

BRILLIANT
CLASSICS

Pietro
Alessandro **YON**
COMPLETE ORGAN MUSIC | volume 1

Tommaso Mazzoletti *organ*

Pietro Alessandro Yon 1886-1943
Complete Organ Music. volume 1

“Twelve Divertimenti” for Organ		17. Canto Elegiaco – Elegy	5’40
1. No.1 Rimembranza, Melody for Oboe	4’27	18. Toccata	7’15
2. No.2 Humoresque, “L’organo Primitivo”, Toccatina for Flute	2’11	19. La Concertina, Suite Umoresca:	
		Lento, Allegretto – Tempo di Valzer lento – Allegro Vivace	5’21
3. No.3 Speranza (Hope), Solo for Diapason	5’03	20. Elegia	5’23
4. No.4 Elan du Coeur, Petite poème	5’40	<i>from Three Compositions for Organ</i>	
5. No.5 Minuetto Antico e Musetta	3’52	21. No.2 Concert Study	4’22
6. No.6 Christmas in Settimo Vittone, Folk-Song, Carol for Vox Humana	4’54	22. No.3 Second Concert Study	3’17
7. No.7 Echo, Double canon in unison	2’36	“Sonata Cromatica” Organ Sonata No.2	
8. No.8 Arpa Notturna, Harp solo	5’33	23. I. Andante Rustico	8’12
9. No.9 Rapsodia Italiana (Italian Patriotic Hymns and Piedmontese Dances)	8’23	24. II. Adagio Triste	3’26
10. No.10 American Rhapsody	12’27	25. III. Fantasia e Fuga	7’40
11. No.11 Trio all’Ottava	2’28	“Sonata Prima” Organ Sonata No.1	
12. No.12 Cornamusa Siciliana	3’48	26. I. Allegro con spirito impetuoso	4’11
Concerto Gregoriano for Organ and Piano		27. II. Adagio, ma non troppo	5’18
13. I. Introduzione ed Allegro	10’25	28. III. Minuetto	3’52
14. II. Adagio	4’57	29. IV. Tema e Variazioni	6’19
15. III. Scherzo	2’51	“Sonata Romantica” Organ Sonata No.3	
16. IV. Finale	10’09	30. I. Introduzione ed Allegro	8’31
		31. II. Adagio	6’16
		32. III. Finale	8’41

Tommaso M. Mazzoletti *organ*
The Fisk Organ at Lausanne Cathedral

Gaia Federica Caporiccio *piano*
Bösendorfer model 290 Imperial



The Amazing Story of Pietro A. Yon
This is a remarkable tale that starts at the foot of the Alps on 8 August 1886, when Pietro Alessandro was born to Margherita and Antonio Yon, the fourth of their ten children.

Pietro Alessandro acquired the first rudiments of music from his brother Costantino, and then continued under Angelo Burbatti in Ivrea. He was clearly a very talented boy, and Burbatti suggested he should enrol at the Institute of Musical Studies in Turin despite his young age. So to Turin he went, facing all sorts of hardships and managing to pay for his studies, board and lodging thanks to money he won in a bicycle race in Valle d’Aosta.

In 1902, however, Pietro also succeeded in obtaining a prestigious grant that allowed him to study at the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome under Giovanni Sgambati (piano), Cesare de Sanctis (composition) and Remigio Renzi (organ). He obtained his Diploma in Rome with full marks, “*Summa cum Laude*”, in the space of five years instead of the usual eleven, and was awarded a Medal of Merit by the sovereign, King Vittorio Emanuele II of Savoy.

Once his studies were over, he was offered a contract and a salary of 100 dollars a week as organist at the church of St. Francis Xavier in Manhattan. So in 1907 boarded a ship with a one-way ticket to New York.

Pietro had plenty of character and found fertile ground for his talents in the United States. In 1914 he and his brother founded a private academy, the “YON STUDIOS”, which was licensed to issue publically recognized qualifications. Initially located in a room in the Carnegie Hall, the school proved to be highly successful, later moving to an exclusive eighth floor studio on 75th Street. Cole Porter was one of the institution’s many students who in due course were to shape the future of American music.

