



The CEUS project

Summary of each CD and
background information



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Foreword

This document summarises each of the CEUS project CDs listed below. Background information (about Ampico, Ampico piano rolls, making these CDs etc) is included along with an outline of the events—spread over 30 years—that culminated in these recordings. On the last page I reflect on why these recordings. What drove me?

Peter Phillips (2010)

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The CEUS project

Conceived and organised by US Fulbright Scholar Albert Frantz, now a piano teacher in Vienna, this extraordinary recording event took place 2–11 March 2007 at Paul Badura-Skoda's recording studio in Vienna. The aim was to record performances of Peter Phillips' MIDI files of Ampico piano rolls on a 2006 Bösendorfer Imperial grand piano fitted with Bösendorfer's new CEUS (as in Zeus) high-end computerised player system. Bösendorfer sponsored the event by loaning the piano and having it tuned each day. Recordings were made in DVD audio format by engineers familiar with recording this type of piano.

Main points

The recordings occupy 12 CDs that contain 166 classical works (174 tracks), written by 46 composers played by 62 pianists, of which 28 are considered "Golden Age" pianists (trained and performing in the 19th century). Total playing time is 14 hours, 22 minutes.

CDs PAA-001 to PAA-006 present programs of music based on style (eg, bravura, encore, impressionist, Spanish, Viennese). The remaining six CDs are based on composers and one on a pianist (Moiseiwitsch). There are two CDs of music by Chopin.

The pianists range from the legendary to the lesser known. Some were born in the 1850s, and all but two were born sometime in the 19th century. All are highly accomplished, and many made gramophone recordings. Some of the Ampico piano roll performances on these CDs have not previously been issued as recordings, such as Dohnányi playing his *Rhapsodies*, Fritz Kreisler on piano, Moiseiwitsch roll recordings.

The method of recreating these performances has been achieved with computer files (called *erolls*, a MIDI version of the original piano rolls), which were played into a state-of-the-art "player" piano, thereby eliminating the original pneumatic technology. The Bösendorfer Imperial piano used in these recordings was virtually new, and at the time, with its CEUS player system, was the only one of its kind.

The Imperial piano, first developed around 1900, is one of the largest grand pianos made and has a unique sound quality. Interestingly, the instrument used in these recordings had the same tonal quality as a 1927 Imperial sitting alongside.

The CD case artwork includes original photos of nearly 50 pianists in the collection, as well as rare promotional Ampico artwork. The booklet notes give a short biography of every pianist, many of the composers and something about each work. There is also background information about the project, Ampico and Ampico roll technology. The total word count is over 30,000.

Links to CDs or tracks

CD or track downloads are available from the Naxos Classicsonline service. Booklets are provided with a CD download, but not with individual tracks. The following link takes you to the *e/eced* label, the home page of the series.

<http://www.classicsonline.com/e/eced/>

The following pages describe each of the 12 CDs in order of CD number. Links are provided to the Naxos download service for each CD on the page describing the CD. Links are also listed below.

[Concert Hall PAA-001](#)

[Recital Hall PAA-002](#)

[Reflections PAA-003](#)

[Echoes of Vienna PAA-004](#)

[Spanish PAA-005](#)

[Rarities PAA-006](#)

[Moiseiwitsch PAA-007](#)

[Liszt PAA-008](#)

[Chopin–Etudes and Nocturnes PAA-009](#)

[Chopin–Major Works PAA-010](#)

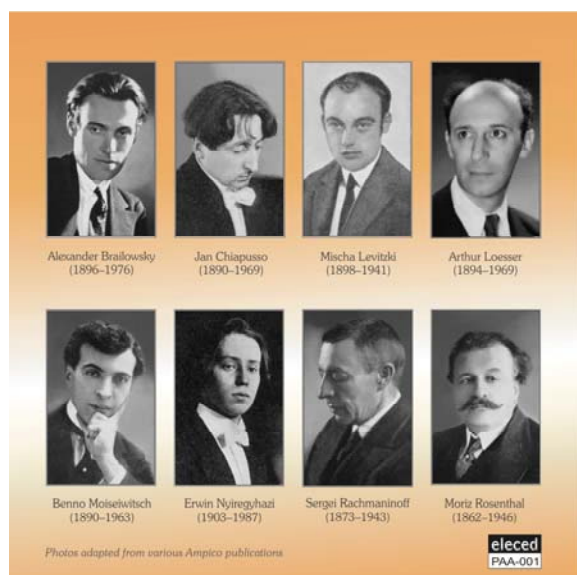
[Beethoven, Brahms... PAA-011](#)

[Wagner & Liszt PAA-012](#)

Concert Hall (PA-001)

Legendary pianists, some from the “Golden Age”, performing a program of bravura works from the Romantic repertoire. Some of the pieces on this CD still feature in concert hall recitals or piano competitions. Several works may not be so familiar, such as track 7, a work reminiscent of Liszt by Norwegian composer Halfdan Cleve. Dohnányi’s *Rhapsody* Op.11 No.3 (track 9) was very popular in its time, but is not often heard today.

Pianists



Alexander Brailowsky (1896–1976), a Russian pianist who became a French citizen at age 30.

Jan Chiapusso (1890–1969) born in Java of Dutch and Italian parentage, settled in America.

Lester Donahue (1895–?) American pianist

Mischa Levitzki (1898–1941). Although his parents were naturalised US citizens, he spent the first eight years of his life in Russia, later moving to America.

Arthur Loesser (1894–1969) American pianist.

Benno Moiseiwitsch (1890–1963), Russian pianist who settled in England.

Erwin Nyiregyhazi (1903–1987) a child prodigy born in Budapest, settled in America.

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943), Russian born pianist and composer, left Russia in 1917, became a US citizen shortly before his death.

Moriz Rosenthal (1862–1946), born in Poland, settled in America.

Composers

Halfdan Cleve

Erno Dohnányi

Manuel de Falla

Henri Kowalski

Franz Liszt

Camille Saint-Saëns

Franz Schubert

Johann Strauss–Moriz Rosenthal

Tschaikowsky–Grainger

Richard Wagner

Track listing

- 1 The Erlking (Schubert) Arthur Loesser
- 2 Ritual Fire Dance (Falla) Alexander Brailowsky
- 3 Rhapsodie d’Auvergne (Saint-Saëns) Alexander Brailowsky
- 4 Concert Study No.3 (Liszt) Mischa Levitzki
- 5 Flower Waltz Paraphrase (Tschaikowsky–Grainger) Nyiregyhazi
- 6 Hungarian Rhapsody No.6 (Liszt) Mischa Levitzki
- 7 Ballade Op.8 (Cleve) Erwin Nyiregyhazi
- 8 Carnival of Vienna (Strauss–Rosenthal) Moriz Rosenthal
- 9 Rhapsody Op.11 No.3 (Dohnányi) Lester Donahue
- 10 Impromptu Op.90 No.4 (Schubert) Sergei Rachmaninoff
- 11 Wild Hunt (Etude No.8) (Liszt) Jan Chiapusso
- 12 Salut a Pesth (Kowalski) Erwin Nyiregyhazi
- 13 Liebestod (Wagner–Liszt) Benno Moiseiwitsch

