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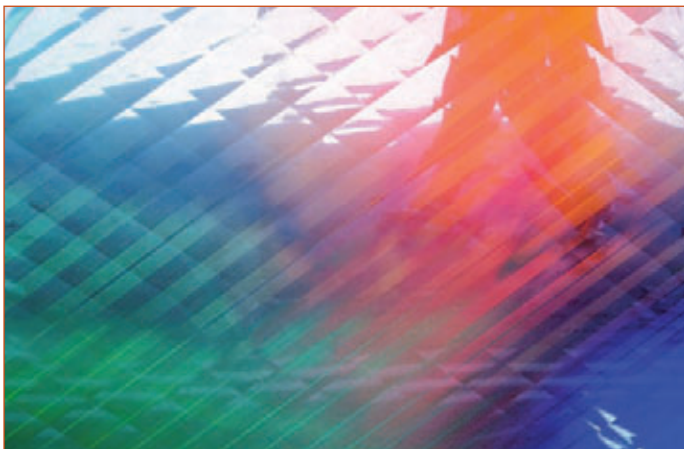
Ildebrando  
**PIZZETTI**

**Canti della stagione alta**

(Concerto for piano and orchestra)

**Prelude to Fedra • Sinfonia del fuoco**

Susanna Stefani Caetani, Piano • Boris Statsenko, Baritone  
Städtischer Opernchor, Chemnitz • Robert-Schumann-Philharmonie  
Oleg Caetani



## Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880-1968):

### Canti della stagione alta • Sinfonia del fuoco • Fedra: Prelude

The son of a piano teacher, Ildebrando Pizzetti was born in Borgo Strinato in Parma in 1880 and moved to Reggio Emilia two years later, when his father took up a position there on the staff of the Scuola Comunale di Musica. As a boy his chief interest was in the theatre, but in 1895 he entered the Conservatory in Parma as a music student, graduating in 1901, with a series of compositions to show for himself. In the following years he earned a living by teaching and as assistant conductor at the Parma Teatro Regio, but in 1905 was able to establish an important relationship with the writer Gabriele D'Annunzio, when he set part of the prologue of the latter's *La nave* (The Ship), a work that was then in progress. D'Annunzio was sufficiently impressed to ask Pizzetti to write all the necessary incidental music for the drama, which was staged in Rome in 1908. For D'Annunzio Pizzetti became Ildebrando da Parma, although he chose not to retain the nickname. In 1907 he had started teaching composition at the Conservatory, where he already taught the history of music, and in 1908 moved to Florence to teach counterpoint and harmony at the Istituto Musicale. He remained in Florence, latterly as director of the Istituto Musicale, until 1924, when he moved to Milan as director of the Conservatory. In 1936 he succeeded Respighi as professor of advanced composition at the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome. He served as president of the Accademia from 1947 until 1952 and retired from teaching there in 1958. He died in Rome ten years later.

Pizzetti's career allowed him to develop his interest in drama in more than a dozen operas and in incidental music. In common with other musicians and artists of his generation, he was strongly influenced by D'Annunzio and shared an interest in ancient Greek civilisation, of which he made a lucid critical study *La Musica dei Greci* (The Music of the Greeks) published in 1914. Like Respighi, he had a deep interest in Gregorian chant and was able to develop his enthusiasm

for earlier Italian music, reflecting in this D'Annunzio's own fascination with the music of Monteverdi and other early composers, the revival of whose music he did everything to encourage. At one time Pizzetti had been associated with Casella in the promotion of new music in Italy, but in 1932 he joined with Respighi and others representing a more conservative tendency in Italian music in an attack on the modern trends that Casella was helping to promote.

Gabriele D'Annunzio was a figure of the greatest importance in the Italy of his time. His own musical interests extended from the ancient to the modern. The exoticism and sensuousness of his writing, influenced as he was by Flaubert and, still more, by Swinburne and by Nietzsche, had a strong contemporary appeal as a leader of the so-called decadents at the turn of the century and subsequently as a war-hero in his attempts to keep Fiume a part of Italy in 1919 and 1920.

