Haiku No. 2, C'è una meta per il vento*

(after Ikenishi Gonsui; Milan, 2019 – www.regazzoni.net)