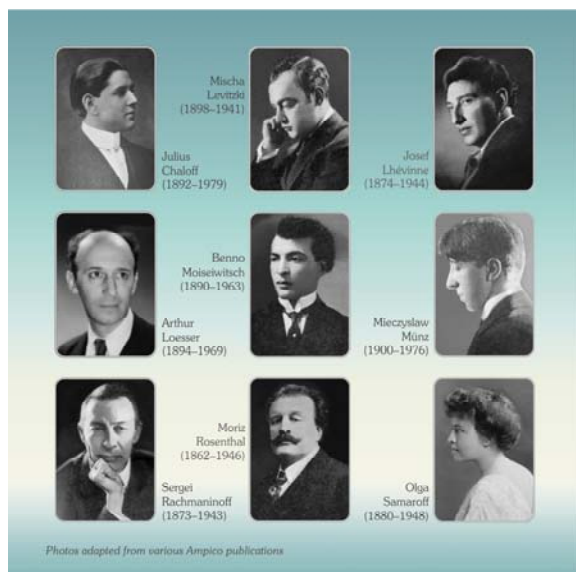
Highlights

- * Three huge performances by Erwin Nyiregyhazi, sometimes regarded as “a second Liszt”. His playing is well supported by the big sound of the Bösendorfer Imperial piano. Since the release of Nyiregyhazi’s biography, *Lost Genius* by Kevin Bazzana, there has been considerable interest in Nyiregyhazi’s recordings. His roll performances have not previously been issued on record.
- * Remarkable performance of a solo piano version of Saint-Saëns’ *Rhapsodie d’Auvergne*, played by Alexander Brailowsky
- * Benno Moiseiwitsch’s reading of *Liebestod*, his only complete recording of the work
- * Moriz Rosenthal playing his own *Carnival of Vienna*
- * Rachmaninoff playing Schubert’s *Impromptu Op. 90, No. 4*.

Recital Hall (PAA-002)

The works on this CD might be heard in a piano recital, a piano competition, or perhaps as encores. Many of the pieces are from the Romantic repertoire, which suits the style of the pianists playing them, as some of these are now recognised as “Golden Age” pianists, schooled in the Romantic style of the 19th century. Certainly they are all veterans of concert and recital performances.

Pianists



Victoria Boshko (1874–1949) born in Russia, performed in USA, Europe, Russia.

Julius Chaloff (1892–1979) American pianist, son Serge was a noted jazz baritone saxophonist.

Ignaz Friedman (1882–1948), born in Poland, died in Australia on Australia Day, 1948.

José Iturbi (1895–1980, born in Spain, died in USA. It's his playing behind the 1945 movie *A Song to Remember* with Cornel Wilde as Chopin.

Ernesto Lecuona (1895–1963), born in Cuba, skilled pianist, wrote many songs, including *Siboney*.

Mischa Levitzki (1898–1941). Although his parents were naturalised US citizens, he spent the first eight years of his life in Russia, later moving to America.

Josef Lhévinne (1874–1944), born in Russia, interned in Berlin during WW1, settled in USA.

Arthur Loesser (1894–1969) American pianist. Half brother, Frank Loesser wrote Broadway shows *Guys and Dolls* & *The Most Happy Fella*.

Benno Moiseiwitsch (1890–1963), Russian pianist who settled in England.

Mieczyslaw Münz (1900–1976) born in Poland, settled in America.

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943), Russian born pianist and composer, left Russia in 1917, became a US citizen shortly before his death.

Moriz Rosenthal (1862–1946), born in Poland, settled in America.

Olga Samaroff (1880–1948) born Lucy Mary Agnes Hickenlooper in San Antonio, Texas. Taught at Julliard, was married to Leopold Stokowski.

Composers

Albéniz	Liszt
Bortkiewicz (Sergei)	Paganini-Liszt
Brahms	Rachmaninoff
Chopin	Strauss–Schulz-Evler
Friedman–Gartner	Strauss–Schütt
Lecuona	Strauss–Tausig
Levitzki	Vogrich

Track listing

- 1 Etude Op.25 No.6 (Chopin) Moriz Rosenthal
- 2 La Campanella (Paganini–Liszt) Josef Lhévinne
- 3 Sequidillas Op.232 No.5 (Albéniz) José Iturbi
- 4 Malagueña (Lecuona) Ernesto Lecuona
- 5 Blue Danube Arabesques (Strauss–Schulz-Evler) Levitzki
- 6 Etude Op.15 No.8 (Bortkiewicz) Moriz Rosenthal
- 7 Barcarolle Op.10 No.3 (Rachmaninoff) Rachmaninoff
- 8 Enchanted Nymph (Levitzki) Mischa Levitzki
- 9 Kiss Waltz Paraphrase (Strauss–Schütt) Ignaz Friedman
- 10 Staccato Caprice (Vogrich) Victoria Boshko
- 11 Nocturne Op.27 No.1 (Chopin) Olga Samaroff
- 12 Capriccio Op.76 No.2 (Brahms) Benno Moiseiwitsch
- 13 Hungarian Rhapsody No.15 (Liszt) Arthur Loesser
- 14 The Moth (Strauss–Tausig) Mieczyslaw Münz
- 15 Nocturne Op.48 No.1 (Chopin) Mischa Levitzki
- 16 Vienna Dance No.1 (Friedman–Gartner) Julius Chaloff
- 17 Annie Laurie (Transcription) (arr. Levitzki) Levitzki

Highlights

- * Moriz Rosenthal, a “Golden Age” pianist with links to Chopin and Liszt, playing a work by Chopin
- * Ernesto Lecuona performing his *Malagueña*, recorded shortly after he composed it
- * Mischa Levitzki playing his *Enchanted Nymph* and an arrangement of the old song *Annie Laurie*
- * José Iturbi's performance of *Sequidillas* by Albéniz – a 1936 roll recording
- * *Etude Op.15 No.8* by Sergei Bortkiewicz, and the brisk *Staccato Caprice* by Max Vogrich.

Reflections (PAA-003)

The works on this CD were recorded on piano roll when the written score tended to be more of a guide to the interpretation, unlike today's more reverential attitude. From the romantic and impressionist repertoire, each piece is played in the style of the times, giving a program of music by numerous composers performed by a range of pianists that invites you to relax and slip back to another time.

Some of the pianists on this CD were performing in the so-called "Golden Age" of pianism, others trained in the early 20th century. Several were contemporaries and champions of the impressionist composers Debussy and Ravel. The oldest pianist is Carreño (born 1853), the youngest is Suskind (1898).