America also encouraged Yon to pursue his artistic goals, even in circumstances that might have been very discouraging. During his first year in the United States, he fractured both his wrists in a car accident and was forced to cut back his activities for several months. With the help of protracted physical therapy, however, he managed to regain complete use of his hands. But that was not all. During the time he was unable to move his hands he acquired amazing skill in pedal technique, as his works clearly reveal. Such virtuoso mastery makes Yon’s music a delight for the ear, and also spectacular to behold, almost like a movie experience.

Pietro met with enormous success as a concert performer, holding his first concert at the Aeolian Hall in New York in 1914. During the course of almost thirty years of feverish activity, he gave around 1500 performances, 23 of them in the famous Carnegie Hall in New York. During a concert there in 1927 he played his *Concert Study*, declaring to the audience that the piece comprised 1467 pedal notes and that it would only last for 3 minutes. The work was repeated several times over, eliciting extreme enthusiasm on the part of the audience and great acclaim in the press the next day.

In May 1919, he married Francesca Pessagno, a piano student of his, and in 1920 Mario Costantino was born. Despite the threats of war and difficult crossings, Pietro continued to return to Italy for lengthy stays in Settimo Vittone, where he paid to have the church organ restored.

By 1926 he had made an outstanding name for himself, acquiring the post of Chancel Organist at St. Patrick’s Cathedral, the foremost seat of Catholicism in the USA, and becoming Director of Music there in 1929. He worked tirelessly at his

new job, renewing and expanding the events organized at the Cathedral. He invited the soloists of the Metropolitan to perform during services, and also devoted time to composing. He wrote 26 Masses, over a 100 Motets, 4 Oratorios, numerous compositions for orchestra, soloists and choir, various pieces for solo organ and the famous “*Gesù Bambino*” whose sales topped three hundred thousand copies. An audience of over seven thousand attended the first performance of the Oratorio “*The Triumph of St. Patrick*”, which became a regular feature at the Carnegie Hall for many years.

Pietro A. Yon was also very much a public figure, a fact that throws light on certain aspects of his music and the goals he pursued. *The New Yorker* published a telling portrait of him in its “*Talk of the Town*” column, declaring him to be “not at all like our conception of a cathedral organist” and describing his habit of matching his ties with the colours of the liturgy. He comes across as a perfect New Yorker who moved comfortably in high society, especially that of Italo-American circles, a man with a taste for vaudeville and ragtime. Among the various habitués of the Yon residence were Arturo Toscanini, Giovanni Martinelli and Enrico Caruso. He was clearly hyperactive and indefatigable, a self-made man who was adroit in business, but also kindly, generous and always willing to give to charity.

Pietro Alessandro Yon died on 22 November 1943. Over 1300 people flocked to the funeral held in St. Patrick’s Cathedral, including Arturo Toscanini and other outstanding figures from the world of music. He is probably the only organist to have inspired a novel: “*The Heavens Heard Him*”, written by Vera Hamman with his brother Costantino – an account of his life and adventures in music.

Yon revolutionized the world of the 20th century organ. He was modern, determined and untiring in his quests and achievements, from his beloved small hometown to glittering New York. People simply adored him.

The organ works for concert performance

I decided to devote the first album of this set to the pieces Pietro Alessandro Yon wrote for lay audiences accustomed to the rich programs of American concert halls. Outside the sphere of church services, the organ was usually considered as part of the orchestra. The bulky concert hall organs were largely used for ensemble performance, and when they featured as solo instruments, it was largely for transcriptions, which were fashionable at the time. Yon flatly refused to play or compose transcriptions for the organ, instead creating a wealth of compositions that respected the academic tradition, but also appealed to listeners who would not normally have paid much attention to the genre.

