



NAXOS

Luigi LEGNANI Rossini Variations

L'Italiana in Algeri
Guillaume Tell
Armida • Zelmira
La Cenerentola
La donna del lago

Marcello Fantoni, Guitar



Luigi Legnani (1790–1877): Rossini Variations

Rossini – L'Italiana in Algeri (The Italian Girl in Algiers): "Gran Sinfonia", Op. 2		8:33	22 Variation 1: Più mosso	1:06
1	Largo	1:42	23 Variation 2: Più lento	0:51
2	Allegro spiritoso	6:51	24 Variation 3: Tempo primo	0:53
Rossini – Guillaume Tell: Overture, Op. 202 (excerpts)		7:40	25 Variation 4	1:01
3	Andante	3:15	26 Variation 5: Minore, Un poco più moderato	2:27
4	Allegro vivace	4:25	27 Variation 6: Allegro brillante	1:22
Rossini – L'Italiana in Algeri, Act I: Duetto: Ai capricci della sorte, Op. 5		6:08	28 Coda	1:24
5	Allegretto	3:43	Variations on <i>La mia spada, e la più fida</i> from Rossini's <i>La donna del lago</i>, Op. 24	
6	Allegro	2:25	29 Tema: Vivace	9:31
Rossini – L'Italiana in Algeri, Act I: Cavatina: Languir per una bella, Op. 7		4:36	30 Variation 1	0:39
7	Andante grazioso	1:25	31 Variation 2	0:42
8	Allegretto	3:11	32 Variation 3	0:47
Rossini – L'Italiana in Algeri, Act II: Coro e rondo: <i>Pensa alla patria</i>, Op. 8		5:47	33 Variation 4	0:46
9	Allegro maestoso	0:50	34 Variation 5: Largo	0:48
10	Moderato	1:40	35 Variation 6: Vivace	3:46
11	Allegro	3:17	36 Coda	0:45
Variations on <i>O quante lagrime</i> from Rossini's <i>La donna del lago</i> (The Lady of the Lake), Op. 18 (Variazioni per la chitarra sopra la Cavatina favorita <i>O quante lagrime</i> nell'opera: <i>La donna del lago</i> di Rossini)		7:03	Variations on <i>Non più mesta accanto al fuoco</i> from Rossini's <i>La Cenerentola</i>, Op. 30 (Variations agréables pour la guitare sur la Romance Favorite de <i>Cendrillon: Non più mesta accanto al fuoco</i>)	
12	Tema: Allegro	0:37	37 Introduzione	1:13
13	Variation 1	0:33	38 Tema: Andantino	0:36
14	Variation 2	0:50	39 Variation 1	0:34
15	Variation 3	0:28	40 Variation 2	0:35
16	Variation 4	0:44	41 Variation 3	0:35
17	Variation 5: Largo	1:51	42 Variation 4	0:33
18	Variation 6: Allegro	0:50	43 Variation 5	1:02
19	Coda	1:09	44 Variation 6	0:56
Introduction and Variations on <i>Sorte secondami</i> from Rossini's <i>Zelmira</i>, Op. 21 (Introduzione e Variazioni per la chitarra sopra la Cavatina favorita <i>Sorte secondami</i> nell'opera: <i>Zelmira</i> di Rossini)		11:43	45 Coda	1:27
20	Introduzione: Largo cantabile	1:25	Variations on <i>Cara, per te quest'anima</i> from Rossini's <i>Armida</i>	
21	Tema: Allegro moderato	1:08	46 Largo marziale	10:30
			47 Tema: Andante	0:55
			48 Variation 1	0:43
			49 Variation 2	0:57
			50 Variation 3	0:55
			51 Variation 4: Allegretto	0:51
			52 Variation 5	0:57
			53 Largo cantabile	1:02
			54 Variation 6	1:40
			55 Coda	0:55
				1:29

Luigi Legnani, guitarist and composer, born in Ferrara, Italy, studied in his early years to be an orchestral string player. But he branched off into singing and appeared in operas by Rossini, Pacini and Donizetti as a tenor following his debut in Ravenna in 1807. He began his concert career as a guitarist in Milan in 1819, and performed in Vienna in 1822, later touring Italy, Germany, and Switzerland.