Composers

Chopin

Debussy

Liszt

Mascagni

Rachmaninoff

Ravel

Pianists

Brailowsky (1896–1976)

Carreño (1853–1917)

Copeland (1882–1971)

Godowsky (1870–1938)

Lhévinne (1874–1944)

Mascagni (1863–1945)

Moiseiwitsch (1890–1963)

Ornstein (1893–2002)

Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)

Samaroff (1880–1948)

Schmitz (1889–1949)

Suskind (1898–1975)

Wittgenstein (1886–1961)

Track listing

- 1 Arabesque No.1 (Debussy) Leo Ornstein
- 2 Berceuse Op.57 (Chopin) Teresa Carreño
- 3 Beside the Spring (Liszt) Alexander Brailowsky
- 4 Afternoon of a Faun (Debussy) George Copeland
- 5 Andante Spianato (Chopin) Leopold Godowsky
- 6 Cavalleria Rusticana (Mascagni) Pietro Mascagni
- 7 Gardens in the Rain (Debussy) E. Robert Schmitz
- 8 Gondoliera (Liszt) Josef Lhévinne
- 9 Reflections in the Water (Debussy) Leo Ornstein
- 10 Nocturne Op.9 No.2 (Chopin) Alexander Brailowsky
- 11 Floods of Spring (Rachmaninoff) Milton Suskind
- 12 Impromptu Op.36 No.2 (Chopin) Benno Moiseiwitsch
- 13 Maiden's Wish (Chopin–Liszt) Sergei Rachmaninoff
- 14 Jeux d'eau (Ravel) E. Robert Schmitz
- 15 Liebesleid (Kreisler–Rachmaninoff) Sergei Rachmaninoff
- 16 Clair de Lune (Debussy) Olga Samaroff
- 17 Consolation No.3 (Liszt) Victor Wittgenstein

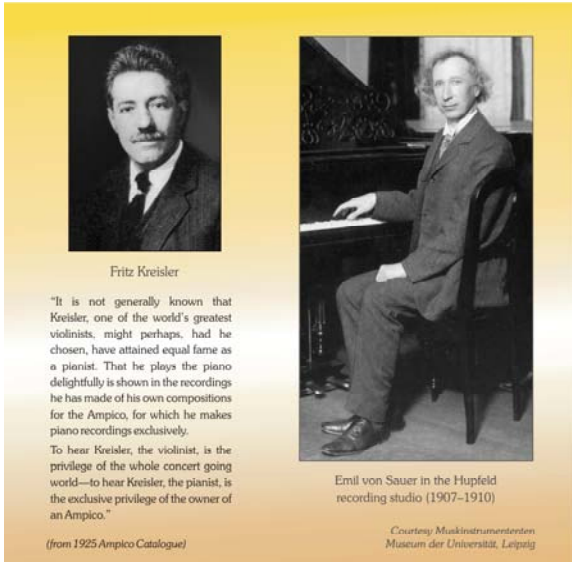
Highlights

- * Solo piano version of *Afternoon of a Faun* written and played by Debussy student George Copeland
- * Leopold Godowsky's lyrical performance of Chopin's *Andante Spianato*, recorded around 1913
- * Pietro Mascagni playing his own *Intermezzo* from *Cavalleria Rusticana*
- * Rachmaninoff playing his transcription of Kreisler's *Liebeslied*
- * Debussy expert E. Robert Schmitz playing Debussy's *Gardens in the Rain*
- * Chopin's *Impromptu Op.36 No.2* played by Benno Moiseiwitsch

Echoes of Vienna (PAA-004)

Home, even today, to some of the world's best known musicians, Vienna has an extraordinary musical heritage that in a small way, is represented on this CD. Virtually all the composers are from Vienna, as are some of the Golden Age pianists whose piano roll recordings have been brought back to life through the Bösendorfer CEUS player system developed in Vienna and installed in that most Viennese of all pianos, a Bösendorfer Imperial. The recordings on this CD were made in Vienna and include transcriptions of Strauss waltzes alongside Fritz Kreisler playing some of his most popular tunes, this time on piano. These are the only recordings Kreisler made as a pianist.

Pianists



Fritz Kreisler

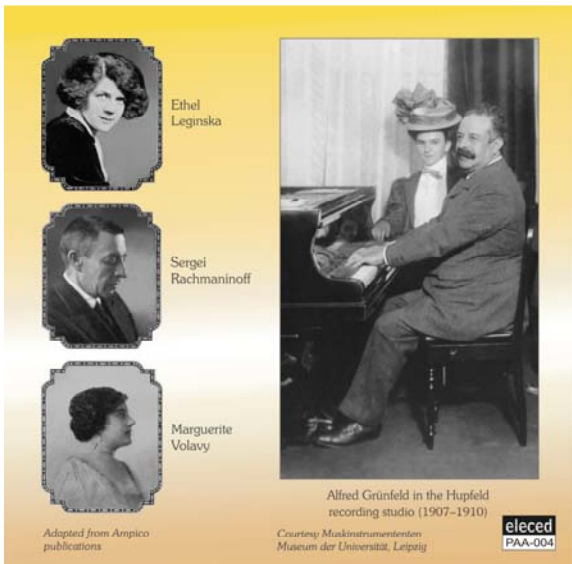
"It is not generally known that Kreisler, one of the world's greatest violinists, might perhaps, had he chosen, have attained equal fame as a pianist. That he plays the piano delightfully is shown in the recordings he has made of his own compositions for the Ampico, for which he makes piano recordings exclusively.

To hear Kreisler, the violinist, is the privilege of the whole concert going world—to hear Kreisler, the pianist, is the exclusive privilege of the owner of an Ampico."

(from 1925 Ampico Catalogue)

Emil von Sauer in the Hupfeld recording studio (1907–1910)

Courtesy Musikinstrumenten-Museum der Universität, Leipzig



Ethel Leginska

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Marguerite Volavy

Alfred Grünfeld in the Hupfeld recording studio (1907–1910)

Courtesy Musikinstrumenten-Museum der Universität, Leipzig

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PAA-004

Alfred Grünfeld (1852–1924)

Fritz Kreisler (1875–1962)

Aurore La Croix

Ethel Leginska (1886–1970)

Nikolai Orloff (1892–1964)

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)

Emil von Sauer (1862–1942)

Marguerite Volavy (1886–1951)

Track listing

- 1 Echo de Vienne (Sauer) Emil von Sauer
- 2 Sounds from Vienna Woods (Strauss–Schütt) Volavy
- 3 Caprice Viennois Op. 2 (Kreisler) Fritz Kreisler
- 4 Liebesfreud (Kreisler–Rachmaninoff) Rachmaninoff
- 5 Entr'acte Op. 46 No. 2 (Kramer–Kreisler) Fritz Kreisler
- 6 Blue Danube Arabesques (Strauss–Schulz-Evler) Leginska
- 7 I'm In Love (Kreisler) Fritz Kreisler
- 8 Viennese Melody (Gärtner–Kreisler) Fritz Kreisler
- 9 Artists Life Waltz (Strauss) Volavy
- 10 Midnight Bells (Heuberger–Kreisler) Fritz Kreisler
- 11 Sweet Rosmarin (Kreisler) Fritz Kreisler
- 12 Voices of Spring Paraphrase (Strauss–Grünfeld) Grünfeld
- 13 Nancy's Farewell (Kreisler) Fritz Kreisler
- 14 Soirées de Vienne 6 (Schubert–Liszt) Orloff
- 15 The Old Refrain (Kreisler) Fritz Kreisler
- 16 One Lives But Once (Strauss–Tausig) La Croix

