

NAXOS

2 CDs

# ROSSINI

## Péchés de vieillesse • 4 (Sins of Old Age)

### Album de château

Alessandro Marangoni, Piano



## Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)

### Péchés de vieillesse: Volume VIII, Album de château · Volume IX (excerpts)

Gioachino Antonio Rossini, one of the most successful and popular operatic composers of his time, was born in Pesaro in 1792, five months after the marriage of his parents. His father, a brass-player and later teacher of the French horn at the Bologna Accademia, had a modest career, disturbed by the political changes of the period as the French replaced the Austrians in Northern Italy. Rossini's mother was a singer and as a boy Rossini made his appearance with his father in the pit orchestra and from time to time as a singer with his mother on stage, going on to work as a keyboard-player in the opera orchestra.

Rossini's early studies in music were with his father and mother, and with other teachers through the generosity of rich patrons. In childhood he had already started to show ability as a composer and his experience in the opera-house bore natural fruit in a remarkable and meteoric career that began in 1810 with the production of *La cambiale di matrimonio* in Venice.

There followed a series of operas, comic and tragic, until the relatively poor reception of *Semiramide* in Venice in 1823 turned Rossini's attention to Paris. Under the Bourbon King Charles X Rossini staged French versions of earlier works and in 1829 *Guillaume Tell*. A contract for further operas came to nothing when the King was replaced in the revolution of 1830 by Louis-Philippe, although eventually, after some six years, Rossini was able to have his agreed annuity restored. With matters settled in France, in 1836 he returned to Italy and in spite of ill health concerned himself with the affairs of the Liceo Musicale in Bologna. The revolutionary disturbances there in 1848, activities with which he had little sympathy, seemed to threaten him and his second wife, Olympe Pélissier, whom he had married in 1846, after the death of his first wife, the singer Isabella Colbran, from whom he had been legally separated since 1837. For his own safety he moved first to Florence, but in 1855, partly in a search for better health, returned to Paris. In that city and a few

years later at his new villa at Passy he passed the rest of his life.

Rossini's last ten years brought a return to composition, principally with a series of pieces described as *Péchés de vieillesse* (Sins of Old Age). Some of these are based on earlier works, some designed for performance at the informal Saturday evenings when he entertained guests in Paris, and others simply musical *obiter dicta*, as it were, pieces written as the mood took him. The *Péchés de vieillesse* are included in thirteen volumes, with the fourth to the eighth grouped together by Rossini as '*Un peu de tout. Recueil de 56 morceaux semi-comiques pour le piano* ("Je dédie ces *Péchés de vieillesse* aux pianistes de la 4<sup>me</sup> classe à la quelle j'ai l'honneur d'appartenir") (A little of everything. Collection of 56 semi-comic pieces for the piano: "I dedicate these Sins of Old Age to pianists of the fourth class, to which I have the honour to belong"). Rossini was unfairly modest about his abilities as a pianist, which were, it seems, not inconsiderable. Other volumes also contain piano pieces.

The eighth volume of the *Péchés de vieillesse* has the title *Album de château*. It contains twelve pieces, coupled here with five piano pieces from Volume IX. The set starts with *Spécimen de l'ancien régime*, which includes a characteristic waltz and a reminiscence of Bach in a fugal section. The following *Prélude pétulant-rococo* fulfils the promise of its title with its lively parody of rococo ornament, use of sequence, repeated notes and, not quite in character, its surprising conclusion. *Un regret* and *Un espoir* (A Hope) offer suitable contrast, the second piece including a returning lyrical operatic interlude.

Other elements find their way into the promised dance in *Boléro tartare*, followed by an ostentatious display of fugal counterpoint, replete with final stretto and coda in *Prélude prétentieux*. *Spécimen de mon temps* takes a wryly affectionate look at some contemporary operatic fashions, opening with a stolid *Andantino maestoso* before venturing into more

dangerous territory, and the *Valse anti-dansante* offers a terpsichorean warning. *Prélude italien* and *Petite fanfare* are from Volume IX, which includes some pieces for violin, cello, harmonium and horn, as well as works for piano. The *Petite fanfare* is given in a version for piano either two or four hands.

