

MYSTERY VARIATIONS ON GIUSEPPE COLOMBI'S CHIACONA



EDMUND CAMPION
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GUALTIERO DAZZI
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MIROSLAV SRNKA
STEVEN STUCKY
TAN DUN
JUKKA TIENSUU
TAPIO TUOMELA
ROLF WALLIN
RYAN WIGGLESWORTH
JOJI YUASA

Anssi Karttunen, cello

FIRST RECORDING

MYSTERY VARIATIONS ON THE *CHIACONA* OF GIUSEPPE COLOMBI

by Anssi Karttunen

The idea for the *Mystery Variations* came from Kaija Saariaho and my wife, Muriel von Braun, who in 2010 wanted to organise a joint 50th-birthday present from the composers I have been working with through my professional life. They decided to write to a number of them, inviting each to compose a single variation on the *Chiacona per basso solo* by Giuseppe Colombi (1635–94). For many years I had been playing the *Chiacona* in my recitals, often commenting that for me it represents the beginning of the history of my instrument, the other end of that history being what my friends are writing today.

The *Mystery Variations* thus became a collection of 31 variations by as many composers, from twelve different countries, on one of the earliest known pieces written for the cello.¹ It offers a unique look at how many very different ways there are to write for the cello today, a sort of instantaneous snapshot of the world of cello at the end of the first decade of the 21st century.

It is fascinating to follow in these Variations how many ways there are to vary and react to the simple *Chiacona*. Some composers – Kaipainen and Saariaho, for instance – took the rhythmic or harmonic skeleton and covered it with a new musculature; some – Cohen and Hakola – took the architecture and filled it with completely new furniture; others – Neikrug, Matthews and Lindberg – quoted passages, or mixed the theme with the musical letters of my name, in the last instance even making it into a duel between the two; and

¹ *Anssi's Eternal Return* by Jean-Baptiste Barrière (born in Paris in 1958) is a video projection and therefore the only one of the *Mystery Variations* not on this CD. It consists of an electronically treated recording of the *Chiacona* mixed with a video merging artwork by my wife Muriel von Braun together with videos made for an earlier multimedia piece by Barrière. It can be watched at www.toccataclassics.com/cddetail.php?CN=TOCC0171.

others yet – Globokar, Tuomela – seemingly ignore Colombi altogether. No two are alike.

The title *Mystery Variations* stems from the fact that while the composers were writing their variations, they didn't know who else had been asked. I was also asked to premiere them without knowing what I had promised to play. The title turns out to be very fitting as the set as a whole mysteriously works in almost any order. The variations seem to feed from one another and the whole becomes larger than its parts. I have chosen an order for the CD which seems to work best when heard as an uninterrupted set of variations. Mysteriously, they also just fit on a CD, with only a few seconds' space left.²

Giuseppe Colombi seems to have been born in Modena, between Parma and Bologna, in 1635: a manuscript recording his death in 1694 (on 27 September) states that he was 59 years old. He was a court violinist from 1671 and two years later became *capo del concerto degli strumenti*; in 1674 he was named *sottomaestro* of the court *cappella*, a position he held until his death. In 1673 he was beaten to the post of *maestro di cappella* of Modena Cathedral by his bitter rival, Giovanni Maria Bononcini (1642–78), whose two sons would also become prominent composers. With the help of his courtly patron, Duke Francesco II, Colombi became *maestro di cappella* of the Church of the Madonna del Voto instead, eventually succeeding Bononcini at the Cathedral in 1678. Apart from a hiccough in 1689–90, when bad debts led to the temporary abolition of the *cappella*, Colombi remained in this post, too, until his death.

Colombi's *Chiacona* [1] – the manuscript of which is kept at the Biblioteca

² The *Mystery Variations* are published by Chester Music, London, 2012.

Estense in Modena – was originally written in F; I have transcribed it a tone higher because in Colombi's time an early and larger form of the cello – which he calls simply *basso* – was tuned a whole tone lower than in today's practice, an approach known as Bolognese tuning. Double-stops, chords and open strings would not be comfortable in the original key on a cello with modern tuning.