Highlights

- * Emil von Sauer playing his own *Echo de Vienne*, a work that captures the old Viennese style
- * Rachmaninoff playing his arrangement of Kreisler's *Liebesfreud*
- * Five works by Johann Strauss, four of them transcriptions by different composers
- * Eight performances by Fritz Kreisler of his own compositions or arrangements (he made 14 rolls). A music critic concluded from Kreisler's piano roll recording of *The Old Refrain* that he was equally gifted on the piano as the violin. We believe this CD is the first recording to be issued of Kreisler as a pianist.

Spanish (PAA-005)

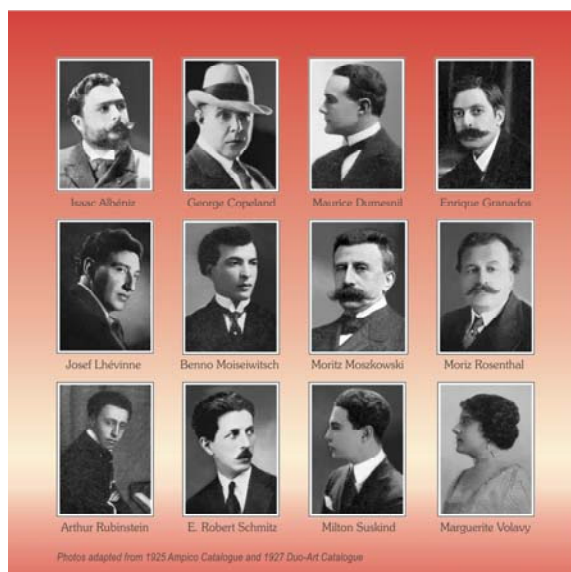
The wide range of Spanish music issued on piano rolls shows how popular it was at the time. American audiences started hearing piano works by Granados in 1913, and recitals during this year are reviewed as having “introduced new” piano pieces by Albéniz. This style of music was immediately accepted, in which even the classically-bent *New York Times* referred (in 1915) to works by Albéniz as being “*comprehensible, explicable, interesting, and it may be said frequently with traits of real musical significance and beauty.*” Reviews of piano recitals at the time show the same enthusiasm for the music, so little wonder piano roll companies issued many works of a Spanish flavour, if not necessarily written by a Spaniard.

The least Spanish composer is Moritz Moszkowski, who excelled in whatever musical genre he wrote in. The three works of his on this CD are usually heard in their orchestral version. Many of the works presented here are possibly better known through their orchestrations or transcriptions for other instruments.

Musicians

Some of the pianists playing these pieces, such as Arthur Rubinstein, Schmitz and Dumesnil were responsible for introducing audiences to works by composers such as Granados and Albéniz, and thereby generally helped popularise Spanish piano music. While the interpretations might differ from how these pieces are typically played today, it’s worth noting that the pianists and the composers were all plying their art at around the same time.

Composers	Pianists
Albéniz	George Copeland (1882–1971)
Chabrier	Maurice Dumesnil (1886–1974)
Falla	Josef Lhévinne (1874–1944)
Granados	Benno Moiseiwitsch (1890–1963)
Moszkowski	Rata Present
	Moriz Rosenthal (1862–1946)
	Arthur Rubinstein (1887–1982)
	E. Robert Schmitz (1889–1949)
	Milton Suskind (1898–1975)
	Marguerite Volavy (1886–1951)



Track listing

- 1 Malagueña “Souvenirs de Voyage” (Albéniz) Copeland
- 2 Suite Española Op.47 No.3 (*Sevilla*) (Albéniz) Lhévinne
- 3 Suite Española Op.47 No.6 (*Aragon*) (Albéniz) Copeland
- 4 España – Rhapsody (Chabrier) Copeland
- 5 Tango Espagñole (Albéniz) Maurice Dumesnil
- 6 Caprice Espagñole Op.37 (Moszkowski) Suskind
- 7 Sentimental Waltz “Valses Poéticos” (Granados) Copeland
- 8 Chants d’Espagne Op.232 No.2 (*Oriéntale*) (Albéniz) Rosenthal
- 9 Chants d’Espagne Op.232 No.4 (*Cordoba*) (Albéniz) Rubinstein
- 10 Tango in D (Albéniz) Rata Present
- 11 Danzas Españolas Op.37 No.5 (*Andaluza*) (Granados) Tovar
- 12 Danzas Españolas Op.37 No.6 (Granados) Moiseiwitsch
- 13 Danzas Españolas Op.37 No.7 (*Valenciana*) (Granados) Tovar
- 14 Spanish Dance No.1 “The Short Life” (Falla) Schmitz
- 15 Ibéria Book 1, No.1 (*Evocation*) (Albéniz) Schmitz
- 16 Ibéria Book 1, No.2 (*The Harbour*) (Albéniz) Schmitz
- 17 Ibéria Book 2, No.3 (*Triana*) (Albéniz) Rubinstein
- 18 Spanish Dance Op.12 No.1, (Moszkowski) Volavy
- 19 Spanish Dance Op.12 No.2 (Moszkowski) Volavy

Highlights

- * The rhythms, dances and tunes of Spain as performed by pianists who were contemporaries of the composers
- * *Malagueña* from Albéniz’ “Souvenirs de Voyage”, played at a very fast tempo by George Copeland
- * Moszkowski’s popular *Caprice Espagñole* played by Milton Suskind
- * George Copeland playing his piano arrangement of Chabrier’s popular orchestral work *España*.

Rarities (PAA-006)

The works on this CD were all popular during the first quarter of the 20th century, when the Romantic compositional style was making way for the modernist. The composers are mainly from the middle to the late Romantic era, and their works are played by pianists who excelled in the style these pieces require. Composers such as Beach and Palmgren are lesser known today, others like Rachmaninoff remain popular. While each item has its own particular reason for inclusion on this CD, perhaps the rarest items are the three *Rhapsodies* Op.11 (tracks 1, 2 and 3) composed and played by Erno Dohnányi.

