SERA D’INVERNO

Songs by Ildebrando Pizzetti

HANNA HIPP
mezzo-soprano

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piano
Hanna Hipp mezzo-soprano
Emma Abbate piano

Sera d’inverno
Songs by Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880–1968)

About Hanna Hipp & Emma Abbate:

‘Hanna Hipp […] is excellent, with a knowing, competent demeanour and a glowing mezzo timbre’
The Guardian

‘[…] sensitively accompanied by Emma Abbate’
International Record Review

1. Sera d’inverno [3:42]
2. L’annuncio [2:06]

Cinque Liriche
3. I pastori [5:15]
4. La madre al figlio lontano [4:13]
5. San Basilio [1:59]
6. Il clefta prigione [2:42]
7. Passeggiata [6:16]

8. Épitaphe [1:48]
9. Antifona amatoria di Basiliola [1:19]
10. E il mio dolore io canto [2:34]

11. Incontro di Marzo (from Tre Liriche) [6:00]

Due Canti d’amore
13. Oscuro è il ciel [2:28]

14. Scuote amore il mio cuore (from Tre Canti d’amore) [1:45]

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15. Augurio [2:58]
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Total playing time [55:20]
Sera d’inverno: The Songs of Ildebrando Pizzetti

Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880–1968) belonged to a group of Italian composers who were born around the year 1880, referred to as the *generazione dell’ottanta* (‘generation of eighty’). Far from being unified by a singular style, this group included other important composers such as Franco Alfano (1876–1954), Ottorino Respighi (1879–1936), Gian Francesco Malipiero (1882–1973), and Alfredo Casella (1883–1947). They would, despite their very different aesthetic ideals, play important roles in preparing the way for the next generation of Italian composers, many of whom broke away from traditional Italian styles. One characteristic that set Pizzetti apart from his contemporaries was that he never studied outside Italy, unlike the other members of the *generazione dell’ottanta*. Therefore, he was perhaps the most intrinsically ‘Italian’ of all these composers, since his education was steeped in the traditions and techniques of the old Italian school. His domestic education probably also explains his ‘preoccupation with emerging from Italian musical provincialism’, an objective that would remain a life-long concern for him.