The first of the *Mystery Variations*, in the order chosen for this CD, is *Anything Goes* [2] by **Jouni Kaipainen** (born in Helsinki in 1956) which follows the texture and structure of the *Chiacona* exactly but substitutes the theme with one from Kaipainen's score to *Hämäränmaassa* ('In the Land of Twilight'), Op. 69 (2004), a 'musical play' for children based on a fairy tale by Astrid Lindgren. The next, *Polvo* ('Dust') by **Martin Matalon** [3] (Buenos Aires, 1958) takes the individual notes of the theme and embellishes them into a very quiet, short, fragmented fantasy; Matalon asks for a metal mute, which produces a sound with an eerily distant quality. The next is *Colombi Daydream* [4] by **Roger Reynolds** (Detroit, 1934), who uses notes of the *Chiacona* theme to play with all sorts of combinations of the numbers 5 and 50 – intervals of fifths, quintuplets, five beats in a bar, etc., at times following the theme, or quoting little fragments from the *Chiacona*, all in a dreamlike manner: nothing is literal. *Colombi Daydream* naturally has 50 bars. *Chaconne* [5] by **Denis Cohen** (Couvray, 1952) follows exactly the structure and rhythms of the Colombi, but changing the notes and harmonies and using a very wide range of playing techniques to distance himself from the Baroque style. Every now and again the flow of the *Chaconne* is brought to a stop with sudden dissonant chords. *bLeuelein*³ [6] by **Jukka Tiensuu** (Finland, 1948) is a study in various types of *pizzicati*, slides, chords and resonances. It has the

³ My surname, Karttunen, is a diminutive of *karttu*, the Finnish word for a stick, bat, billet, mallet; *Bleue* is apparently the German equivalent, and so *Bleuelein* would be its diminutive. I have no idea why the 'l' rather than the opening 'b' is capitalised, and Tiensuu has the reputation of never discussing his own music.

feeling of a slow procession, maybe a passacaglia distantly reminiscent of the notes of the theme and its key of G major.

The *Partite sopra un basso* [7] by **Steven Stucky** (Hutchinson, Kansas, 1949) create a shimmering, falling tremolo landscape which one could imagine ‘painted’ landscape one could imagine ‘painted’ over a bass theme suggested by the subconscious. At the end Stucky adds ‘cordiali saluti da B. B.’ – Béla Bartók – with a quotation from the *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*. **Esa-Pekka Salonen** (Helsinki, 1958) writes a *Sarabande per un Coyote* ⁴ [8], which he makes into a grandiose fantasy on the rhythmic progression of the *Chiaccona*. He ignores any austere early-Baroque harmonies or the limits of what is comfortable on the cello and projects Colombi through a post-Busonian, even post-Elgarian, magnifying glass. *Something to Go On* [9] by **Edmund Campion** (Dallas, 1957) is a colourful collage of several modern styles, passing from spectral to minimal music within seconds before moving on to a slightly warped quote from Colombi; it is completed by a distant quote of ‘Happy Birthday’.

In his *Ciacconetta* [10] **Rolf Wallin** (Oslo, 1957) cleverly inserts the notes of the theme into a mix of slowly sliding arpeggios, into the middle of which he sets one of the faster passages of Colombi, twisting it into a virtuoso dance. **Pablo Ortiz** (Buenos Aires, 1956) takes Colombi for a ride in a tango machine: his *Paloma* [11] vacillates between cautious nostalgia and controlled melancholia. **Paavo Heininen** (Järvenpää, 1938) contributes *Triple Antienne* [12], one of the more substantial variations, in three parts: ‘Assonance’, ‘Consonance’ and ‘Resonance’. The first section seems like a free introduction to the central

⁴ The title is explained by the fact that for the past thirteen years Magnus Lindberg and I have performed as a cello-and-piano duo under the name ‘Dos Coyotes’; his *Dos Coyotes* (2002), moreover, is an arrangement for cello and piano of *Coyote Blues* for chamber ensemble (1993).

‘Consonance’, which brings in a theme resembling the Chiaccona, repeating it each time a little more distantly and leading to the fast ‘Resonance’, which is an intricate play with little motives from Colombi. *Still and Flow* [13] by **Anders Hillborg** (Sollentuna, 1954) opens with an extremely slow, high, chromatic melody, ‘Still’, which leads to ‘Flow’, reminiscent of the Bach cello suites. The combining of two dynamics within the same texture complicates the apparent simplicity of ‘Flow’, creating an atmosphere which at first seems straightforward but is mysteriously unsettled.