Musicians



<i>Composers</i>	<i>Pianists</i>
Beach	Barth, Hans (1897–1956)
Chaminade	Cone-Baldwin, Caroline
Cui	Dohnányi, Erno (1877–1960)
Dohnányi	Gould, Morton (1913–1996)
Grieg	Harris, Tomford
Liapounow	La Forge, Frank (1877/9–1953)
MacDowell	Lhévinne, Josef (1874–1944)
Moszkowski	Moiseiwitsch, Benno (1890–1963)
Palmgren	Nyiregyhazi, Erwin (1903–1987)
Rachmaninoff	Rachmaninoff, Sergei (1873–1943)
Ravel	Tollefson, Augusta (1885–1955)
Schubert	Volavy, Marguerite (1886–1951)

Track listing

- 1 Rhapsody Op.11 No.1, G minor (Dohnányi) Erno Dohnányi
- 2 Rhapsody Op.11 No.2, F# minor (Dohnányi) Erno Dohnányi
- 3 Rhapsody Op.11 No.4, E flat minor (Dohnányi) Erno Dohnányi
- 4 Causerie Op.40 No.6 F major (Cui) Josef Lhévinne
- 5 Nocturne (*Summer Night*) Op.54 (Grieg) Erwin Nyiregyhazi]
- 6 Lesghinka Op.11 No.10 (Liapounov) Tomford Harris]
- 7 Etude de Concert Op.36 (MacDowell) Carolyn Cone-Baldwin
- 8 The Fairy in the Fountain (Beach) Schnabel-Tollefson
- 9 Autumn Op.35 No.2 (Chaminade) Marguerite Volavy
- 10 Polonaise Op.46 No.12 (MacDowell) Hans Barth
- 11 Lilacs (Transcription) (Rachmaninoff) Sergei Rachmaninoff
- 12 Waltz Op.34 No.1, E major (Moszkowski) Marguerite Volavy
- 13 The Star Spangled Banner (Key lyrics) Sergei Rachmaninoff
- 14 Cradle Song (Palmgren) Benno Moiseiwitsch
- 15 Sparks (Etincelles) Op.36 No.6 (Moszkowski) Frank La Forge
- 16 Wohin? (Schubert–Rachmaninoff) Sergei Rachmaninoff]
- 17 Bolero (Ravel) Morton Gould

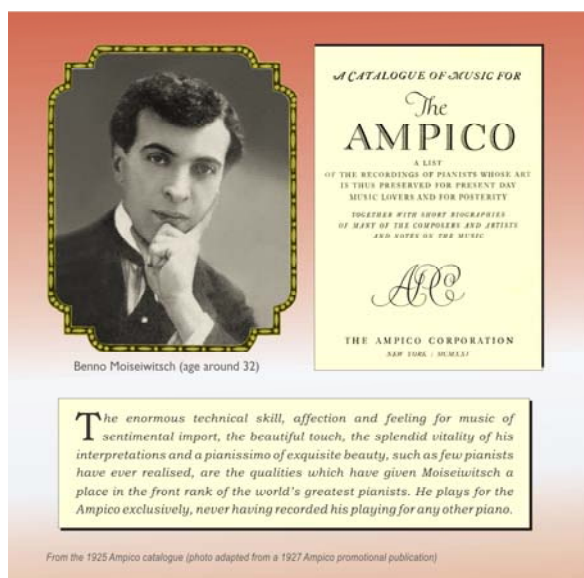
Highlights

- * Dohnányi playing his own *Rhapsodies*, two from piano rolls discovered in the 1970s, and therefore not released at the time
- * *Causerie* (Cui) and *Lesghinka* (Liapounov); two impressive but rarely performed works
- * Two bravura pieces by Edward MacDowell
- * Two works by Moszkowski that were very popular in their day
- * Three Rachmaninoff transcriptions played by the composer
- * Beach's rarely heard but dramatic *The Fairy in the Fountain*
- * Gould's arrangement for piano and performance of Ravel's *Bolero*. It requires the use of the left elbow during the final bass chords. Gould recorded a shorter version on gramophone.

Moiseiwitsch (PAA-007)

Benno Moiseiwitsch was regarded by Ampico as second only to Rachmaninoff. He made his 30 Ampico piano roll recordings in New York (during the 1920s), and his gramophone recordings for HMV in London. He toured widely, including seven trips to Australia, and was a noted Chopin interpreter. His many disc recordings have since been reissued on CD, but little is written or known about his piano roll recordings (a technology Moiseiwitsch championed).

While Moiseiwitsch features on other CDs in this series, it was decided to group the larger works on this CD, coupled with several smaller items. Many of these tracks have not been previously issued on record, despite the stature of this pianist.



Track listing

- 1 Tannhäuser Overture (Wagner–Liszt)
 - Carnaval Op.9** (Schumann)
 - 2 Part 1 – *Preamble, Pierrot, Arlequin, Valse noble*
 - 3 Part 2 – *Eusebius, Florestan, Coquette, Replique, Papillons, Lettres dansantes, Chiarina*
 - 4 Part 3 – *Chopin, Estrella, Reconnaissance, Pantalon et Colombine, Valse Allemande, Paganini*
 - 5 Part 4 – *Aveu, Promenade, Pause, Marche des "Davidsblundler"*
 - Sonata Op.58, B minor** (Chopin)
 - 6 1st movement, Allegro maestoso
 - 7 2nd movement, Scherzo
 - 8 3rd movement, Largo
 - 9 4th movement, Presto, non tanto
- 10 Hark! Hark! The Lark (Schubert–Liszt)
- 11 Girl with the Flaxen Hair (Debussy)
- 12 Nocturne for Left Hand (Scriabine)



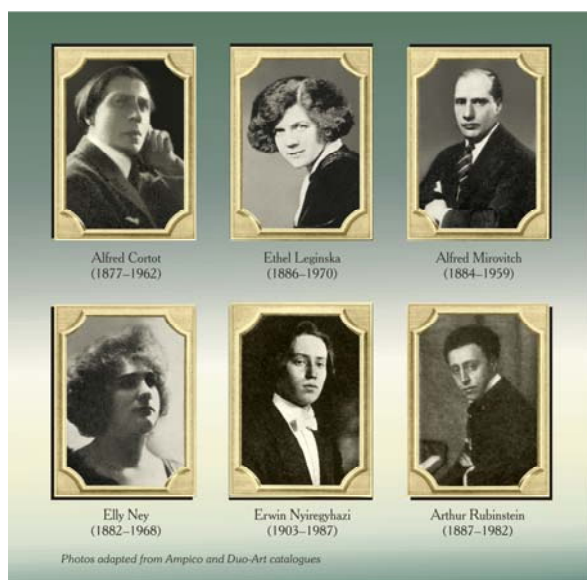
Highlights

- * Schumann's *Carnaval*. A disc recording was made in 1919 of Moiseiwitsch playing this piece, but it was never issued.
- * *Sonata Op.58* (Chopin), another work Moiseiwitsch did not record on gramophone disc. An unsuccessful attempt was made in 1921 to record the 2nd movement.
- * *Tannhäuser Overture*, which Moiseiwitsch recorded on Ampico roll around 1928, and ten years later on disc. This work was often performed by Moiseiwitsch in his recitals.