D'Annunzio's play *Fedra*, which has its own debt to Swinburne's *Phaedra*, takes its story from the plays by Euripides and Seneca. Pizzetti had started on his own version of this for an opera libretto. D'Annunzio advised him to wait until his own tragedy was complete. Abridged, this became the libretto for Pizzetti's first opera *Fedra*, given its première at La Scala, Milan, in 1915. Fedra (Phaedra), wife of Teseo (Theseus) and step-mother of his son Ippolito (Hippolytus), is consumed with passion for the young man. Her joy at a report of her husband's death in battle is followed by her killing of the young slave-girl that Teseo brings back for his son. She tries to kiss Ippolito, as he sleeps, and he wakes, only to reject her. At this, she accuses him of rape and Teseo prays to the sea-god to punish his son. Ippolito is thrown from his horse and killed on the sea-shore and Fedra now defiantly admits her guilt, as she dies, having taken poison. The *Preludio* opens with an extended melody for violas, reflecting Fedra's passionate desire for Ippolito. Other instruments provide a texture that increases in colour and richness

and it is the theme of Fedra's fatal passion that returns, fragmentarily again and again, until the music fades away and the curtain rises on the opening scene, as suppliant mothers of the Seven Heroes mourn the death of their sons.

Pizzetti wrote his piano concerto *Canti della stagione alta* (Songs of the High Season) between July and September 1930 in the Dolomites, early in his second marriage, (he had met Irene, known as Riri, in February 1924 and married on 19th January 1925), one of the sunniest periods of his life. The concerto was dedicated to Giuseppe De Robertis, with whom he was associated in the circle around the Florence periodical *La voce*, with the composer and critic Giovanni Bastianelli and the essayist and controversial pamphleteer Giovanni Papini. During the 1940s the great Italian pianist Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli showed some interest in the work – Pizzetti wrote a cadenza especially for him (not included on this recording) – but, in the end, never played the piece.

Written only two years after the *Concerto dell'estate* (Naxos 8.572013), *Canti della stagione alta* may likewise be seen in the context of Pizzetti's 'naturism', aptly depicted by the composer's biographer, Guido M. Gatti, as '[conjuring] up a version of life in the open air, among open-hearted people who can interpret and understand nature because they love it and feel it not as something extraneous but as a living and beneficent creative power'. The piano introduces the principal modal theme of the first movement over the murmured background of the strings. This material is expanded and developed by the soloist and orchestra, leading to a secondary theme, proposed again by the piano, with solo strings contributing to a change of texture. A third thematic element is introduced and all this is subject to a development that is often rhapsodic in its treatment of the piano. The first theme returns in a changed mode to end the movement, heard now against an evocative melodic line from the French horns, instruments that have earlier added their own characteristic poignancy to the movement. The following *Adagio* allows the soloist to present the theme

in the manner of a recitative, over a sinister B minor *ostinato* from the strings. A bassoon echoes the melody, which leads to a central section, a hymn-like passage for bassoons and French horns. After a dynamic climax and hushed comment from a French horn and then from a trombone, the first theme is heard again, now offered by the violins, while the soloist joins others in the sinister accompaniment of the opening, now elaborated. The final rondo starts conventionally enough, the main theme offered first by a bassoon, over an insistent and lively accompanying rhythm. This theme is to be transformed and adapted in varying ways, including a fugal treatment of it, as it returns to frame contrasting episodes often suggesting the mood of some idiosyncratic Italian Rachmaninov. A final cadenza leads to a grandiose conclusion, elaborating material from the first movement.

#### Keith Anderson, Peter Bromley (2009)

The Italian silent film *Cabiria*, a great epic of the Second Punic War (219/218 to 201BC), was conceived and directed by Giovanni Pastrone (1883-1959), against the backdrop of the fervent patriotism engendered by the Italian occupation of Libya (1911-12) and the Italian government's desire for a return to the glories of ancient Rome. Pastrone was a qualified engineer and needed a name from the artistic world to promote his film. To this end he exploited the cult status and celebrity lifestyle of the writer Gabriele D'Annunzio, who contributed to the intertitles and to the naming of the characters, and the film was presented to the public as a *Visione storica del III secolo a.C. di Gabriele D'Annunzio* (Historical vision of the Third Century BC by Gabriele D'Annunzio). Lasting about two and a half hours, this spectacular and hugely expensive production, with filmed exteriors in Tunisia, Sicily and the Alps, centres on the Sicilian girl of the title, whose name Cabiria means 'born of fire'. Fleeing an eruption of Mount Etna, Cabiria is captured by pirates and sold as a slave in Carthage, where she is rescued from sacrifice to the god Moloch (depicted in the film as a man with the head of a