It is not easy to classify these works, since Yon's originality lay in the fact that he never saw himself as part of a trend. Some pieces, such as "*Christmas in Settimo Vittone*" or "*Rapsodia Italiana*" reveal hints of Piedmontese folk tunes and the soundscape of the hillsides of his birthplace. In others, including "*Sonata Cromatica*" and "*Sonata Romantica*", there are evident references to Liszt and Chopin, whose works he often played in piano concerts. But there were also more spectacular compositions that allowed audiences to admire his virtuoso skills: for instance, the two pieces entitled "*Concert Study*". With his creativity and brilliant modernity, he was in many ways a pioneer: he was the first person in the USA to introduce the idea of organ concerts that audiences paid to hear; the first organist to promote and advertise his concerts on billboards and the radio; the first organist to be engaged as a consultant by Hammond, for whom he tested the prototypes of what would later become the legendary Hammond organs; and he was the first organist to attract huge audiences to listen to Bach outside the sphere of the church.

Yon's works, including the compositions for concert performance, reflect the influence of the huge range of possibilities offered by American organs, some of which he actually helped design. Indeed, he was a pioneer in the ground-breaking tradition of American organ construction, where he introduced criteria that were distinctly

more European. He drastically renovated the organ at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York, increasing the stops from 51 to 157, and worked closely with the Kilgen organ builders on the renovation of many other instruments. The genre to which his input gave rise was known as the "American Classic". In Yon's own scores the registration markings reveal how he deliberately embraced both the rules of tradition and the creative possibilities of modernity, thereby reconciling established forms with some highly original stop usage in order to reach out to much wider audiences.

These three albums are recorded on the magnificent Fisk organ in Lausanne Cathedral in Switzerland, which reflects the sound features of Yon's American Classic organ better than almost any other instrument of the sort in Europe. Although it was built in Gloucester (USA), it embodies the main European styles and with its 111 stops has made it possible to reproduce Yon's concert works faithfully, using the same stops the composer indicated in the scores. What makes the choices of stops truly unique in this album is the *Positif expressif* with the ripieno made up entirely of strings and the *Fernwerk* organ echo.

This recording is intended as a homage to a great musician who in more recent times has been unaccountably overlooked. With humility and courage he inspired a generation of musicians who, to this day, continue to enthral audiences with his music. It is high time this inspiration became the focus of wider attention, since it comes from the heart of a man who was truly unique.

Enjoy!

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Translated by Kate Singleton

The Fisk organ at Lausanne Cathedral Opus 120

Ranks: 135

Pipes: 7313

Created: 2003/2013

Grand Orgue *Man II*

Principal 32' *from 16'*
Montre 16'
Bourdon 16'
Montre 8'
Gambe 8'
Flûte harmonique 8'
Bourdon 8'
Prestant 4'
Octave 4'
Quinte 2 2/3'
Doublette 2'
Terz 1 3/5'
Fourniture VII
Cymbale V
Mixture VI-IX
Bombarde 16'
Trompette 8'
Clairon 4'
Trommet 16'
Trommet 8'

Positif-de-Dos *Man I*

Quintadehn 16'
Prinzipal 8'
Gedackt 8'
Oktave 4'
Rohrflöte 4'
Grosse Tierce 3 1/5'
Nasard 2 2/3'
Doublette 2'
Quarte de Nasard 2'
Tierce 1 3/5'
Larigot 1 1/3'
Piccolo 1'
Plein jeu V
Scharff IV
Dulcian 16'
Cromorne 8'



Positif expressif *Man III*

Salicional 8'
Unda maris 8' (C)
Flûte harmonique 8'
Bourdon 8'
Voix éolienne (C0)
Fugara 4'
Zartflöte 4'
Violine 2'
Sesquialtera II

Harmonia aethera V
Cor anglais 16'
Basson 8'
Clairon 4'

Récit expressif *Man IV*

Bourdon 16'
Diapason 8'
Viole de gambe 8'
Voix céleste 8'
Flûte traversière 8'
Bourdon 8'
Prestant 4'
Flûte octavante 4'
Quinte 2 2/3'
Octavin 2'
Tierce 1 3/5'
Plein jeu IV
Bombarde 16'
Trompette harmonique 8'
Clairon harmonique 4'
Basson-Hautbois 8'
Clarinette 8'
Voix humaine 8'