Liszt (PAA-008)

The Ampico catalogue lists over 60 Liszt compositions, with some works being recorded by up to three different artists. This is exceeded only by the 96 Chopin works issued on Ampico roll. The line-up of artists performing the works on this CD include names familiar today, along with others now forgotten. These works were all recorded when it was fashionable to 'interpret' music, rather than playing exactly to the score, so anticipate variations to what you might be used to hearing, particularly in the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. The tracks presents a mix of music by Franz Liszt, from his most popular bravura works to the gentler *Cantique d'amour*. Although none of the pianists studied with Liszt, his influence would have surrounded them.

Pianists



Hans Barth ((1897–1956)

Alfred Cortot (1877–1962)

Ethel Leginska (1886–1970)

Alfred Mirovitch (1884–1959)

Elly Ney (1882–1968)

Erwin Nyiregyhazi (1903–1987)

Guiseppe Randegger (1874–1946)

Arthur Rubinstein (1887–1982)

E. Robert Schmitz (1889–1949)

Lillian Utz

Track listing

1	Mazeppa	Erwin Nyiregyhazi
2	Cantique d'amour	Lillian Utz
3	St Francis Walking on the Waves	Guiseppe Randegger
4	Ballade No.1, Db	Erwin Nyiregyhazi
5	Rigoletto Paraphrase	E. Robert Schmitz
6	Hungarian Rhapsody No.2	Alfred Cortot
7	Hungarian Rhapsody No.8	Ethel Leginska
8	Hungarian Rhapsody No.10	Hans Barth
9	Hungarian Rhapsody No.11	Alfred Mirovitch
10	Hungarian Rhapsody No.12	Arthur Rubinstein
11	Hungarian Rhapsody No.14	Elly Ney

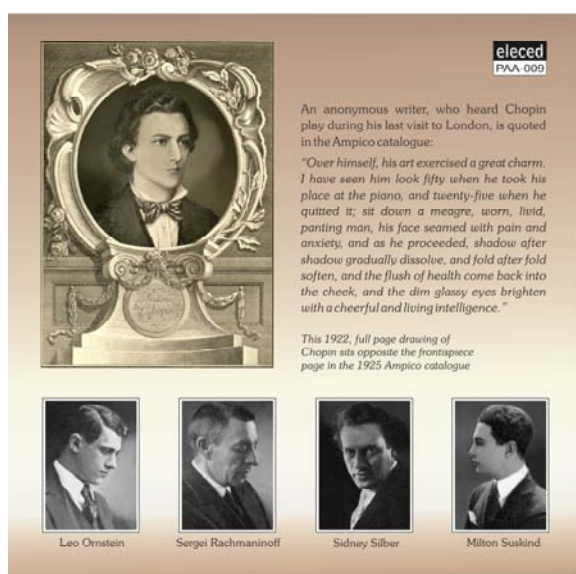
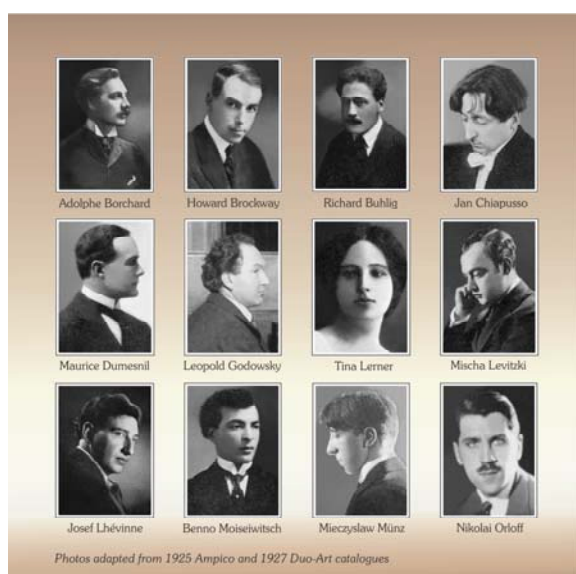
Highlights

- * Erwin Nyiregyhazi, who specialised in Liszt's music, playing Liszt's tone poem *Mazeppa* and the lesser known *Ballade No.1*. (When Moriz Rosenthal first heard this piano roll recording, he is reported to have remarked: "That's how Liszt played it". Rosenthal studied with Liszt for six years.)
- * Randegger's performance of *St Francis Walking on the Waves*, combined with the Bösendorfer Imperial's impressive bass.
- * Four of Liszt's most popular *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, played by the likes of Rubinstein and Cortot. Elly Ney, who plays the *14th Rhapsody*, was a Bösendorfer artist.
- * *Rigoletto Paraphrase*, in which Schmitz arrives at the big ending without having run out of volume.

Chopin—Etudes & Nocturnes (PAA-009)

Chopin's music has always been popular, not only with pianists but also with audiences, which is why virtually all concert pianists include Chopin works in their repertoire, whether that pianist is a Chopin "expert" or not. The 17 artists on this CD are no different in this respect, with some acknowledged as Chopin experts, others simply as concert pianists. The common factor among these performances is that they were all recorded in the first quarter of the 20th century, on Ampico reproducing piano roll.

Pianists



Adolphe Borcard (1882–1967)
Howard Brockway (1870–1951)
Richard Buhlig (1880–1951)
Jan Chiapusso (1890–1969)
Charles Cooper (1888–1971)
Maurice Dumesnil (1886–1974)
Leopold Godowsky (1870–1938)
Tina Lerner (1890–?)
Mischa Levitzki (1898–1941)
Josef Lhévinne (1874–1944)
Benno Moiseiwitsch (1890–1963)
Mieczyslaw Münz (1900–1976)
Nikolai Orloff (1892–1964)
Leo Ornstein (1893–2002)
Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)
Sidney Silber (1881–1959)
Milton Suskind (1898–1975)

Track listing

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| 1 Etude Op.10 No.4, C# minor | Tina Lerner |
| 2 Etude Op.10 No.5, Gb (<i>Black Key</i>) | Mischa Levitzki |
| 3 Etude Op.10 No.8, F | Nikolai Orloff |
| 4 Etude Op.10 No.11, Eb | Josef Lhévinne |
| 5 Etude Op.10 No.12 (<i>Revolutionary</i>) | Mieczyslaw Münz |
| 6 Etude Op.25 No.1, Ab (<i>Aeolian Harp</i>) | Howard Brockway |
| 7 Etude Op.25 No.3, F | Milton Suskind |
| 8 Etude Op.25 No.5, E minor | Jan Chiapusso |
| 9 Etude Op.25 No.9 (<i>Butterfly</i>) | Mischa Levitzki |
| 10 Nocturne Op.9 No.1, Bb minor | Maurice Dumesnil |
| 11 Nocturne Op.9 No.2, Eb | Charles Cooper |
| 12 Nocturne Op.9 No.3, B | Josef Lhévinne |
| 13 Nocturne Op.15 No.1, F | Sergei Rachmaninoff |
| 14 Nocturne Op.15 No.2, F# | Leo Ornstein |
| 15 Nocturne Op.27 No.2, Db | Richard Buhlig |
| 16 Nocturne Op.32 No.1, B | Sidney Silber |
| 17 Nocturne Op.37 No.1, G minor | Adolphe Borcard |
| 18 Nocturne Op.37 No.2, G | Leopold Godowsky |
| 19 Nocturne Op.72 No.1, E minor | Benno Moiseiwitsch |

Highlights

- * Seventeen pianists, some legendary, playing nineteen well known works by Chopin from piano roll recordings made between 1916 and 1928.
- * Howard Brockway's sensitive performance of the *Aeolian Harp* etude. Like Suskind, Ornstein, and several other pianists on this CD, Brockway only recorded on piano roll.
- * Polish pianist Mieczyslaw Münz playing the *Revolutionary* etude.