bull) by a Roman nobleman, Fulvio Axilla, and his muscular slave Maciste. The film also includes Hannibal's crossing of the Alps and the defence of Syracuse against attacking ships by Archimedes with his burning-glass. The pastiche film score was composed largely by Manlio Mazza, a former pupil of Pizzetti, who reworked the classical music of several other composers including Mozart, Mendelssohn, Spontini, Donizetti and Gluck. The *Sinfonia del fuoco*, however, was composed by Pizzetti, on D'Annunzio's recommendation, to accompany the *Invocation to Moloch* that forms one of the pivotal episodes of the film, when one hundred naked children are sacrificed to the god of Carthage. Scored for a large orchestra, including six first and six second violas, baritone and a

mixed chorus of more than five parts, the *Sinfonia del fuoco* was performed once only, on the evening of the film's première, conducted by Mazza, at the Teatro Vittorio Emanuele in Turin, on 18th April 1914. Contemporary reviews indicate that on this occasion the work was performed as an Overture at the start of the film. The sheer size of the forces involved, coupled with the composer's refusal to allow others to conduct the work (he himself never included it in his own concerts) precluded further performances until 1988 when the 1914 version of the film, with live orchestral accompaniment of the complete score, was presented at the Orto Botanico, Rome.

**Peter Bromley (2009)**

## Susanna Stefani Caetani



Born in Florence, Susanna Stefani Caetani studied the piano from childhood with Antonio Beltrami, Clemente Terni and, for harmony, Carlo Prosperi. She later studied with Tatyana Nikolayeva at the Mozarteum in Salzburg and with Maria Curcio in London. She gave her first concert at the age of twelve, followed by a concert tour of Italy. In 1986 she performed a Mozart concerto in London's Queen Elizabeth Hall and in Dublin's National Concert Hall, and from 1987 to 1995 played in almost every concert season of Siena's Accademia Chigiana. Her career brought a concert tour of Russia in 1989 and she has performed Mosolov's Piano Concerto No. 1 and Pizzetti's Piano Concerto *Canti della Stagione Alta* with different orchestras throughout Europe. A regular performer with different chamber ensembles, she played in 2005 with the Quartetto di Roma for the Italian President, a concert which was broadcast all over Europe. She has been married to the conductor Oleg Caetani since 1999.

## Boris Statsenko



Born in Russia, the baritone Boris Statsenko studied singing at the Moscow School of Music with Hugo Tiez and Piotr Scusnicenko. In 1987 he was engaged as soloist by the Pokrovsky Chamber Theatre and in 1990 he worked at the Bolshoy, and afterwards for five years at the Opera in Chemnitz. He has sung in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in many French productions, and made his début at the opera houses of Toulouse and Strasbourg in *Stiffelio*, *Ernani*, *Il trovatore* and *Nabucco*, this last also at the Ludwigsburgen Festival. Winner of many prizes, he has appeared in *La bohème*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Eugene Onegin*, *The Queen of Spades*, *Iolanta*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Tosca*, *Rigoletto*, *La forza del destino*, *Falstaff*, *La traviata*, *Don Carlo*, *Otello*, *Boris Godunov* and *Don Giovanni*. Since 1999 he has been the first baritone of the Düsseldorf Opera Ensemble. He has been a guest in many theatres, among them Hamburg, Amsterdam, Montpellier, Stuttgart, Toulon, Toulouse, Frankfurt, Helsinki, Dresden and Liège.

## Chemnitz Opera Chorus

The Chemnitz Opera Chorus was established in 1868 and is employed in opera, operetta and musicals, as well as in the concert-hall in major choral works performed with the Robert Schumann Philharmonic Orchestra. The chorus has 52 members and has been directed since 1976 by Dieter Wefing in a wide range of repertoire.

## Robert-Schumann-Philharmonie

The Robert-Schumann-Philharmonie was established in 1833 as the Chemnitz City Orchestra, under the direction of Wilhelm August Mejo. Already with a distinguished history, the orchestra came to further prominence with the establishment of the opera-house in 1909. In the years before the war the orchestra appeared with some of the greatest conductors of the time and after the war worked with Rudolf Kempe, the young Klaus Tennstedt, Robert Satanovski, Gert Bahner and Gerhard Rolf Bauer. Under Dieter Gerhardt Worm, who served as chief musical director from 1975 to 1993, the orchestral complement was increased to 120, finally taking its present name in celebration of its 150th anniversary. Worm was followed by John Carewe and, in 1996, by Oleg Caetani, with each musical director adding to the breadth of orchestral repertoire and to the orchestra's now very considerably extended activities in Chemnitz, elsewhere in Germany and abroad.