His friendship with Paganini who described him as 'the leading player of the guitar' has often been written about and it is possible that they played concerts together including one in Turin in 1835. Late in the same year Legnani went to Paris to perform but is said to have injured his arm falling from a carriage and Fernando Sor played the concert instead.

In 1838 Legnani's concerts included performances in Dresden, Berlin and Monaco, and he also played in Vienna in 1839. In 1842 he was reported as having given a concert tour of Spain performing in Madrid. His last public appearance was in 1850 in Cervia, near Ravenna. Legnani then retired to Ravenna. He died at Ravenna on 5 August, 1877, three months before his 87th birthday.

Legnani published around 260 works including solo compositions, duets for flute and guitar and two guitars, a concerto, and a guitar method. In the 20th century his compositions were not often played in recitals but over recent years there has been a resurgence of interest spearheaded by the Czech virtuoso Pavel Steidl, among others.

Giachino Rossini (1792–1868) wrote 39 operas, as well as sacred music, songs, chamber music and piano pieces. His most renowned operas include the Italian comedies *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (The Barber of Seville), *L'italiana in Algeri* (The Italian Girl in Algiers), *La Cenerentola* (Cinderella), *La Gazza Ladra* (The Thieving Magpie), and *Guillaume Tell* (William Tell).

Like his esteemed compatriot, Mauro Giuliani (1781–1829), Legnani delighted in transcribing Rossini's opera themes from orchestra to the guitar and providing variations. The results were often virtuosic, writing 'orchestral' for the guitar by means of imitative effects.

L'italiana in Algeri, an opera in two acts had its first performance at the Teatro San Benedetto, Venice, in May,

1813. Stendhal commented 'When Rossini wrote *L'italiana* his youthful genius was bursting into flower'. The Overture begins with a dramatic *Largo* section. This is followed by a lively *Allegro spiritoso*.

The setting for the opera is the palace of the Bey of Algiers. The first scene introduces a chorus of the eunuchs of the harem. Elvira, the Bey's wife, complains that her husband no longer loves her. Haly, the captain of the Bey's corsairs, is told to go and find an Italian wife for the Bey. Already in the Bey's service is Lindoro, an Italian slave, who sings a duet with the Bey. In the Cavatina, *Languir per una bella* (To languish for a beauty), the Bey laments the absence of the woman he loves. This is followed by a vivacious *Allegretto*. The patriotic song, *Pensa alla patria*, comes towards the end of the second act. The piece is sung by all the Italians gathered together and Lindoro's friend, Isabella. In the end Lindoro escapes from the harem and the Bey returns to his true love, his wife Elvira.

Guillaume Tell was premiered in 1829 at the Paris Opéra. The main protagonists are Arnold, a Swiss patriot and son of Melcthal, leader of the Swiss, who has saved Mathilde, the sister of the Austrian tyrant Gessler, from drowning. Arnold and Mathilde are in love. In the first act Gessler's soldiers capture Melcthal who is executed in the second act. The third act contains the famous scene where William Tell shoots the apple off his son's head by order of Gessler. Later the tyrant is killed by an arrow from Tell and the Swiss are victorious. Mathilde and Arnold are united in love.

La donna del lago follows Sir Walter Scott's narrative poem *The Lady of the Lake* (1810) and was first performed in Naples in 1819. The plot tells a romantic story of King James V of Scotland (1512–1542). Set in the Trossachs region of Scotland, Scott's poem comprises six cantos each of which tells the action of a single day. There are three strands in the plot – the contest between Roderick Dhu, James Fitz-James, and Malcolm Graeme to win the love of Ellen Douglas, the quarrel and reconciliation of James V with James Douglas, and a war between the lowland Scots under the king and the highland clans led by Roderick Dhu. In the end Ellen and Malcolm marry and all antagonisms are peaceably resolved.

At the end of the first act of *La donna del lago*, Ellen sings the moving Cavatina entitled *O quante lagrime* (Oh, How Many Tears), with the words, *Oh, how many tears I weep, away from your lovely eyes*. (Rossini uses the same aria in his opera *Otello*, sung by Desdemona towards the end of the opera.)

In his *Opus 18*, Legnani provides a guitar paraphrase of the melody, mirroring the dexterity of the soprano voice. The first variation reiterates the melody in the bass line against repeated notes in the treble while the second variation offers a tender dialogue between bass and treble. The third variation uses the melody in the bass against more ornate answers, a concept inverted in the fourth variation where the treble repeats the melody against embellished basses. This is followed by a reflective exploration of the theme. Finally an *Allegro* displays rapid octaves followed by an energetic coda moving from dancing thirds towards further interplay between bass and trebles.