Fred Lerdahl (Madison, Wisconsin, 1943) writes a set of mirrored variations in his *There and Back Again* [14], which takes a trip through musical history: starting from the Baroque, it progresses phrase by phrase through the centuries, past the twelve-tone to microtonal, before gradually returning to the beginning. In *...se sillan...*⁵ [15] **Veli-Matti Puumala** (Kaustinen, 1965) presents a piece premised on extremes, contrasts, colours and relentlessness. In six connected sections, for a long time it seems not to want to relate to Colombi, but towards the end one realises that it has been moving closer and closer to the theme, without ever completely giving in to it.

50 notes en 3 variations [16] by **Pascal Dusapin** (Nancy, 1955) is a miniature of three parts and exactly 50 notes: it starts with a *pizzicato* variation which fragments the *Chiaccona* theme, moves on to a meditation on colours and contours and finishes with a wash of colour from a long C natural down to a long C sharp. *Colombi Variation* [17] by **Kimmo Hakola** (Jyväskylä, 1958) is, like much of his music, a crazily extroverted fantasy breaking down any barriers of genre, style and received ideas of what is acceptable. In his *Chiaccona – after*

⁵ Another play on my name: although ‘se sillan’ poetically suggests something like ‘that, near a bridge’ in Finnish, it is also an anagram of *Anssille*, ‘for Anssi’.

Colombi [18] **Tan Dun** (Si Mao, Hunan, 1957) makes a cultural transformation typical of this composer in turning a strict quote of the theme into a Chinese melody – even the cello sounds like some ancient instrument and the word ‘Chiacona’ shouted by the cellist becomes part of some old ritual. *Tiny Colombi* [19] by **Marc Neikrug** (New York, 1946) combines in the theme of the original with the musical letters of my name, *A-n-(e)S-SI*, adding the tongue-in-cheek instruction at the end: ‘continue until finnish’. *Locus on Colombi’s Chiacona* [20] by **Joji Yuasa** (Koriyama, Fukushima, 1929) is a short variation of twelve-tone ascents and descents across the entire register of the cello, stopping on the notes of the theme. *Arietta (after Colombi)* [21] by **Ryan Wigglesworth** (Sheffield, 1979, making him the youngest of these composers) is a beautiful improvisation-like song, which starts by quoting letters from my first name.

Drammatico [22] by **Colin Matthews** (London, 1946) is the only one of the variations to have a part for electronics. That consists of multiple synthesised cellos playing one by one all the notes of the theme on top of one another in a very low register while the real cellist races through anxious virtuosic passages, which start with the interval A–E flat, again derived from my name. **Kaija Saariaho** (Helsinki, 1952) follows, in her *Dreaming Chaconne* [23], the harmonic progression of the Colombi with trills, tremolos, glissandos and natural harmonics, creating such a wonderfully rich sound-world that one barely notices the constant underlying presence of the *Chiacona*. The *Preludio e Ciaccona* [24] by **Ivan Fedele** (Lecce, 1953) is another extremely virtuosic piece, constantly scuttling here and there. He divides the scale into sixth-tones, making the fast passages even more mysterious. **Vinko Globokar** (Anderny, 1934) writes about his *Idée Fixe* [25] thus:

The right hand of the cellists is injured and in a sling, he can only play with his left hand. In this piece – which wants to be virtuosic and modern – the voice of the cellist introduces an ‘Idée Fixe’. This originates possibly from the time the cellist first encountered the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. The ‘Idée Fixe’ may be passing, silent, or even obsessive, to the point of endangering the control and mastery of the performance.

The *Variation libre et sombre* [26] by **Gualtiero Dazzi** (Milan, 1960) creates a haunting and passionate atmosphere through very simple slow progressions, following the *Chiacona* at a distance. **Tapio Tuomela** (Kuusamo, 1958) responded to the request with *Idulla* (which means ‘germinating’ in Finnish) [27]. It is a short fantasy, perhaps more closely related to his image of my cello-playing than directly to the theme. It starts by simply colouring one note and ends in unpitched tapping of the bow. *A Fancy for Anssi* [28] by **Betsy Jolas** (Paris, 1926 – and thus the most senior of the composers gathered here) is in two distinct moods, the first a fast series of reminiscences of fragments from the *Chiacona*, the second meditatively muted, turning around and even quoting the letters of BACH. These two moods become more and more intimately mixed with each other, finally becoming one. In *A Variation* [29] by **Miroslav Srnka** (Prague, 1975) a quickening pulse progresses into a tremolo through slides, harmonics and double stops. Having reached the tremolo it finally finds the *Chiacona* stretched into such wide intervals that it appears not so much as a melody as a vast harmonic landscape. *Anssimmetry* [30] by **Luca Francesconi** (Milan, 1956) is a very free fantasy based on memories of Colombi and Baroque forms, reminding me of the extreme inventiveness of Frescobaldi’s wildest