An important question to consider regarding Pizzetti is whether to view him as a revolutionary or a conservative. His complicated history makes answering this question less straightforward than it might at first appear. Two manifestos, both signed by Pizzetti, reveal this dichotomy. The first – signed by such forward-thinking composers as Vincenzo Tommasini (1878–1950), Francesco Malipiero, and Alfredo Casella, in addition to Pizzetti and three others – was included as a kind of preface to a printed programme for a concert of compositions by these so-called ‘young Italian school’ composers in 1914. The signatories sought to revitalise the national music of Italy, ‘in spite of the lethargy which has blighted the natural development of the seventeenth-century melodrama, smothered the germs of eighteenth-century chamber music and dried up (or almost) the sources of folk-song’. The authors continued by announcing that ‘this concert […] is being given in order to prove the birth of a new musicality in our country’. Pizzetti’s association with this group of composers and his signing of this document would seem to place him at the forefront of the modern musical movement in Italy, a movement far removed from the stodgy conservatism of the *verismo* and old *bel canto* schools.
In 1932, Pizzetti aligned himself with Respighi, Riccardo Zandonai (1883–1944), and various other conservative musical figures to sign a notorious manifesto that essentially condemned experimental music and encouraged a return to the established musical tradition of Italy. This manifesto caused great upheaval in an already complicated and tense period for struggling Italian composers, creating a situation in which ‘ [...] the Italian musical world was soon divided into pro and contra camps and sub-factions.’ Ironically, this document was likely aimed at some of the signatories of the 1914 manifesto, specifically Casella and Malipiero. It is surprising that Mussolini, often the advocate for Italian tradition, actually sided with the modernists after this manifesto surfaced. Pizzetti later recanted his signing of this document, perhaps in response to confrontations by musicians such as Malipiero – who in 1934 wrote to Pizzetti condemning the manifesto and its ill effects on all modern composers, even those that signed it – but his signing did shed light on either the composer’s change of position over the course of three decades or his proclivity for rejecting alternate musical ideologies that did not correspond to his own artistic values. The songs of Ildebrando Pizzetti, of which there are thirty-three for voice and piano, are unique in the long history of song composition. Never has an Italian composer expressed such a strong emphasis on the texts of his songs. Pizzetti’s varied methods of responding to text make for highly individual works in this genre. He was not a composer who was content to compose music that was guaranteed to be a success with his audiences. Instead, he challenged himself to compose thoughtful settings that arose from the elevated poetry that he consistently chose to use. If some of his greatest songs are also his most rhythmically and musically challenging, one need look no further than Pizzetti’s efforts towards realising an authentic, idiomatic rendering of his texts to discover the reason for their complexity. The resulting songs are so characteristically ‘Pizzettian’ that virtually none of them could be mistaken for having been written by any other composer. In the best of them, he essentially created an entirely new kind of Italian song (which he called liriche), one in which word and music were perfectly wedded to form something greater than its parts. The most universal and important characteristic of Pizzetti’s style is his focus on the text. Early in his career, he began to direct his attention toward achieving an authentic musical setting for Italian texts. This came as a reaction to composers of Italy’s past and present, as perceived by Pizzetti, who obscured the texts they were setting for various musical reasons, but especially for the sake of melody. He also felt that composers of the recent past had chosen to set inferior poetry, largely due to the ease with which it was possible to set such simplistic, metrically regular verse. In identifying these problems, Pizzetti set for himself the objective of writing songs that were absolutely faithful to the words in every conceivable way, a goal that influenced nearly every aspect of his songs.

This ideal also led Pizzetti to seek out modern and traditional poetry of high quality for his songs. His texts come from three basic sources: modern Italian poetry; ancient and historical sources, including biblical texts and poetry, and texts by Petrarch (1304–1374), Michelangelo (1475–1564) and Sappho (born c. 650 B.C.); and folksong texts. By far the largest source of poetry for his songs comes from modern Italian poets. Some were famous, such as Gabriele D’Annunzio (1863–1938) and Giuseppe Ungaretti (1888–1970), who were two poets that inspired some of the greatest Pizzetti songs (I pastori by D’Annunzio and the later work, Due poesie di Giuseppe Ungaretti), while others were lesser known, such as Mario Silvani (1884–1913), who authored Sera d’inverno and who happened to be from Pizzetti’s hometown of Parma.

Pizzetti’s careful attention to text setting had many results. The first was that his songs eschewed traditional melodies in favour of vocal lines that followed the natural spoken inflection of the Italian language. Thus, longer, higher notes, especially those that fall on the strong beats of the measure, tend to be found on the stressed syllables of important words; unstressed syllables of less important words in the sentence fall on lower notes and are shorter in duration. In fact, in certain songs one can almost imagine Pizzetti creating a hierarchy of words in each sentence in order to establish his vocal ‘melody’. Emotional outbursts in the text are consistently set as high notes, usually preceded by an unprepared disjunct leap. Generally speaking, though, his vocal lines are stepwise in nature, making these excursions distinctive because they leap out of an otherwise speech-like texture that falls within a limited vocal range. As one might expect, the texts themselves are usually set syllabically, with only a handful, such as the late song Surge, propera, amica mea serving as aberrations from the norm.

Another characteristic driven by Pizzetti’s desire for accurate text-setting is his varied use of mixed meter, which manifests itself either as a consistent fluctuation in meter as
A basic characteristic of the piece (i pastori), or as a polymer between the voice and piano (Vorrei voler, Signor, quel ch’io non voglio), or both (La madre al figlio lontano).

