

THE PEDAL PIANO

'I remember what a strange impression was produced by the sight of this graceful and dainty person perched on a huge case containing the lower strings of the pedal-board [...] her pretty legs darting most adroitly to reach the different pedals of the keyboard she had at her feet'



written in the score,' he says. 'It also triggers young people to listen to music.'

Early in his career, Prosseda championed neglected composers for the piano such as Salieri, Rossini and Caetani. He has also recorded the complete piano works of Luigi Dallapiccola and Goffredo Petrassi. Since 2004, he has gained international fame for his Mendelssohn discoveries. He has given premieres of more than 40 previously unpublished piano works by the composer, including the Third Piano Concerto, reconstructed by Marcello Bufalini and recorded by Prosseda with the Gewandhaus Orchestra and Riccardo Chailly. Last year, he finished recording all Mendelssohn's piano music on nine discs for Decca. He has also edited the publication of 'new' Mendelssohn works and founded the Associazione Mendelssohn Italia, to promote Mendelssohn's music and heritage. In addition, he conceived the 'i-Mendelssohn' app, produced together with the Mendelssohn Stiftung in Leipzig.

PROSSEDA HAS COMMISSIONED many composers to write for the pedal piano, including Cristian Carrara, Ennio and Andrea Morricone, Giuseppe Lupis, Alessandro Solbiati and Michael Glenn Williams. Michael Nyman is in the process of writing him a concerto.

He taught himself to play the instrument: 'I had to develop a pedal technique that is quite different from that needed to play the organ. It requires a particular sensitivity of touch, because the pedals are connected to a piano action with hammers and strings. So a more pianistic approach to pedal technique is required for a rich sonority and good control of dynamics and legato, using the weight of the leg and transferring this weight from one note to another. For some pianissimo notes, a single toe will do.' It took some experimenting with various types of footwear, socks and even jazz dance shoes before he settled on a shoe designed for yoga and Pilates.

The hands are also required to play differently from on a normal piano, as the player's balance and seating position are often altered by the constant movement of the legs. The sustaining pedal is seldom used, as both feet are simply too busy playing the pedal board. Therefore, the general sound is dryer and more