

NAXOS

Gian Francesco
MALIPIERO

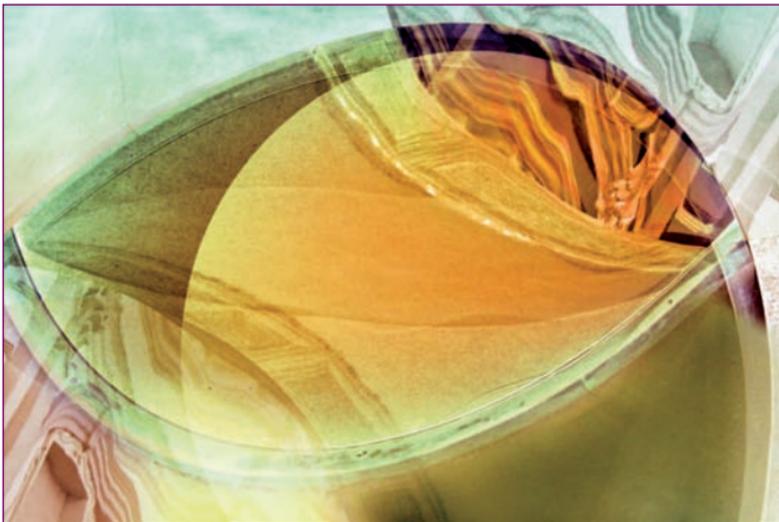
Symphony No. 7 “delle canzoni”

Sinfonia in un tempo

Sinfonia per Antigenida

Moscow Symphony Orchestra

Antonio de Almeida



Gian Francesco Malipiero (1883 - 1973)

The Symphonies • 4

Symphony No. 7 “delle canzoni”

23:39

- | | |
|------------------------------|------|
| 1 Allegro | 3:56 |
| 2 Lento quasi andante | 6:41 |
| 3 Allegro impetuoso | 4:38 |
| 4 Lento | 8:24 |

Sinfonia in un tempo

27:07

- | | |
|------------------|-------|
| 5 Andante | 27:07 |
|------------------|-------|

Sinfonia per Antigenida

17:55

- | | |
|-------------------|------|
| 6 Ritenuto | 4:29 |
| 7 Lento | 6:06 |
| 8 Allegro | 3:18 |
| 9 Lento | 4:02 |

Moscow Symphony Orchestra

Antonio de Almeida

Gian Francesco Malipiero (1883 – 1973): Symphony No.7 “delle canzoni” Sinfonia in un tempo • Sinfonia per Antigenida

During his exceptionally long career, Gian Francesco Malipiero composed prolifically in many different genres. The resultant huge and varied body of works, though uneven in quality, nevertheless includes more than enough vividly original music to have won him a leading place among the Italian composers of his generation. Yet in recent decades his works – like those of all his immediate Italian contemporaries with the partial exception of Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936) – have suffered grievous neglect by performers and the public in his own country as elsewhere. In Italy the basic reason for this neglect of an entire generation of highly interesting composers is partly (it has to be said) political; for that was the generation whose full creative maturity coincided with the heyday of Italian fascism.

It is true that Malipiero – more, perhaps, than his near-contemporaries Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880-1968) and Alfredo Casella (1883-1947) – has never been without a dedicated band of admirers, even in the years when the eclipse of this so-called “generazione dell’Ottanta” was at its most extreme. Nevertheless the huge claims for his importance, which have been made by Luigi Dallapiccola (1904-75) and others, remained for many years unheeded by the musical world at large. The current dawning revival of interest in Malipiero’s music – in which new recordings made both in and out of Italy are playing a welcome part – therefore provides a long-overdue opportunity not only for reassessment but for fresh discovery of his works by a wholly new public.

The present series of discs is devoted to Malipiero’s symphonies – or, more precisely, to his various compositions whose titles include the word “Sinfonia” (for it should be stressed that not one of them is quite a symphony in the normal post-Beethovenian sense). Malipiero wrote seventeen works with that sort of title, although he numbered only eleven of them: among the un-numbered ones, three are early works which he subsequently, in varying degrees, repudiated – though listeners to the present disc’s companions will discover that in at least two cases his rejection was over-severe.