In his most famous song I pastori, the voice and the piano are written in polymer and both parts frequently change meter throughout the piece. The meter of the vocal line is not indicated but alternates between 2/4 and 6/8, while the piano part alternates between 9/8 and 3/4.

A second important characteristic of Pizzetti’s songs is the incorporation of Medieval and Renaissance elements into the overall musical conception. Many authors, when discussing Pizzetti, have pointed to his use of modes in his music, though there are, in actuality, relatively few instances of Pizzetti using any historical mode in his songs. Instead, Pizzetti often adapts characteristics from the music of these time periods to suit his specific needs, imitating without replicating exactly any specific modality or other defining qualities. Generally, when it seems that Pizzetti is relying on some mode that is ancient sounding or, at least, not familiar to modern ears, it is likely that Pizzetti composed this ‘mode’ in response to the ancient and exotic elements of this text.

Pizzetti’s fascination with early music also contributed to the most characteristic aspect of his songs—the ‘flexible arioso’ style that pervades much of his song output. The melodic flexibility of Pizzetti’s style was influenced in part by his knowledge of Gregorian chant, a feature often mentioned in contemporary accounts of his music. There are times when the music strays from an overwhelmingly syllabic style; generally when this is the case, it is to introduce a melismatic element that recalls characteristics from Medieval chant. A particularly moving use of this feature can be found in the opening section of Adiuro vos, filiae Jerusalem, in response to the ancient biblical text from Song of Solomon. Antifona Amatoria di Basiliola is an example of this compositional technique put to particularly dramatic effect. A striking example of Pizzetti’s use of this technique can be found in the heart-breaking Mirologio per un bambino.

Though Pizzetti supported his fellow composers at various points in his career and also served as a teacher to so many of the younger generation of Italian composers, his strong belief in his own musical aesthetic caused him to distance himself from other musicians on numerous occasions. He did this in his critical writings for the journals and magazines for which he worked during his lifetime and by signing the infamous manifesto of 1932, mentioned above, among other ways. He admired certain composers for their operas, such as Bellini and Gluck, but felt that their compositions fell short of his high standards, usually due to the predominance of the music over the words in their operas. Other composers earned his esteem for their attempts at a marriage between words and music, such as Wolf and Debussy, but he felt that they hadn’t gone far enough in their experiments in this regard. One wonders, from the modern and admittedly easy vantage point, if Pizzetti didn’t perhaps go too far with his. He apparently admired Monteverdi greatly, indicating that he had found ‘a few pages’ of music written by this composer that displayed a perfect marriage between words and music. This kind of arrogance was unlikely to garner many friends among his contemporaries. Perhaps Pizzetti’s opinion of other composers, contemporary and historical alike, can best be summarised by quoting his final words, shouted from his death bed: ‘They are all dilettantes!’

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Adapted from A Singer’s Guide to the Songs of Ildebrando Pizzetti by Mark Whatley, D.M.A.
1. Sera d’inverno
Muore il giorno invernale tra un pio lamentar di campane. Muore… e un bagliore sanguigno sui monti lontani s’indugia. S’alza la nova luna su’il puro velario del cielo e la gran coltre nivea scintilla di vivido argento. Nel piano senza fine il popol de li alberi assorto nel suo dolore muto tende le braccia a l’alto; e un gregge intorpidito sotto la lana grigia sognaendo i verdi paschi pel bianco silenzio lontana.
Ancora le campane ripetono il vano lamento: quel anima si lagna nel gelo vespertino? È questa l’ora triste pei cuori che celano un sogno per quelli che sanno le lotte per quelli che sanno le gioie.
Naufraga in questo mar senza rive ogni voce di vita ogni cosa mortale nel bianco silenzio s’addorme.

1. Winter Evening
The winter day dies amid a pious lament of bells. It dies... and a sanguine glow on the distant mountains lingers. The new moon rises on the pure curtain of the sky and the great white snow blanket sparkles of silver bright. In the endless plain the population of trees, absorbed in their sorrow, silently stretches their arms to heaven; and a numbed flock underneath the grey wool dreaming of the green pastures through the white silence far away.

