

ALFRED BRENDEL

The SPA Recordings

BEETHOVEN • LISZT
STRAUSS • BUSONI

Ludwig van Beethoven

Flute Sonata in B-flat Major, Anh4

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|------|
| 1 | I. Allegro | 7:45 |
| 2 | II. Polonaise | 3:54 |
| 3 | III. Largo | 4:08 |
| 4 | IV. Thema mit Variationen. Allegretto | 6:57 |

Trio for Piano, Flute and Bassoon in G Major, WoO37

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|---|-----------------------------------|------|
| 5 | I. Allegro | 7:59 |
| 6 | II. Adagio | 5:25 |
| 7 | III. Thema andante con variazioni | 9:55 |

with **Camillo Wanausek**, *flute*

Leo Cermak, *bassoon* (WoO37)

Franz Liszt

Weihnachtsbaum, S. 186

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|----|---|------|
| 8 | I. Psallite, altes Weihnachtslied. Allegro non troppo | 2:47 |
| 9 | II. O heilige Nacht! Weihnachtslied nach einer alten Weise. Lento | 4:44 |
| 10 | III. Die Hirten an der Krippe, in dulci júbilo. Allegretto pastorale | 3:16 |
| 11 | IV. Adeste Fideles, gleichsam als Marsch der heiligen drei Könige. Tempo di marcia moderato | 2:22 |
| 12 | V. Scherzoso, Man zündet die Kerzen des Baumes an. Presto | 1:56 |
| 13 | VI. Carillon. Molto vivace | 1:48 |
| 14 | VII. Schlummerlied - Berceuse. Andante | 3:57 |
| 15 | VIII. Altes provenzalisches Weihnachtslied. Allegro giocoso | 1:20 |
| 16 | IX. Abendglocken. Andantino affettuoso | 4:25 |
| 17 | X. Ehemals. Andante | 4:11 |
| 18 | XI. Ungarisch. Maestoso, tempo di marcia | 1:58 |
| 19 | XII. Polnisch. Andante - tempo di mazurka | 6:37 |

Richard Strauss

Fünf Klavierstücke, Op. 3, TrV 105

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|------|
| 20 | I. Andante | 5:46 |
| 21 | II. Allegro vivace scherzando | 3:27 |
| 22 | III. Largo | 7:08 |
| 23 | IV. Allegro | 3:51 |
| 24 | V. Allegro marcatisimo | 5:02 |

Piano Sonata in B Minor, Op. 5, TrV 103

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|----|---------------------------------------|------|
| 25 | I. Allegro molto appassionato | 7:20 |
| 26 | II. Adagio cantabile | 5:58 |
| 27 | III. Scherzo. Presto | 2:27 |
| 28 | IV. Finale. Allegretto vivo - Animato | 6:15 |

Ferruccio Busoni

Fantasia contrappuntistica, BV 256

- | | | |
|----|-------------------|------|
| 29 | Preludio corale - | 9:01 |
| 30 | Fuga I - | 4:18 |
| 31 | Fuga II - | 2:49 |
| 32 | Fuga III - | 6:35 |
| 33 | Intermezzo - | 1:13 |
| 34 | Variatione I - | 1:34 |
| 35 | Variatione II - | 1:05 |
| 36 | Variatione III - | 1:09 |
| 37 | Cadenza - | 1:43 |
| 38 | Fuga IV - | 1:57 |
| 39 | Corale - | 1:05 |
| 40 | Stretta | 1:51 |

Johann Sebastian Bach arr. Busoni

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 41 | <i>Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ, BWV 639</i> (BV B 27 No. 3) | 3:34 |
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Alfred Brendel, *piano*

While exact recording date information is not available, these recordings were made in Vienna between 1951-52 (Liszt) and 1952-54 (Beethoven, Strauss, Busoni)

Liszt released in 1952 as SPA-26

Beethoven released in 1952 as SPA-28

Strauss released in 1954 as SPA-48

Busoni and Bach-Busoni released in 1956 as SPA-56

Executive producer for SPA: **F. Charles Adler**

Engineer and editor unknown

Cover image: original SPA Records generic cover graphic

Reissue produced, restored and mastered for **Toblach Ausgabe** by **Gene Gaudette**, [Urlicht AudioVisual](#)

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

The successful launch of the long playing phonograph record at the very end of the 1940s proved to be a boon not only for major record companies around the world but for independent record labels looking not only to issue major works in sound quality much improved from that of 78rpm discs but to satisfy an audience with a suddenly growing interest in a wider range of music. Innovative artists and producers began to plumb the depths of baroque and early classical music, contemporary works, and masterpieces by composers whose "neglect" on record often, as in the cases of Mahler and Bruckner, had more to do with the economics and logistics of recording long works with large ensembles than audience popularity. This was certainly the case with Mahler, as Sybille Werner's groundbreaking recent research into Mahler performances following his death has shown.