*Prélude semipastorale* explores key after key in its very ornamental progress. It is followed by *Tarantelle pur sang (avec Traversée de la procession)* (Thoroughbred Tarantelle (with the crossing of the procession)). There is an introduction, before the dance takes up its characteristic rhythm. The bell announcing the procession, with its accompanying hymn, interrupts the tarantella, which soon resumes its headlong course. The procession is heard once more, and the music of the introduction, followed by the return of the tarantella. There is also a suggested version of the piece for chorus, harmonium and handbell.

*Un rêve* (A Dream) has all the variety that its title suggests, including a nightmare episode and a passage suggesting the sound of horns. *Prélude soi-disant dramatique* (So-called Dramatic Prelude) opens with sinister intensity, before moving to more lyrical operatic material, including a staged march and adventurous modulations. *Spécimen de l'avenir* (Specimen of the Future) suggests a satirical view of Liszt's music of the future, going nowhere in particular, in spite of everything.

*Echantillon du chant de Noël à l'italienne* (Example of the Christmas Carol in Italian Style) offers the characteristic gentle lilt of the Christmas song, interspersed with the bagpipes of the shepherds, a piece taken from Volume IX, as are the final two pieces included here. *Marche et réminiscences pour mon dernier voyage* (March and Reminiscences for My Final Journey) frames brief excerpts from a number of Rossini's operas within a funeral march - *frappons* (let us knock), Rossini urges. *Di tanti palpiti* from *Tancredi* is followed by *Non più mesta* from *Cenerentola*, a fragment of *La donna del lago*, a quotation from the overture to *Semiramide*, a familiar rapid reference to *Guillaume Tell*, and the Gondolier's song *Nessun maggior dolore* from *Otello*, recalling Dante's narrative of Paolo and Francesca. The last reminiscence is of *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, a fragment of the *Goodnight Quintet*, in which Don Basilio is urged away, apparently in need of a doctor, *Buona sera, mio signore*. As the composer nears the gates of Heaven there follows *Mon portrait – allons* (*Let's go*) – *j'y suis* (*I am there*) – and a final bar, *Requiem*.

The present recording ends on a lighter note with *Echantillon de blague mélodique sur les noires de la main droite* (Example of a melodic joke on the black notes of the right hand), its G flat major melody designated *Chant cochon* by the composer.

**Keith Anderson**

## Alessandro Marangoni



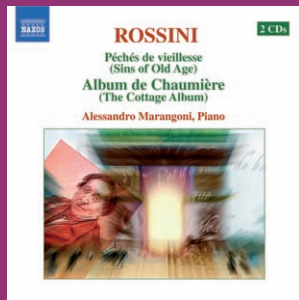
Photo: Vanessa Zan

Born in Italy in 1979, Alessandro Marangoni studied piano with Marco Vincenzi at the Università di Pavia, where he was awarded the diploma with honours (summa cum laude). He continued his studies at the Scuola di Musica in Fiesole with Maria Tipo and Pietro De Maria. Besides his musical studies he was awarded an honours degree in philosophy at the Università di Pavia with a thesis on Fernando Liuzzi's philosophy of music. He was also a *merit student* of the Almo Collegio Borromeo, Pavia, one of the oldest and most important European university colleges. The recipient of several national and international awards, including the prestigious Amici di Milano International Prize for Music, Alessandro Marangoni has appeared in many important musical events in Europe, both as a soloist and as a chamber musician, including Rome (Accademia di Santa Cecilia), Florence (Accademia della Crusca), Venice (Teatro La Fenice), Ischia (the Walton Foundation), Cittadella in Assisi, Teatro Verdi in Trieste, Engadiner Internationales Kammermusik-Festspiele, Sagra Musicale Umbra, the Italian

Cultural Institute in London, the Teatro Dal Verme in Milan, St John's College, Cambridge, and the Universidad Católica de Chile. As a chamber musician he has collaborated with some of the most important Italian musical personalities and ensembles, including Mario Ancillotti, Vittorio Ceccanti, Daria Masiero, Stefano Parrino, Quirino Principe, Carlo Zardo and the Nuovo Quartetto Italiano. He has played to great public and critical acclaim in Spain with the Málaga Philharmonic Orchestra and in Bratislava with the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Aldo Ceccato. He has also given more than a hundred concerts for the Second Life virtual platform. He has recently started an artistic collaboration with the Italian actress Valentina Cortese. He plays the piano for the Trio Albatros, with which he has won acclaim all over the world. In 2007 Alessandro Marangoni made a recording for La Bottega Discantica of piano works by the great Italian conductor Victor de Sabata. For the 40th anniversary of the latter's death he played in a recital at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan, with Daniel Barenboim. He is recording the complete piano works by Rossini (*Pêchés de vieillesse*) and Clementi's *Gradus ad Parnassum* for Naxos. He teaches piano and chamber music in several masterclasses in Europe and South America.