Then, throughout the period 1911-32, Malipiero rigorously avoided the word “Sinfonia” in his titles, owing to the rooted antipathy he had developed towards the Austro-German symphonic tradition and all that stemmed from it. Only as he moved on into later middle age (by which time the tormented restlessness of his earlier life had given place to a more settled existence) did he begin his main series of numbered symphonies, the first of which appeared in 1933, the second in 1936. (Both are recorded on the second in this set of discs, Naxos 8.570879.)

It was not, however, until the mid-1940s that Malipiero started to pour forth symphonies in unexpectedly rapid succession: his next five contributions to the genre (numbers 3 to 7 inclusive) all appeared during 1944-8 – the one period in his entire career when symphonies actually became the predominant thread in his output. (He even ceased, throughout most of 1944-7, to write anything at all for the stage.) Moreover, qualitatively as well as quantitatively this period marks the culmination of his activity as a symphonist: the *Third* and *Fourth* symphonies, which appeared, respectively, in 1944-5 and 1946 (and which are recorded on the first of these discs, Naxos 8.570878), are arguably his two finest. There is also much to admire in the dynamic though rather heterogeneous *Fifth Symphony* (1947) (Naxos 8.570880), which includes concertante parts for two pianos; while the radiantly lyrical *Sixth* (1947) (Naxos 8.570880) – scored for string orchestra and subsequently also arranged for solo string quintet – has probably, of all Malipiero’s symphonies, been the most widely performed.

The *Seventh Symphony* (1948), the earliest work recorded on the present disc, shares many of the best qualities of Malipiero’s preceding four symphonies. Like the *Third* and the *Fourth* (and indeed the *First* and *Second*), and unlike the *Fifth* and *Sixth*, it is scored for a normal though not particularly large symphony orchestra. It also resembles all the six previous numbered symphonies in being in four separate

movements; moreover, as in the previous five symphonies, the sequence of tempi from movement to movement (which may again be summarized as “fast; slow; scherzo-like; variable”) shows at least an outward resemblance to what one would expect in a classical symphony. However, Malipiero’s seeming rapprochement with established symphonic ideals was never more than superficial: the character of his material and the patterns of his musical thinking remained idiosyncratically personal and waywardly intuitive rather than intellectual. The simple fact that his movements seldom end in the keys in which they began itself indicates how remote he still was from Beethovenian methods. Moreover the very idea of dialectical thematic “development” always remained alien to him – although his symphonies, like most of his other works, do abound in capriciously unpredictable recurrences and transformations of motifs.

The *Seventh Symphony*’s brief, vigorous opening movement is a particularly interesting “test case” where these matters are concerned, since at first sight its form seems to owe more than is usual in Malipiero to traditional sonata structures. The first fourteen bars are repeated (with modifications to the first two bars but otherwise unchanged) about two thirds of the way through the movement – i.e. at about the point where a classical composer might have begun a recapitulation section. What is more, two further blocks of previously-presented material are then restated, but at new pitches: the analogies to orthodox sonata procedure, with its transposition of second subject material in the recapitulation, are therefore striking. However, that should not blind us to the fact that the central part of the movement is not in any sense a “development” section: on the contrary, it features two statements of a snaky, exotic-sounding melody which does not occur at all in the outer parts of the movement; moreover the transpositions that take place in the movement’s latter part do not bring about the traditional “reconciliation of tonalities”, and were clearly not intended to do so.

The slow second movement is notable for an intensely eloquent initial melody that seems to grow in

potency when subsequently repeated: at its third appearance, just before the end of the movement, it rises majestically (transposed and more richly scored) to the surface of the music, having started in a rather more disguised form in the middle register on the horns. Between the three statements of this main melody, the movement also features (among other things) a simple, boldly stated plainsong-like motif, which comes closer than Malipiero’s music usually does to the neo-Gregorian side of Respighi. The other two movements are a brief, exhilaratingly dynamic *scherzo* and a relatively long, freely-constructed finale, which is predominantly slow but includes some rather faster material in its central section. Although the work as a whole, like almost all Malipiero’s symphonies, has a subtitle (“*delle canzoni*” [“of the songs”]), it is best regarded as a purely abstract piece, without any pictorial content comparable to (say) the bell-evocations that run through the *Third Symphony*. Malipiero’s own reference, by way of explanation of the *Seventh Symphony*’s subtitle, to “a certain singing, which makes an effect like the song of an ancient bard seated on the summit of the sacred Monte Grappa” seems to be a typically capricious gloss rather than a serious comment on the music.