2. L’annuncio
Italian text by Teresa Corinna Ubertis Gray (1877–1964)

2. The Announcement
It came with the wind; it landed, the first, on the old chimney top and greeted. It was already the shadow of the evening: on the top of the hay racks the bonfires were lit. In the mountains they celebrated the good saint who has a name of lovely weather and of fortune and the bell with its sound poured out to him three rosaries of praise, to the plain. No one knew what sweetness he was collecting on the house that evening, on the little peaceful house of the grandmother where the first swallow settled.

Cinque Liriche

3. I pastori
Settembre, andiamo. É tempo di migrare. Ora in terra d’Abruzzi i miei pastori lascian gli stazzi e vanno verso il mare: scendono all’Adriatico selvaggio che verde è come i pascoli dei monti. Han bevuto profondamente ai fonti alpestrì, che sapor d’acqua natìa.
Ah, why am I not with my shepherds?

Gabriele d'Annunzio (1863–1938)

Swishing waters, trampling hoof steps, sweet sounds.
The sun makes the living wool so golden
Senza mutamento è l'aria.

The air is without change.

Now the flock walks along the coastline.

Ora lungh'esso il litoral cammina la greggia.

on the footprints of the ancient fathers.

su le vestigia degli antichi padri.

Now the flock walks along the coastline.

Ora lungh'esso il litoral cammina la greggia.

I am the voice of the one who first

O voce di colui che primamente

knows the trembling of the sea!

conosce il tremolar della marina!

And they go along the ancient sheep path to the plain

E vanno pel tratturo antico al piano

that is as green as the mountain meadows.

che lungo illuda la lor sete in via.

for how many months here alone I have been waiting

O figlio, figlio, in che mondo ti trovi?

and every evening I go back to make it

ed ogni sera mi ribue il pianto.

it is always untouched with fresh sheets

è sempre intatto coi lenzoli novi

Every morning I check your bed:

Ogni mattina riguardo il tuo letto:

for you!

Il pastorale era verde, e gettò un ramo,

I have renewed it when you were born:

che lungo illuda la lor sete in via.

I have saved it, son, for your return.

L'ho rinnovato quando mi sei nato:

4. The Shepherds

September, let's go. It is time to migrate.

Now in the land of Abruzzi

And the staff became green, and sprang a branch,

e il pastorale era verde, e gettò un ramo,

to say the alphabet.

E il pastoreale era verde, e gettò un ramo,

he leaned on the shepherding staff

E il pastorale era verde, e gettò un ramo,

tell us the alphabet.

E il pastoreale era verde, e gettò un ramo,

"If you are coming from the master,

“Se vieni dal maestro, dici l'abbiccì.”

and where do you go?

“Basilio mio, dove vieni, e ove scendi?”

and Turkey and Rome:

San Basilio viene di Cesarea:

5. Saint Basil

Romualdo Pàntini (1877–1945)

And all the world said it to you,

E tutto il mondo tel dicevano,

he wears bronze shoes and iron garments.

porta scarpe di bronzo e ferree vesti.

And all the world said it to you,

E tutto il mondo tel dicevano,

he wears bronze shoes and iron garments.

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And all the world said it to you,

E tutto il mondo tel dicevano,

he wears bronze shoes and iron garments.

porta scarpe di bronzo e ferree vesti.
that I might take the opposite side of the mountains, of the high peaks, of the great mountains, that I might leave mothers without sons, wives without husbands."

Greek folk text, translated by Niccolò Tommasino

7. Passeggiata
Italian text by Giovanni Papini (1881-1956)

8. Epitaph
Il dor.
Quoi que le sort fût pour lui bien étrange, il vivait.
Il mourut quand il n'eut plus son ange.
La chose simplement d'elle-même arriva, comme la nuit se fait lorsque le jour s'en va.