Independent labels were especially drawn to Vienna as a center of activity, due not only to the plentiful pool of excellent musicians but knowledgeable technicians familiar with then-new tape recording technology – all very affordable to American-based labels due to a highly favorable exchange rate. Some of the emerging labels' top producers had close ties to Vienna – including Remington's Marcel Prawy, Westminster's Kurt List, and an expatriate conductor who had settled in upstate New York's vacation mecca, Saratoga Springs: Frederick Charles Adler.

Born in London in 1889 to an American father and German mother, Adler became a pupil of Felix Mottl and Gustav Mahler, and served as chorus master for preparation of the latter's monumental *Eighth Symphony*. Through 1933 he ran a music publishing house; when the Nazis rose to power, Adler emigrated to the United States and became a prime force behind Saratoga's Spa Music Festival. In 1950, with financial help from his socialite wife and a business partner, he founded

a new record label: Society of Participating Artists, Inc. (with the very intentional acronym SPA).

SPA is best remembered for its groundbreaking first recordings of Mahler's *Third* and *Sixth Symphonies*, Anton Bruckner's *Third Symphony*, and Charles Ives's *Second Symphony*, all played by the Wiener Symphoniker (under various pseudonyms) conducted by Adler. A primary focus of the label was on previously unrecorded repertoire, revealing a treasure-trove of discoveries from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by composers including George Antheil, Werner Josten, Silvestre Revueltas, Erich Zeisl, Eugen d'Albert, and Artur Schnabel. Adler himself had a particular knack for matching first-rank artists with rare and previously unrecorded repertoire by Mozart, Beethoven, CPE Bach, and Schumann. In the case of one artist, the choice of repertoire would launch one of the most illustrious recording careers of the century and beyond.

As with fellow Viennese pianists Paul Badura-Skoda and Jörg Demus, **Alfred Brendel** started his recording career with independent labels in Vienna. While it had been believed that Brendel's recording of Franz Liszt's *Christmas Tree* was his first commercial recording, further research suggests that his recording of Prokofiev's *Fifth Piano Concerto* with the Wiener Symphoniker conducted by Jonathan Sternberg, made on January 25, 1951 for Period (and reissued shortly thereafter by Vox) was in fact his first. The Liszt was recorded later that year or in early 1952. Brendel made three additional recordings for SPA: Beethoven's *Flute Sonata in B flat major, Anh4* and *Trio in G Major for Flute, Bassoon and Piano, WoO37* (with flutist Camillo Wanausek and bassoonist Leo Cermak), Richard Strauss's *Piano Sonata in B Minor, Op. 5, TrV 103* and *Five Pieces, Op. 3, TrV105*, and Busoni's *Fantasia contrappuntistica, BV 256* coupled with the composer's transcription of *Bach's Choral prelude "Ich ruf zu Dir Herr", BV B 27 after BWV 639*.

Liszt's *Christmas Tree* – a suite of 12 pieces – was composed in 1873–76, with revisions in 1881. Not all of the works have an explicitly seasonal theme, notably the final three movements, "Ehemals" (a title which invokes nostalgic memories of past times), "Ungarisch" (one cannot help but notice similarities to rhythms and themes in the *19 Hungarian Rhapsodies*) and "Polnisch" (a grand polonaise). While the first ten pieces are technically less challenging than much of Liszt's mature works, they do require an ear for color and mood – attributes which Brendel uses to impressive effect.

The two Ludwig van Beethoven rarities were practically unknown until decades after the composer's death. The *Flute Sonata*, attributed to Beethoven, was found amongst his papers after his death – though, interestingly, the manuscript was not in his hand. It remained unpublished until 1906. Analysis of the Mozartean *Trio* suggests that it was composed when Beethoven was in his teens. As with the *Flute Sonata*, it was found among his papers after his death but remained unpublished until 1888, when it appeared in Breitkopf & Härtel's supplement to his complete works.

The piano works by Richard Strauss are among his earliest, and were composed when he was a teenager. The influence of Beethoven and Schubert resounds strongly, but there is a Mendelssohnian feel to much of the melody and harmonization. Brendel has a clear affinity for this music – and brings out an expressive range that is missing in the handful of other recordings of these works.

The most well known – and sought-after – of Brendel's SPA recordings is the recording debut Busoni's *Fantasia contrappuntistica*, a masterpiece of romantic fugal writing that owes a great deal to Johann Sebastian Bach's *Die Kunst der Fuge* (the third fugue's subject is in fact B flat-A-C-B natural, which in German letter notation spells B-A-C-H). While Brendel has recorded Busoni infrequently, he has long been a

champion and exponent of Busoni's enormously challenging piano works, and his first Busoni recording remains a benchmark that arguably has never been surpassed.

– **Audra Fendrick**

PRODUCER'S NOTE: The present set was remastered from LPs in my own collection – copies of all of the original SPA LPs plus the Delta reissue of the Liszt program. The high frequency response on the Liszt is restricted on all commercial issues, but has been sonically improved with discrete equalization. Application of speed stabilization and correction has yielded additional benefits to these landmark recordings.

– **Gene Gaudette**

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