Soon after completing the work, Malipiero boldly declared that “today we are almost certain that the *Seventh Symphony* closes the cycle that runs from 1933 to 1948”. Although, as things turned out, he was to go on to write seven more symphonies, there are some senses in which his prediction was nevertheless correct. For one thing, he wrote no more *numbered symphonies* until the mid-to-late 1960s, and numbers 8 to 11 belong to a very different expressive and stylistic world from his symphonies of the 1930s and ’40s. For another, the three *un-numbered symphonies* that Malipiero did write in the intervening years (*Sinfonia in un tempo*, 1950; *Sinfonia dello zodiaco*, 1951; *Sinfonia per Antigenida*, 1962) all in varying degrees break away from the stylistic and structural approach that his first seven numbered symphonies had all to a fair extent shared.

The very title of the *Sinfonia in un tempo* reveals one respect in which the work marks a new departure,

as compared with its seven immediate predecessors. For whereas the first seven numbered symphonies are all without exception in four separate movements, this next symphony was his first since the juvenile *Sinfonia del mare* (1906) that plays continuously without a break, and therefore at least appears (as its title claims) to be “in one movement”. That being so, Malipiero excluded the work from the series of his numbered symphonies, while admitting that its single-movement structure was more apparent than real: as he once put it (in a characteristically whimsical confession), “the desire not to pass the fateful number seven has perhaps influenced the form of my latest offspring, which will justify its title only if its four sections can follow each other without drawing attention to the transitions between them”. In other words, his basic reason for not calling this symphony his eighth was not really so much its formal difference from its predecessors as his superstition about the number seven (comparable to Mahler’s about the number nine)! Having not numbered this symphony, he also refrained from numbering his next two. His reasons for belatedly resuming the numbering of his symphonies, with the so-called *Eighth Symphony* of 1964, is a teasing question – which lies, however, beyond the scope of the present note.

Analysis of the *Sinfonia in un tempo* quickly reveals a recognizable four-movement outline which is only thinly disguised by the continuity of flow. The first three movements (a first movement covering a wide range of moods and tempi; a slow movement; and a *scherzo* in leisurely triple time) are thematically quite distinct from each other, while the fact that the fourth brings back material from the other three is not itself a new departure as compared with the previous symphonies. Indeed, the real novelty of the *Sinfonia in un tempo* lies less in its structural methods than in the character of much of its material. The reticent, rhythmically elusive opening bars at once establish a strangely inverted mood, which is new at least where Malipiero’s symphonies are concerned; and for much (though not quite all) of the time the musical syntax is more complex, the shapes more rugged, the harmonies more pungent, than had usually been the

case in his music of the 1930s and ’40s. It is true that in a few passages – notably (but not only) in parts of the two inner movements – a more familiar, sweetly diatonic sound-world takes over. Yet by and large (not least in the ferociously dissonant final bars) it is abundantly clear that Malipiero was now moving towards the tensely yet poignantly chromatic idiom that was to dominate the music of the last two decades of his life.

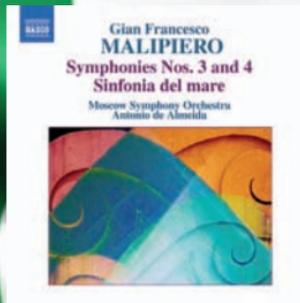
That this last-period Malipiero style reflected a bitter, disillusioned attitude to the world (which by then was already pushing his achievements in to the background to make room for more up-to-date trends) is a thing that many of us who knew him personally can confirm. Moreover, no piece more explicitly symbolizes this disillusionment than the *Sinfonia per Antigenida*. Musically this is perhaps Malipiero’s most forbidding symphony; yet its extra musical significance is crystal clear. Antigenida was an ancient Theban *piffero* player (whose instrument is represented here by a prominent piccolo part). In a note in the score, Malipiero explains that when the skilful playing of Antigenida’s talented pupil Ismenia failed to win public applause, his revered teacher (with whom Malipiero clearly identified himself) advised him to “take no notice of the people, for it is enough that you should please me and the Muses”. In keeping with this idea, the *Sinfonia per Antigenida* contains little trace of the easy, expansive lyricism or the frank picturesqueness which helped to make several of the earlier symphonies so accessible, despite their unconventionality. When performed badly and incomprehendingly, the work can indeed seem totally devoid of content; but when (as on the present disc) the angular lines interweave with sufficient tensile energy, and the craggy dissonances are projected with the necessary conviction, the result achieves a real if somewhat esoteric power – even if just about the only immediately obvious characteristic that the piece shares with the symphonies of 1933-48 is the overall four-movement structure, which reverts once again to the broad pattern – fast; slow; *scherzo*-like; variable”.