In *Opus 24*, Legnani uses the melody from the finale of Act I, *La mia spada, e la più fida* (My faith is in my sword). The theme itself is a simple march. Over the course of six variations Legnani explores increasingly challenging elements of technique concluding with a brilliant *vivace* movement and emphatic repeated chords.

The first performance of *Zelmira* took place at the Teatro di San Carlo, Naples, in 1822. The opera's intricate plot centres on Zelmira, her father Polidoro, King of Lesbos, and her husband, Prince Ilo. The latter has left to defend his homeland. Azor, Lord of Mytilène invades Lesbos in order to dethrone King Polidoro. But Zelmira conceals her father in the royal mausoleum and tells Azor he was hiding in the temple to Ceres. Azor burns down the temple but is himself killed on orders from Antenore, an aspirant to the throne.

Antenore plots to become King of Lesbos, with the help of Leucippo. He incriminates Zelmira in the deaths of Azor and her father. Zelmira, however, tells Emma, her confidante, that her father is still alive. Prince Ilo returns to Lesbos but hears only Antenore's account of the story.

Antenore is crowned King of Lesbos. Leucippo tries to murder Ilo, but is stopped by Zelmira. Zelmira, falsely

accused of attempting to kill her husband, is imprisoned. Leucippo intercepts a letter from Zelmira to Ilo in which she tells him her father is indeed alive. Leucippo and Antenore free her from prison and deceive her into revealing her father's hiding place. Father and daughter are recaptured and await their deaths at the hands of the plotters. Prince Ilo is distraught at the apparent death of Polidoro. Emma then tells Prince Ilo the truth about Zelmira. Ilo and his men rescue Zelmira and Polidoro. Zelmira is reunited with her husband and child, Antenore and Leucippo are led off in chains.

Legnani uses a theme from Act I, Scene II, as the basis for his set of *Introduzione e Variazioni, Op. 21*, incidentally the same theme as Mauro Giuliani employs in *Rossiniana No. 3, Op. 121*. The variations cover a wide range of guitar techniques including arpeggios, repeated chords, melody and accompaniment, rapid octaves, etc.

La Cenerentola (Cinderella) was given its first performance in Rome in 1817. The plot follows the familiar Cinderella story, the despised sister who marries a royal personage. In this instance the hero is Don Ramiro, Prince of Salerno while the wicked sisters are Clorinda and Thisbe, daughters of Don Magnifico, Baron of Mountflagon. Cinderella (here named Angelina) is the step-daughter of the baron. Two other characters are Dandini, the prince's valet, and Alidoro, a philosopher and magician. Elements of disguises and misunderstandings thicken the plot into a fascinating confusion, ultimately resolved by forgiveness and reconciliation.

The theme employed in Legnani's *Variazioni, Op. 30*, is *Non più mesta accanto al fuoco* (No more sadness by the fire) from the finale of Act II, the same melody as Rossini used in the closing act of *Il barbiere di Siviglia* entitled *Ah il più lieto, il più felice* (Ah the most glad, the most happy).

Armida, a musical drama in three acts was presented in Naples in November 1817. The melody taken here as the basis for variations is *Cara, per te quest'anima* (For you, dear soul), which appears in Act I, Scene VII, and is a duet between Rinaldo and Armida.

The opera is set in the time of the Crusades in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Armida, a sorceress of dazzling beauty, enchants Rinaldo who falls in love with her. In the

second act Armida, aided by the princes of hell, transforms a forest into a vast pleasure palace. Ultimately, with the help of a golden wand, two of Rinaldo's faithful knights break the spell of illusory love by showing Rinaldo his true image in a shield. When the three soldiers try to escape

Armida pursues them. His knights drag him away from her. In revenge she destroys the pleasure palace before flying away in a rage.