9. Antifona amatoria di Basilissa
Fulcit me floribus, stipate me malis.
Quia amore langueo.

9. Amatory Antiphon of Basiliola
Support me with flowers, attend me with apples.
Because I am faint with love.
Gabriele d'Annunzio

10. E il mio dolore io canto
Italian text by Jacopo Bocchialini (1878–1965)

10. And I Sing my Sorrow
I am a dry fountain.
Summer wounded my spring that once flowed calm and full.
Now no more.
A falling of leaves down here at the bottom.

11. March Encounter
(Grandi Liriche)
Guardami dunque! Io sono sempre quella come l'apparvi nei sogni d'allora così fiera e soave e così bella. Se tu mi guardi non rivivi ancora nelle morte giornate.
Non respiri fragranze abbandonate?
Getta il rimpianto e la paura amare e saluta la vecchia fantasia.
Anche l'alta bontà di perdonare vuol questa bruna reduce follia.
Dammi le nuove rose e tremino le mie labbra sdegnose.
Per la mia strana iride profonda e tremino le mie labbra sdegnose.

11. And I Sing my Sorrow
I am a sorrowful spring that languishes, every drop is a drop of blood, every drop is a drop of tears.
And I sing my sorrow.
Parched mouth, my spring of weeping does not satisfy.

Sono una muta dolce donna che fui!
Donna di cielo che non s'apron più.
Può se di Marzo a la mia chioma folta doni in memorie le novelle rose tremeranno le mie labbra sdegnose.
Ma ti bacia sul cuore anche una volta questa mia bocca ant'ora.
Oltre l'addio non ferie ira nemica.

11. March Encounter
Look at me then! I am forever that one as I appeared to you in dreams of that time so proud and gentle and so beautiful. If you look at me you will not revive again in days gone by.
Do you not breathe fragrances abandoned?
Cast away the bitter regret and fear and greet the old fantasy.
Even the kindness of pardoning wants this dark madness to be returned.
Give me the new roses and may my contemptuous lips tremble.
For my strange deep iris

A useless flight of little wings around.
Parched mouth, do not come near.
I am a sorrowful spring that languishes, every drop is a drop of blood, every drop is a drop of tears.
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And I sing my sorrow.
Parched mouth, my spring of weeping does not satisfy.
I beseech you, Daughters of Jerusalem
In my bed at night
searching for the one my soul loves;
searching for that one and not finding him.
I beseech you, daughters of Jerusalem,
if you find my beloved,
tell him that I am faint with love.

From the Song of Songs

12. Adjuro vos, filiae Jerusalem
In lectulo meo, in noctes,
quasivi quem diligat anima mea;
quasivi illum, et non inveni.
Adjuro vos, filiae Jerusalem,
si invenieritis dilectum meum,
ut nuncietis ei quia amore languer.

12. I Beseech You, Daughters of Jerusalem
In my bed at night
searching for the one my soul loves;
searching for that one and not finding him.
I beseech you, daughters of Jerusalem,
if you find my beloved,
tell him that I am faint with love.

From the Song of Songs
Hanna Hipp (mezzo-soprano)

Increasingly in demand, as of 2018, Hanna Hipp’s most recent operatic debuts were Isabella (L’italiana in Algeri) for Opéra Orchestre National Montpellier, Beatrice (Beatrice and Benedict) for Seattle Opera, where she also sang Dorabella (Così fan tutte); Frances, Countess of Essex in Gloriana for Teatro Real in Madrid, directed by Sir David McVicar and as Clairon in Capriccio for Garsington Opera.

A former member of the Jette Parker Young Artist Programme at the Royal Opera House (ROH), Covent Garden, Hanna has recently returned to the ROH for an ‘enchanting’ Magdalene (The Daily Telegraph) in Kasper Holten’s new production of Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg, conducted by Sir Antonio Pappano. Previous roles there include Emilia (Otello), and Anna in Berlioz’s Les Troyens, which was also presented at the BBC Proms and released on DVD by Opus Arte.

