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- [First](#) [Prev](#) [Peter Burwasser](#) [Next](#) [Last](#)
- [First](#) [Prev](#) [GOFFREDO PETRASSI](#) [Next](#) [Last](#)
- [First](#) [Prev](#) [TACTUS](#) [Next](#) [Last](#)
- [First](#) [Prev](#) [Arcadio Baracchi](#) [Next](#) [Last](#)
- [First](#) [Prev](#) [Lapo Vannucci](#) [Next](#) [Last](#)
- [First](#) [Prev](#) [flute](#) [Next](#) [Last](#)
- [First](#) [Prev](#) [guitar](#) [Next](#) [Last](#)
- [First](#) [Prev](#) [harp](#) [Next](#) [Last](#)
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- [First](#) [Prev](#) [viola](#) [Next](#) [Last](#)
- [First](#) [Prev](#) [violin](#) [Next](#) [Last](#)

**CD Review by Peter Burwasser**

**PETRASSI *Elogio per un' ombra*.<sup>1</sup> *Nunc*.<sup>2</sup> *Flou*.<sup>3</sup> *Soufflé*.<sup>4</sup> *Toccata*.<sup>5</sup> *Suoni notturni*.<sup>6</sup> *Violasola*.<sup>7</sup> •**

<sup>1</sup>Alessandro Cazzato (vn); <sup>7</sup>Alessio Toro (va); <sup>4</sup>Arcadio Baracchi (fl); <sup>3</sup>Francesco Tirale (hp); <sup>2, 6</sup>Lapo Vannucci (gtr); <sup>5</sup>Vanessa Sotgiu (pn) • TACTUS 901603 (67:21)

Goffredo Petrassi's life spanned nearly all of the 20th century (1904–2003), and his often wonderful music dips into the myriad of styles that flourished in those unprecedently eclectic years. He is best known for his orchestral music, usually described as Neoclassical in the manner of Hindemith and Stravinsky, much more so in his native Italy than elsewhere. Somehow, though Petrassi is a revered figure in Italian musical culture, his reputation abroad never quite reached the status of his fellow Modernists Alfredo Casella, Luigi Dallapiccola, and Luciano Berio. He was very active as a teacher, chiefly at Santa Cecilia Conservatory. His students ranged in manner from Ennio Morricone to Peter Maxwell Davies, an important hallmark of a mentor who does not impose his own tastes on his apprentices.

This intriguing CD consists solely of music for solo instruments, grouped together as his *monologhi*, seven pieces written from 1933 to 1980. The project is a labor of love for the violinist Alessandro Cazzato, who performs the opening work of the disc, *Elogio per un' ombra* (*Praise for a shadow*), written in 1971. It is, like all of the music here, highly sensitive to the particular idiomatic nature of the instrument, with long, song-like lines, expressed in a dreamy, improvisational manner. Cazzato hears the music in a broad context: "The history of the violin here is relived with all its stylistic features..., from Corelli to Paganini, alongside the importance of the interval function."

The earliest work is the 1933 *Toccata for Solo Piano*, a vibrant composition of lyrical grace, as opposed to the more percussive brashness of Prokofiev's work of the same name. There are two works for solo guitar, composed in the late 1950s, and in both Petrassi relies on the folksy, narrative qualities of the instrument, as brought into the mid-20th century with an accrued technical sophistication. *Soufflé* (1969), as one might assume from the title, is a work for flute and piccolo (alternately performed by one musician) that exudes a puckish, perhaps satirical aura. The music beckons the listener to follow it around corners, as if playing a game. In *Flou*, written late in Petrassi's career (1980), he allows the harp to be a harp, that is, to produce music of gentle and introspective poetry, including swooping arpeggios, all the while peppered with dissonance. The last monologue here is for solo viola, which is also the title of this 1978 composition (*Violasola*). Like the violin piece, the music is fluid and free, but more jagged, including pizzicato effects. Petrassi also seems to latch onto the human like tonality of the instrument, expressed in an almost conversational way.



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This project could not be successful without the participation of highly virtuosic and emotionally committed performers, and that is very much the case here. Petrassi's music is unquestionably modern, and therefore not for all tastes. The adventuresome cultural consumer will find great riches here, though, as well as a veritable history lesson in contemporary music. This is a superb production all around, including Cazzato's insightful and affectionate notes and excellent recorded sound. **Peter Burwasser**

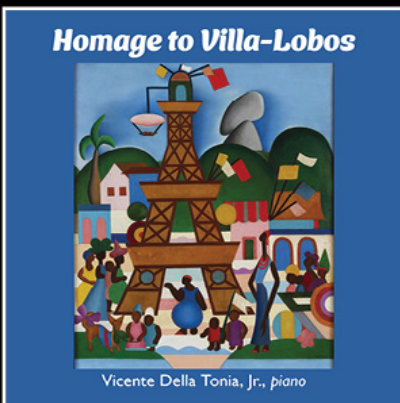
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<a href="#">First</a>	<a href="#">Prev</a>	<i>Issue 45:5 May/June 2022</i>	<a href="#">Next</a>	<a href="#">Last</a>
<a href="#">First</a>	<a href="#">Prev</a>	<b>Composers</b>	<a href="#">Next</a>	<a href="#">Last</a>
<a href="#">First</a>	<a href="#">Prev</a>	<b>Peter Burwasser</b>	<a href="#">Next</a>	<a href="#">Last</a>
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<a href="#">First</a>	<a href="#">Prev</a>	<b>TACTUS</b>	<a href="#">Next</a>	<a href="#">Last</a>
<a href="#">First</a>	<a href="#">Prev</a>	Arcadio Baracchi		
		Lapo Vannucci	<a href="#">Next</a>	<a href="#">Last</a>
<a href="#">First</a>	<a href="#">Prev</a>	flute	<a href="#">Next</a>	<a href="#">Last</a>
<a href="#">First</a>	<a href="#">Prev</a>	guitar	<a href="#">Next</a>	<a href="#">Last</a>
<a href="#">First</a>	<a href="#">Prev</a>	harp	<a href="#">Next</a>	<a href="#">Last</a>
<a href="#">First</a>	<a href="#">Prev</a>	piano	<a href="#">Next</a>	<a href="#">Last</a>
<a href="#">First</a>	<a href="#">Prev</a>	viola	<a href="#">Next</a>	<a href="#">Last</a>
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