Graham Wade

Marcello Fantoni

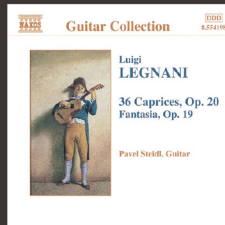
Marcello Fantoni began studying classical guitar at the age of eight. Under the guidance of Lena Kokkaliari and Paolo Paolini he graduated from the Conservatory of Milan *summa cum laude* in performance. At the same institution, for a brief period, he studied composition with Danilo Lorenzini and Davide Anzaghi. He also studied musical analysis at the Department of Musicological and Paleographic-Philological Studies of the University of Cremona. He was awarded a Sergio Dragoni Foundation scholarship and in 1996 took advanced courses with Eliot Fisk at the Salzburg Mozarteum, and then with Leo Brouwer in Córdoba, and Oscar Ghiglia at the Accademia Chigiana, Siena, where he won a scholarship and a Diploma of Merit. The Rome ARAM Association hailed him as an emerging talent, inviting him to play during their concert season. He attended masterclasses held by Eduardo Fernández (2005), Timo Koronen (2005), Leo Brouwer (2006) and Pavel Steidel (2006) at the Conservatory of Florence where, in 2007, he earned a master's degree in performance. His compositions include *Perpetuum*, *omaggio a Egberto Gismonti* (for solo guitar, 2004), *Omaggio a Michel Petrucciani*, *Omaggio a Manuel de Falla* and *Sonata Semplice*. He has a number of broadcasts and recordings to his credit including the works of Spanish composer Tomás Marco released on the Italian label Dynamic. In 2014 Tomás Marco dedicated to Marcello Fantoni his chamber work for guitar, the *Trio Concertante n. 5 "Cartografías de Melodrama"* (for flute, viola and guitar). In 2015 he made the world première recording of guitar works by the Sevillian composer Manuel Castillo (1930–2005) on Naxos [8.573365].



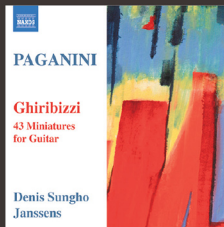
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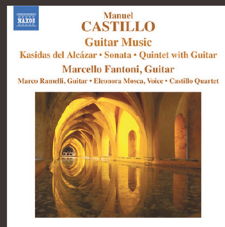
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Italian guitarist and composer Luigi Legnani performed widely throughout Europe and was admired by Paganini as the guitar's "leading player" of his day. Legnani's virtuosity was eminently suited to the 19th century fashion for transcribing and writing variations on famous opera themes that range from the romance of *L'Italiana in Algeri* to the drama of *Armida*. The 'orchestral' colours of the guitar are fully explored with breathtaking special techniques and imitative effects.

Luigi LEGNANI

(1790–1877)

Rossini Variations

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|------|---|------|-------|---|-------|
| 1–2 | Rossini – <i>L'Italiana in Algeri</i> :
Gran Sinfonia, Op. 2 | 8:33 | 12–19 | Variations on <i>O quante lagrime</i>
from Rossini's <i>La donna del</i>
<i>lago</i> , Op. 18 | 7:03 |
| 3–4 | Rossini – Guillaume Tell:
Overture, Op. 202 (excerpts) | 7:40 | 20–28 | Introduction and Variations
on <i>Sorte Secondami</i> from
Rossini's <i>Zelmira</i> , Op. 21 | 11:43 |
| 5–6 | Rossini – <i>L'Italiana in Algeri</i> ,
Act I: Duetto: <i>Ai capricci della</i>
<i>sorte</i> , Op. 5 | 6:08 | 29–36 | Variations on <i>La mia spada</i> ,
<i>e la più fida</i> from Rossini's
<i>La donna del Lago</i> , Op. 24 | 9:31 |
| 7–8 | Rossini – <i>L'Italiana in Algeri</i> ,
Act I: Cavatina: <i>Languir per</i>
<i>una bella</i> , Op. 7 | 4:36 | 37–45 | Variations on <i>Non più mesta</i>
<i>accanto al fuoco</i> from Rossini's
<i>La Cenerentola</i> , Op. 30 | 7:36 |
| 9–11 | Rossini – <i>L'Italiana in Algeri</i> ,
Act II: Coro e rondo: <i>Pensa alla</i>
<i>patria</i> , Op. 8 | 5:47 | 46–55 | Variations on <i>Cara, per te</i>
<i>quest'anima</i> from Rossini's
<i>Armida</i> | 10:30 |

Full track details will be found in the booklet

3–55 WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDINGS

Marcello Fantoni, Guitar

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Playing Time
79:34



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