Following her debut at the Glyndebourne Festival as Flora (La traviata) under Sir Mark Elder, released on DVD by Opus Arte, Hanna has maintained a strong relationship with the company returning every season since: as Ramiro (La finta giardiniera) on tour under Christopher Moulds, La chatte and L’écureuil in Laurent Pelly’s acclaimed production of L’enfant et les sortilèges under Robin Ticciati, Magdalene (Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg) under Michael Götting and, in 2017, as Der Komponist (Ariadne auf Naxos) under Cornelius Meister.

Further performances include a recent debut at Dutch National Opera as the Page in Strauss’ Salome under Daniele Gatti in a new staging by Ivo van Hove, Mercédès (Carmen) at Teatro alla Scala under Massimo Zanetti, and Cherubino (Le nozze di Figaro) at both the Turku Music Festival and in a production by Sir Thomas Allen for Scottish Opera. A successful North American debut as Der Komponist for Minnesota Opera was followed by Isolier in Rossini’s Le comte Ory under Giacomo Sagripanti for Seattle Opera. In concert, Hanna joined Orchestre de la Suisse Romande for L’enfant et les sortilèges under Charles Dutoit, and Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg for Les Troyens under John Nelson, recorded for release on Warner Classics.

Hanna has built a strong relationship with Emma Abbate; they frequently collaborate as a duo performing a varied song repertoire.

Hanna is a graduate of the Stanisław Moniuszko Academy of Music in Gdańsk, the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and the National Opera Studio in London.
Emma Abbate (piano)

The Neapolitan pianist Emma Abbate enjoys a demanding career as a piano accompanist and chamber musician, working with some of the finest singers and instrumentalists of her generation. She has performed in duo recitals for international festivals and concert societies in Salzburg, Lisbon, Naples, Ischia, and Koszierzyzna, and at many prestigious UK venues such as the Wigmore Hall, Southbank Centre, Royal Opera House, St John’s Smith Square, St George’s, Bristol and at the Aldeburgh Festival, in addition to broadcasts on BBC Radio 3.

Emma is releasing a series of recordings devoted to twentieth-century Italian vocal chamber music, the latest of which was the world-première disc of Shakespeare Sonnets by Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco with the BBC New Generation Artist Ashley Riches for Resonus Classics. Her previous disc was L’Infinito: a musical journey through twentieth-century Italian songs with the mezzo-soprano Kamelia Kader, including works by Respighi, Casella, Alfano and Malipiero. She has also released the first of two volumes of Mozart’s complete piano duets on original fortepianos with Julian Perkins for Resonus Classics. This album, recorded on two original instruments from the Richard Burnett Heritage Collection of Early Keyboard Instruments, was the final recording made at Finchcocks Musical Museum.

A keen advocate of contemporary music, Emma has recently released two discs devoted to works by Stephen Dodgson for Toccata Classics: world-première recordings of his cello and piano music with Evva Mizerska, and his piano quintets with the Tippett Quartet. Her discography also includes world-première recordings of works for cello and piano by the English composer Algernon Ashton, and the contemporary Polish composer Krzysztof Meyer, both with Evva Mizerska for Toccata Classics.

Based in London, Emma is a professor at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and a staff coach at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Following her graduation from the S. Pietro a Majella Conservatoire in Naples and an Advanced Diploma from the S. Cecilia Conservatoire in Rome, Emma studied in London with Yonty Solomon. She completed her studies with Geoffrey Pratley as a scholar at the Royal Academy of Music, from where she graduated with distinction. She was also awarded an Italian Literature and Culture degree cum laude from the Federico II University in Naples.

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James Platt (bass), Anna Starushkevych (mezzo-soprano),
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‘From joy to despair, every emotion is here in subtle colours; a legacy of great human and musical worth.’
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