Antonio de Almeida

Antonio de Almeida enjoyed a distinguished career as a conductor, having appeared with the Chicago, Philadelphia and San Francisco orchestras in America, the Berlin Philharmonic, and the London and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras. He was responsible for a number of award-winning recordings, including the major orchestral works of Joaquín Turina and a recording of original unedited overtures and ballet music by Offenbach, a composer on whom he was acknowledged to be a leading authority. His work on behalf of French music brought him, among other distinctions, the award of the Légion d'honneur. Born in France, Antonio de Almeida studied with Paul Hindemith at Yale University and began his career as a conductor with the Oporto Symphony Orchestra in Portugal, later making his London début at the invitation of Sir Thomas Beecham with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. For Marco Polo he recorded works by Glazunov, Malipiero, Sauguet and Tournemire. Antonio de Almeida died in Pittsburgh in 1997 aged 69.

Moscow Symphony Orchestra

The Moscow Symphony Orchestra, one of Russia's leading orchestras, was established in 1989 as the first independent orchestra in the country. During the following years the orchestra not only survived in the period of economic difficulties, but strengthened its position and became one of the top orchestras in Russia. Since the early 1990s it has been a regular participant in the Moscow musical seasons. The orchestra plays annually about twenty concerts in Moscow's two best concert halls, the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory and the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall, and has its own subscription series. The repertoire includes both traditional and less-known classical music, as well as compositions by contemporary composers. Apart from its educational work and its extensive concert programmes the orchestra has been widely recognised for its outstanding recordings, with over a hundred since 1994, principally for Naxos and Marco Polo. For this work the Moscow Symphony Orchestra has received several international awards including the CD of the Month by the American magazine *CD Review*, the prestigious French Diapason d'Or and the Chairman's Choice in the Cannes Classical Awards. *The Economist* voted the orchestra's recording of film music by Bernard Herrmann (Naxos 8.570186) one of the ten best records of the year. The orchestra has also recorded music tracks for several Hollywood films. Since 1991 frequent tours have taken the orchestra to most European countries, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and the United States. The orchestra has also been a regular participant in international music festivals in Germany, Austria and Cyprus. The chief conductor and artistic director of the orchestra is Vladimir Ziva.



8.570878



8.570879



8.570880



8.555515



DDD

8.570881

Playing Time
68:41

© 1993 & © 2009

Naxos Rights International Ltd.

Booklet notes in English

Disc made in Canada. Printed and assembled in USA.

www.naxos.com

This fourth volume of Malipiero's seventeen highly contrasting symphonies features the lyrical *Seventh* (1948), notable for an intensely eloquent slow second movement that grows in potency when subsequently repeated. With its pungent harmonies and more complex structures the *Sinfonia in un tempo* (1950) belongs to a very different expressive and stylistic world from the symphonies of the 1930s and '40s. Named after an ancient Theban *piffero* player, represented by the work's prominent piccolo part, the *Sinfonia per Antigenida* (1962) is perhaps Malipiero's most inscrutable symphony, in which angular lines and aggressive dissonances reflect a bitter, disillusioned attitude to the world.

Gian Francesco
MALIPIERO
(1883 - 1973)

The Symphonies • 4

Symphony No. 7 "delle canzoni"	23:39
1 Allegro	3:56
2 Lento quasi andante	6:41
3 Allegro impetuoso	4:38
4 Lento	8:24
Sinfonia in un tempo	27:07
5 Andante	27:07
Sinfonia per Antigenida	17:55
6 Ritenuto	4:29
7 Lento	6:06
8 Allegro	3:18
9 Lento	4:02

Moscow Symphony Orchestra
Antonio de Almeida

Recorded at the Mosfilm Studio, Moscow, in May and June 1993
 Producer: Edvard Shakhnazarian • Engineer: Vitaly Ivanov • Music Notes: John Waterhouse
 Publisher: Universal Music Publishing Ricordi • Cover: Paolo Zeccara
Previously released on Marco Polo 8.223604