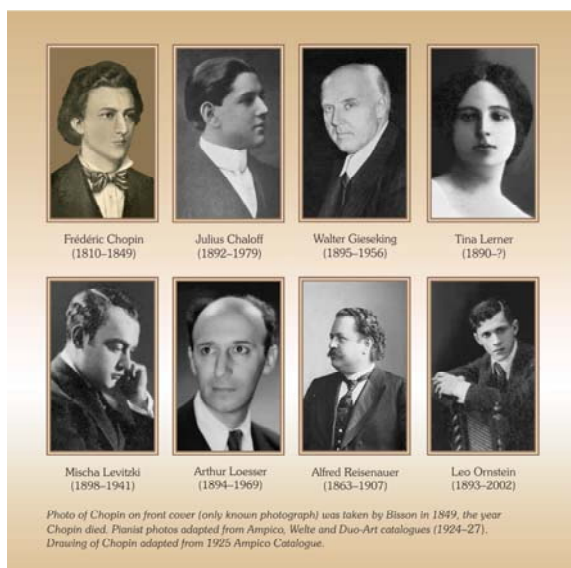
Chopin—major works (PAA-010)

Chopin (1810–1849) wrote over 230 works for solo piano, with many of his compositions still in the repertoire. His popularity has never faltered, and today there are thousands of recordings of Chopin's music available. During the first quarter of the 20th century, Ampico, like other piano roll companies, made many recordings of his works, issuing nearly 100 titles. No other composer is so well represented in the catalogs of all the piano roll companies, with some works recorded by three different artists, each of high repute, and therefore expensive. Clearly there was market demand.

The piano roll recordings on this CD date from 1904 to 1929 and present some of Chopin's larger works. The most senior pianist is Alfred Reisenauer, who made his roll recordings in 1904, at age 41, among the first batch of reproducing piano roll recordings to be made. All other artists on this CD were born in the 1890s, with Mischa Levitzki the youngest. He and Walter Giesecking are the only two pianists who made gramophone recordings.

Artists such as Chaloff, Lerner and Ornstein are unknown today, but were renowned at the time, particularly Ornstein, whose concerts drew huge audiences. Tina Lerner was a Russian pianist who, after her debut in 1905, travelled widely performing solo works and piano concertos. She made numerous piano roll recordings for various piano roll companies.

Pianists



Julius Chaloff (1892–1979)

Walter Giesecking (1895–1956)

Tina Lerner (1890–?)

Mischa Levitzki (1898–1941)

Arthur Loesser (1894–1969)

Alfred Reisenauer (1863–1907)

Leo Ornstein (1893–2002)

Track listing

1	Ballade Op.23 No.1, G minor	Tina Lerner
2	Ballade Op.38 No.2, F	Walter Giesecking
3	Ballade Op.47 No.3, Ab	Mischa Levitzki
4	Ballade Op.52 No.4, F minor	Leo Ornstein
5	Andante Spianato and Polonaise Brillante Op.22	Tina Lerner
6	Barcarolle Op.60	Julius Chaloff
7	Bolero Op.19, C	Alfred Reisenauer
8	Nocturne Op.62 No.2, E	Arthur Loesser

Highlights

- * Tina Lerner's performances. Though unknown today, she was a highly successful Russian pianist who toured widely.
- * Alfred Reisenauer playing Chopin's *Bolero*. Reisenauer died in 1907, making this roll recording the earliest in the series.
- * *Ballade Op.38 No.2*, Walter Giesecking's only recording (on any media) of a work by Chopin.

Footnote

Chopin's works form a major part of this recording project. In all, 38 piano roll recordings of Chopin's compositions have been realised, played by 25 pianists, some of whom are now regarded as legendary. The Ampico roll library contains many more examples of Chopin's music. Surprisingly, when one researches the artists on this CD, there is rarely any reference to their piano roll recordings. It's as though this significant part of our musical history never existed. However, as we believe this CD shows, piano roll recordings have much to offer, both historically and musically.

Beethoven, Brahms... (PAA-011)

"His nine tremendous Symphonies are of deathless magnificence. His piano Sonatas are the acme of writing in that form." Of Beethoven himself, the Ampico catalogue reminds us that "His father was a shiftless singer" and that "Beethoven's childhood, indeed his whole life, was unhappy, and in his last years he was completely deaf."

Ampico issued nearly 20 works by Beethoven, including five sonatas and a two piano version of the *Fifth Symphony*. This CD provides an overview of the many works by German Romantic composers that were issued on Ampico reproducing piano rolls. Carreño, born 1853, is the oldest. She made her recording of Schubert's *Impromptu Op.90 No.3* possibly as early as 1906. Mischa Levitzki is the youngest, recording the *Appassionata* sonata in 1928.

Pianists



Carreño (1853–1917)

Lamond (1868–1948)

Levitzki (1898–1941)

Moiseiwitsch (1890–1963)

Ney (1882–1968)

Ornstein (1893–2002)

Steeb (1890–1941)

Van den Berg (?–1926)

Track listing

Sonata Op.57 No.23 *Appassionata*

(Beethoven) Levitzki

- 1 1st movement – *Allegro assai*
- 2 2nd movement – *Andante con moto*
- 3 3rd movement – *Allegro ma non troppo*
- 4 Intermezzo Op.118 No.6 (Brahms) Moiseiwitsch
- 5 Impromptu Op.90 No.3, G-major (Schubert) Carreño
- 6 Ballade Op.118 No.3, G-minor (Brahms) Ney
- 7 Sonata Op.78 No.24, F# (Beethoven) Lamond
- 8 Kriesleriana Op.16 No.8, G-minor (Schumann) Ornstein
- 9 Capriccio Brillante Op.22, B-minor (Mendelssohn) Steeb
- 10 Capriccio Op.76 No.1, F#-minor (Brahms) Van den Berg
- 11 Waltzes Op.39 Nos.1, 2, 14, 16, 13 (Brahms) Moiseiwitsch
- 12 Waltzes Op.39 Nos.5, 6, 15 (Brahms) BMoiseiwitsch