## Oleg Caetani



Oleg Caetani made his Australian début in 2001 with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and in January 2005 took up the post of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director. He has a particularly close relationship with the Staatskapelle Dresden, which he has conducted for almost three decades, and the Giuseppe Verdi Orchestra in Milan, conducting the latter in 2008 in a concert presented by the Italian President to Pope Benedict XVI in the Vatican and recorded live for Eurovision TV. His career has brought engagements at La Scala, Milan, the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, in Berlin, and with the English National Opera, the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, in San Francisco, at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, in Seattle and Houston, and with orchestras throughout Europe and in Australia. His three recordings for Chandos of music by Alexandre Tansman won the *Diapason d'Or*. Nadia Boulanger discovered his talent and initiated him into music. At the Rome Conservatory of Santa Cecilia

he attended Franco Ferrara's conducting class and studied composition with Irma Ravinale, and at the age of seventeen made his theatre début with Monteverdi's *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*. He subsequently went to the Moscow Conservatory to study conducting with Kyrill Kondrashin and musicology with Nadezhda Nikolaev. He graduated from the St Petersburg Conservatory in conducting with Ilya Musin.

## 5 Invocazione a Moloch

### Il pontefice

*Re delle due zone, t'invoco,  
respiro del fuoco profondo,  
gènito di te, primo nato!*

### Il coro

*Eccoti i cento puri fanciulli,  
Inghiotti! Divora! Sii sazio!  
Karthada ti dona il suo fiore.*

### Il pontefice

*Odimi, creatore vorace,  
che tutto generi e struggi,  
fame insaziabile, m'odi!*

### Il coro

*Eccoti la carne più pura!  
Eccoti il sangue più mite!  
Karthada ti dona il suo fiore.*

### Il pontefice

*Consuma il sacrificio tu stesso  
nelle tue fauci di fiamma,  
O padre e madre, O tu dio e dea!*

### Il coro

*O padre e madre, O tu padre e figlio,  
O tu dio e dea! Creatore vorace!  
Fame ardente, ruggente...*

**Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863-1938)**

## Invocation to Moloch

### The Priest

I invoke you, King of the two zones,  
breath of the deep fire  
created by you, the first born.

### Chorus

Behold the hundred pure children,  
Swallow them! Devour them! Be sated!  
Carthage gives you its flower.

### The Priest

Hear me, ravenous creator,  
you who engender and destroy all,  
Insatiable hunger, hear me!

### Chorus

Behold the purest flesh!  
Behold the sweetest blood!  
Carthage gives you its flower.

### The Priest

Consume the sacrifice yourself  
in your fiery jaws!  
O father and mother, O god and goddess!

### Chorus

O father and mother, O father and son,  
O god and goddess! Ravenous creator!  
Burning hunger, roaring...



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Together with Casella, Malipiero and Respighi, Pizzetti was one of the leading Italian composers of the generation of Italian composers born around 1880 (the so-called 'generation of the 1880s') who, in reacting against the melodic excesses of their predecessors, Puccini and Mascagni, sought not only to modernize the Italian opera tradition but to re-establish non-operatic Italian music. On this Naxos reissue of the first ever compact disc devoted exclusively to a selection of Pizzetti's orchestral music, the intensely expressive yet self-contained *Prelude* to Act I of the opera, *Fedra*, is followed by the ripely romantic Piano Concerto *Canti della stagione alta* (Songs of the High Season) and the only recording of the colourful and dramatic *Sinfonia del fuoco*, written for the 1914 silent film, *Cabiria*.



**Ildebrando  
PIZZETTI**  
(1880-1968)

**Fedra: Tragedia musicale in tre atti**

① **Preludio (1909)** 8:47

**Canti della stagione alta (1930)**

**(Concerto for piano and orchestra)** 29:50

② **Mosso e fervente, ma largamente spaziato** 12:53

③ **Adagio** 8:20

④ **Rondò: Allegro** 8:37

⑤ **Cabiria – Film Music: Sinfonia del fuoco (1914)\*** 10:37

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**Oleg Caetani**

Recorded in the Opernhaus, Chemnitz on 22nd & 23rd September, 1997 (tracks 1 and 5)  
and live in the Stadthalle, Chemnitz on 17th & 18th September, 1997 (tracks 2-4)

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Engineer: Gerald Kassube • Cover: Paolo Zeccara

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Includes the Italian sung text and English translation for track 5,

also accessible at [www.naxos.com/libretti/570874.htm](http://www.naxos.com/libretti/570874.htm)

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