toccatas. After an agitated opening it takes the cello through all its paces before eventually hitting to a wall a little too thick to penetrate. Finally, *Duello* ('Duel') [31] by **Magnus Lindberg** (Helsinki, 1958) is a fight between the *Chiacona* and the letters of my full name, even using my middle name, Ville. The two 'melodies' try to co-exist, but then have it out and finally Colombi wins the battle, the cellist once again becoming just a name in history. In my case the consolation is that, even if my name has to admit defeat, I am the one left playing the *Chiacona* theme, suggesting that without the cellist Colombi won't survive either.

The Finnish cellist **Anssi Karttunen** is one of the most renowned and versatile musicians in the classical-music world today and enjoys a busy career as a soloist and chamber-music player. He performs – on modern cello, Classical and Baroque cellos and on violoncello piccolo – all the standard cello works but has also discovered many forgotten masterpieces and arranged a number of pieces for the instrument.

He is a passionate advocate of contemporary music and has given over 130 world premieres, among them Magnus Lindberg's Cello Concerto with Orchestre de Paris, Esa-Pekka Salonen's *Mania* with Avanti!, Martin Matalon's Cello Concerto with Orchestre National de France and Luca Francesconi's Cello Concerto with RAI Torino. The Boston Symphony Orchestra commissioned a concerto from Kaija Saariaho for him, *Notes on Light*, which had its first performance in February 2007, since when he has performed it over fifty times.

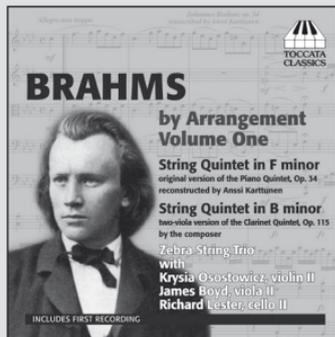


The orchestras with which Anssi Karttunen has worked include the Philadelphia, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philharmonia, BBC Symphony, London Sinfonietta, NHK Orchestra, Tokyo Philharmonic, Tokyo Metropolitan, Orchestre de Paris, Orchestre National de France, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, SWR Symphony Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic, Ensemble Modern, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Residentie Orchestra, Dutch Radio Philharmonic, Dutch Radio Chamber Orchestra, Barcelona Opera Orchestra, Barcelona Symphony Orchestra, Swedish Radio Orchestra, Danish Radio Orchestra, Oslo Philharmonic, RAI Torino, Luxembourg Philharmonic, Finnish Radio Orchestra, Helsinki Philharmonic, Avanti! and many others. He performs at major festivals in Europe including Edinburgh, Salzburg, Lockenhaus, Spoleto, Berlin, Venice, Montpellier, Strasbourg and Helsinki.

His discography ranges from the complete Beethoven works for cello and fortepiano (on period instruments) and twentieth-century works for solo cello to concerti with London Sinfonietta and Los Angeles Philharmonic under Esa-Pekka Salonen. He is a founding member of www.petals.org, a non-profit organisation for the production and sales of CDs on the Internet. In 1996 he appeared on the first contemporary-music CD-ROM: *Prisma*, presenting the music of Kaija Saariaho. Deutsche Grammophon issued a DVD of Tan Dun's *The Map* for cello, orchestra and video and a CD of Henri Dutilleux's *Tout un monde lointain*, and Sony Classical released the cello concerti by Lindberg, Saariaho and Salonen on CD.

Anssi Karttunen was born in Helsinki in 1960. His teachers included Erkki Rautio, William Pleeth, Jacqueline du Pré and Tibor de Machula. Between 1994 and 1998, he was artistic director of the Avanti! Chamber Orchestra. He was also artistic director of the 1995 Helsinki Biennale and the Suvisoitto Festival in Porvoo, Finland, from 1994 to 1997. From 1999 to 2005 he was principal cellist of the London Sinfonietta. He has also appeared as conductor. He plays a cello by Francesco Ruggeri from around 1680.