Bombardes *Man V*

Montre 8'
Flûte creuse 8'
Flûte ouverte 4'
Grand Cornet V
Trompette 8'
Clairon 4'
Trompette en chamade 8'
Clairon en chamade 4'

Pédale

Principal 32' GO
Bourdon 32'
Grosse Quinte 21 1/3'
Contrebasse 16'
Montre 16' GO
Principal 16'
Violonbasse 16'
Bourdon 16' *from 32'*
Basse Quinte 10 2/1'
Octave 8'
Violoncelle 8' GO
Flûte 8' *from Contrebasse*
Bourdon 8' *from 32'*
Quinte 5 1/3'
Octave 4'

Flûte 4' *from Contrebasse*

Mixture IV
Contre Bombarde 32'
from 16'
Bombarde classique 16'
Bombarde 16' GO
Trompette 8' GO
Clairon 4' GO
Posaune 16'
Trommet 16' GO
Trommet 8' GO

Fernwerk *Floating*

Bourdon 16'
Principal 8'
Salicional 8'
Voix céleste 8' (C0)
Flûte 8'
Flûte d'amour 8'
Bourdon 8'
Prestant 4'
Flûte traversière 4'
Trompette 8'
Voix humaine 8'

Couplers:

Pos-de-Dos to GO
Pos expressif to GO
Récit expressif to GO
Bombardes to GO
Octaves grave GO
Octaves grave Pos exp
Positif-de-Dos to Pos exp
Récit expressif to Pos exp

Bombardes to Pos exp
Octaves graves Fernwerk
Octaves aiguë Fernwerk
GO to Pédale
Positif-de-Dos to Pédale
Positif expressif to Pédale
Récit expressif to Pédale
Bombardes to Pédale
Fernwerk to Pédale

Accessories:

General Tremulant
Pos-de-Dos Tremulant doux
Récit exp Trémolo rapide
Fernwerk Tremblant
Rossignol





Tommaso Maria Mazzoletti is a church and concert organist and artistic director.

He was born in Novara in 1991 and initially studied the piano before discovering his true vocation for the organ at the age of 12. He studied in his hometown and then at the Ghedini Conservatoire in Cuneo, where he specialized in Organ and Organ Composition under Massimo Nosetti, obtaining a first class diploma. He then widened his horizons, studying with Emanuele Vianelli and Fausto Caporali, and then moving to France to study under Pierre Meà. In 2016 he obtained his “Master en interprétation musicale – Concert” at the Haute Ecole de Musique in Geneva, under the guidance of Alessio Corti, thereafter moving on to the Haute Ecole de Musique in Lausanne, where he studied with Jean-Christophe Geiser in the course devoted to “Master en interprétation musicale spécialisée – Soliste”.

Following a decade as organist at San Nazzaro Abbey in Sesia and Vercelli Cathedral, in 2016 Tommaso won the contest for the post of titular organist at the Protestant churches of Gland and Vich in the Vaud Canton. At the Church of St. Paul in Gland he is supervising the construction of a new Brondino-Vegezzi-Bossi organ on his designs. In 2017 in collaboration with pastor André Sauter, he founded the association Orgue en Jeux, of which he is president and artistic director.

Tommaso’s concert schedule includes appearances at important international festivals and in prominent cities throughout Europe and the United States.

The many competitions and contests he has won include the Premio Nazionale delle Arti in Rome, under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, and the Prix d’Orgue Pierre Segonde, awarded by the city of Geneva.

His recordings include *Virtuoso Organ Music* released by IMD, the album *Danse Macabre* in collaboration with Ismez and the set of 3 albums *Pietro Alessandro Yon: the complete organ works for concert* released by Brilliant Classics.

*I would like to thank a number of people
for their help in making this recording possible:*

*Jean-Christophe Geiser, titular organist at Lausanne Cathedral,
who was the first to believe in the project, supporting me throughout.*

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for the recording within the context of the
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*Maestro and musicologist Gianluca Rovelli,
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Yon photo: © Tommaso Mazzoletti

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