[www.alessandromarangoni.com](http://www.alessandromarangoni.com)

## Also Available



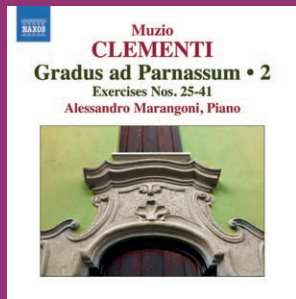
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During his last decade, Rossini wrote a series of 13 volumes he called *Sins of Old Age*, of which volume 8 is subtitled *Album de château*. It contains 12 pieces, each richly characterised. Many are fuelled by an operatic sense of vitality, and we also find dances, fugal writing, and a nightmarish dream episode of great intensity. The five pieces from volume 9 offer equal pleasures – a Christmas Carol, self-quotations from his operas, and a skittish black note joke, all served up with his inimitable gift for melody and enjoyment. ‘Marangoni has a beautiful legato touch, and a keen sense of phrasing.’ (*American Record Guide*, on Vol. 1: 8.570590-91)

Gioachino  
**ROSSINI**  
(1792-1868)

## Complete Piano Music • 4

<b>CD 1</b>	<b>Péchés de vieillesse, Vol. VIII: Album de château</b>	<b>79:31</b>	<b>CD 2</b>	<b>Péchés de vieillesse, Vol. VIII: Album de château (continued)</b>	<b>79:56</b>
<b>1</b>	No. 1. Spécimen de l'ancien régime	<b>17:41</b>	<b>1</b>	No. 8. Prélude semipastorale	<b>14:56</b>
<b>2</b>	No. 2. Prélude pétulant-rococo	<b>7:21</b>	<b>2</b>	No. 9. Tarantelle pur sang	<b>10:45</b>
<b>3</b>	No. 3a. Un regret	<b>3:07</b>	<b>3</b>	(avec Traversée de la procession)	<b>9:27</b>
<b>4</b>	No. 3b. Un espoir	<b>4:14</b>	<b>4</b>	No. 10. Un rêve	<b>11:32</b>
<b>5</b>	No. 4. Boléro tartare	<b>10:11</b>	<b>5</b>	No. 11. Prélude soi-distant dramatique	<b>10:22</b>
<b>6</b>	No. 5. Prélude prétentieux	<b>5:22</b>		No. 12. Spécimen de l'avenir	
<b>7</b>	No. 6. Spécimen de mon temps	<b>12:59</b>			
<b>8</b>	No. 7. Valse anti-dansante	<b>7:44</b>			
	<b>Péchés de vieillesse, Vol. IX: Album pour piano, violon, violoncelle, harmonium et cor (pieces for piano only)</b>		<b>6</b>	<b>Péchés de vieillesse, Vol. IX: Album pour piano, violon, violoncelle, harmonium et cor (pieces for piano only)</b>	
<b>9</b>	No. 9. Prélude italien	<b>7:01</b>	<b>6</b>	No. 6. Echantillon du chant de Noël à l'italienne	<b>6:56</b>
<b>10</b>	No. 12. Petite fanfare à quatre mains	<b>3:52</b>	<b>7</b>	No. 7. Marche et réminiscences pour mon dernier voyage	<b>8:16</b>
	<i>(Both piano parts played by Alessandro Marangoni)</i>		<b>8</b>	No. 11. Echantillon de blague mélodique sur les noires de la main droite	<b>7:43</b>



### Alessandro Marangoni, Piano

Piano: Steinway & Sons

Recorded at the Baroque Hall, Ivrea, Turin, Italy, 18th-19th March 2010  
and 15th-17th June 2010 • Booklet notes: Keith Anderson  
Producers, Engineers and Editors: Renato Campajola and Mario Bertodo (SMC Records)  
Cover image: Paolo Zeccara

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Playing Time  
2:39:27



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