Also from Anssi Karttunen on Toccata Classics



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a double piano sonata – in which form it was published – before finally arriving at the piano quintet version we know today. The original version was destroyed by its hard-to-please composer so the reconstruction here by Anssi Karttunen, cellist in the Zebra String Trio, is conjectural. [...] it is wonderful to hear this music using one single family of instruments. This allows for an equality of timbre and texture that somehow allows the structure and musical material to be more instantly apparent. Add to that a group of performers of the highest technical and musical standing and you are in for a performance that is as pleasurable as it is revelatory. I had not heard of the Zebra string trio as an ensemble but the players who make it up are well known. To their ranks are added some of Britain's finest chamber players – very much a gathering of friends and kindred spirits I sense.

The result is as exciting a disc of chamber music as I have heard this year.”

Nick Barnard, MusicWeb

Full review at www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2012/June12/Brahms_by_Arrangement_TOCC0066.htm#ixzz22UeCGVd5.



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Mystery Variations is available
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To celebrate the 50th birthday of the Finnish cellist Anssi Karttunen in 2010 his wife, Muriel von Braun, and colleague and compatriot Kaija Saariaho wrote to a number of composers with whose music Karttunen had been working, asking each to write a variation on the *Chiaccona per basso solo* by the Italian composer Giuseppe Colombi (1635–94) – perhaps the earliest work in the history of the cello. The composers were not told who else was involved in the project, and Karttunen agreed to perform the music before he had seen it – hence the title, *Mystery Variations*. These 30 variations thus link the very beginning of the cello repertoire with music by some of the most distinguished composers of the present day and, with their distant echo of Beethoven's 32 'Diabelli' Variations, provide a showcase for the extraordinary resourcefulness of contemporary cello technique.



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MYSTERY VARIATIONS ON GIUSEPPE COLOMBI'S CHIACONA

1	Giuseppe Colombi: <i>Chiaccona</i>	2:05	18	Tan Dun: <i>Chiaccona – after Colombi</i>	1:34
2	Jouni Kaipainen: <i>Anything Goes</i>	2:28	19	Marc Neikrug: <i>Tiny Colombi</i>	1:04
3	Martin Matalon: <i>Polvo</i>	1:05	20	Joji Yuasa: <i>Locus on Colombi's Chiaccona</i>	1:24
4	Roger Reynolds: <i>Colombi Daydream</i>	5:54	21	Ryan Wigglesworth: <i>Arietta (after Colombi)</i>	1:21
5	Denis Cohen: <i>Chaconne</i>	3:30	22	Colin Matthews: <i>Drammatico</i>	1:21
6	Jukka Tiensuu: <i>bLevelein</i>	3:36	23	Kaija Saariaho: <i>Dreaming Chaconne</i>	3:22
7	Steven Stucky: <i>Partite sopra un basso</i>	1:26	24	Ivan Fedele: <i>Preludio e Ciaccona</i>	2:18
8	Esa-Pekka Salonen: <i>Sarabande per un Coyote</i>	2:32	25	Vinko Globokar: <i>Idée Fixe</i>	5:10
9	Edmund Campion: <i>Something to Go On</i>	1:36	26	Gualtiero Dazzi: <i>variation sombre e libre d'après Chiaccona</i>	3:36
10	Rolf Wallin: <i>Ciacconetta</i>	1:23	27	Tapio Tuomela: <i>Idulla</i>	1:23
11	Pablo Ortiz: <i>paloma</i>	2:18	28	Betsy Jolas: <i>A Fancy for Anssi</i>	2:05
12	Paavo Heininen: <i>Triple Antienne</i>	5:02	29	Miroslav Srnka: <i>A Variation</i>	1:51
13	Anders Hillborg: <i>Still and Flow</i>	2:16	30	Luca Francesconi: <i>Ansimmetry</i>	2:30
14	Fred Lerdaahl: <i>There and back again</i>	3:38	31	Magnus Lindberg: <i>Duello</i>	2:40
15	Veli-Matti Puumala: <i>...se sillan...</i>	4:01			
16	Pascal Dusapin: <i>50 notes en 3 Variations</i>	1:47			
17	Kimmo Hakola: <i>Colombi Variation</i>	3:27			

TT 79:57

Anssi Karttunen, cello

FIRST RECORDING



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