Highlights

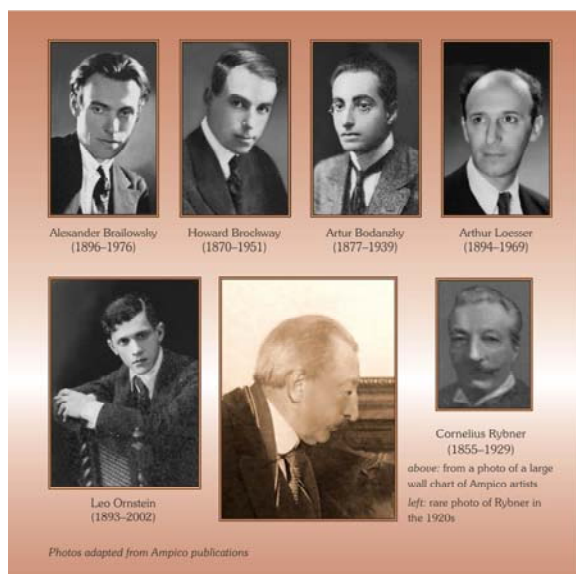
- * *Appassionata* sonata played by Mischa Levitzki, his only recording of the work. The intensity of Levitzki's performance is ensured through the sound of the extra large concert grand piano used in these recordings.
- * Olga Steeb's electrifying performance of a piano version of Mendelssohn's *Capriccio Brillante*, Op.22. This arrangement is not just the piano part, and is a demanding test of the pianist.
- * Beethoven's *Sonata Op.78*, played by Frederic Lamond from a piano roll recorded in 1905, the earliest roll on this CD.

Wagner & Liszt (PAA-012)

Liszt's piano transcriptions of Wagner's music are well known, unlike those by Dr Cornelius Rybner, who features on this CD as both arranger and pianist. Born in 1855, his playing style is from the 19th century, and his sumptuous arrangements are largely unknown today. Other works include an overture played by duo-pianists Pelletier and Loesser conducted by Artur Bodanzky, from the Metropolitan Opera Company. Wilfred Pelletier was also a conductor and the largest multi-purpose concert hall in Canada was named in his honour in 1966.

Ampico issued over 20 titles of Wagner's music and some 60 works by Liszt. This CD combines these two composers in a program performed by nine distinguished musicians.

Artists



Barth (1897–1956)

Brailowsky (1896–1976)

Brockway (1870–1951)

Bodansky (*conductor*) (1877–1939)

Landow (1877–1960)

Loesser (1894–1969)

Ornstein (1893–2002)

Pelletier (1896–1982)

Rybner (1855–1929)

Track listing

- 1 Flying Dutchman Overture (Wagner) Pelletier–Loesser
- 2 Spinning Song (*Flying Dutchman*) (Wagner–Liszt) Brailowsky
- 3 Siegmund's Love Song (*The Valkyrie*) (Wagner–Rybner) Rybner
- 4 Ride of the Valkyries (*The Valkyrie*) (Wagner) Brockway
- 5 Wotan's Farewell (*The Valkyrie*) Wagner–Rybner) Rybner
- 6 Magic Fire Scene (*The Valkyrie*) (Wagner–Rybner) Rybner
- 7 Mastersingers Concert Paraphrase (Wagner–Rybner) Rybner
- 8 Evening Star (*Tannhäuser*) (Wagner–Liszt) Brockway
- 9 Wedding March (*Lohengrin*) (Wagner) Brockway
- 10 Lucia di Lammermoor Fantasie (Donizetti–Liszt) ybner
- 11 Consolation No.4, Db (Liszt) Landow
(on a theme by Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna)
- 12 Hungarian Rhapsody No.4 (Liszt) Barth
- 13 Hungarian Rhapsody No.13 (Liszt) Ornstein

Highlights

- * Vibrant performance of Wagner's *Flying Dutchman Overture*, played by duo-pianists Pelletier and Loesser.
- * Rybner's luscious arrangement of the *Magic Fire Scene*, from Wagner's opera *The Valkyrie*.
- * *Lucia di Lammermoor Fantasie*, in which pianist and arranger Cornelius Rybner manages to add even more notes.
- * Rybner's *Mastersingers Concert Paraphrase*, a transcription from many parts of the opera, not just the *Overture*.

Rybner

Peter Martin Cornelius Rybner (Rübner) (1855–1929) was born in Copenhagen, studying first at the Copenhagen Conservatory, later in Leipzig before moving to the USA, where he pioneered the establishment of music departments in various universities. He was head of the music department at Columbia University from 1904 to 1919 (he replaced McDowell). He made six Ampico roll recordings that were all issued in 1921. He also recorded on Welte piano roll, but did not make gramophone recordings. Rybner is among the oldest of the pianists to record on Ampico roll (the oldest is Vincent d'Indy, born 1851), and his arrangements and playing style both smack of mid 19th century romanticism. His use of heavily contrasting dynamics and lots of notes makes his transcriptions exciting and yet often difficult to accurately reproduce on a mechanical piano.

Background

From paper roll to e-roll

A reproducing piano roll is, in effect, a digital recording of a live artist, with information stored as holes that are 'read' and translated into sound by a pneumatically powered player piano. In 1977, I began developing a means of converting piano roll data into an electrical signal. A pioneer in the field, I needed to develop two components: a roll reader to produce the required electrical signal, and an electro-pneumatic adaptor fitted to my Ampico reproducing piano to receive this signal and actuate the Ampico mechanism as if it was playing from a roll. I completed the system in 1980, and began a 10 year recording project in which I borrowed Ampico rolls from collectors around Australia to build up a library of over 1500 Ampico e-rolls.

I designed the roll reader so it 'read' the rolls with air, as in a player piano, and also so it could play rolls directly into my modified Ampico, with a single wire connecting the two. Therefore, I was able to convert the rolls to electrical data by playing them in real time while hearing the recorded output on my Ampico piano, similar to recording a live pianist. This recording methodology is unique to these e-rolls, and I believe gives the highest timing accuracy and therefore the best musical results.

During the 1990s the e-rolls were converted to MIDI format so they could be played on an electrically powered MIDI piano, such as Yamaha's Disklavier (introduced in 1988) and all other such instruments, in particular the Bösendorfer CEUS.

Bösendorfer CEUS Imperial

The 290 Imperial piano, first introduced around 1900, is Bösendorfer's flagship concert grand piano. It has its own sound quality, sometimes called the Viennese sound, and features extra keys and bass strings. Bösendorfer has long had an involvement with player mechanisms, starting with the Ampico system in the 1920s. The CEUS player system is an all-new high-end computerised player system, developed in Vienna to Bösendorfer's specifications, and only available in a Bösendorfer piano.

The recordings

This recording project has a number of unique aspects, in particular the use of electronic versions of Ampico rolls as the musical source. This compares to the many

recordings of piano rolls made to date that are mostly of original instruments playing paper rolls. While a pneumatic reproducing piano can give an excellent performance, it is necessarily limited by the tone of the piano and the capabilities of the player system. Some recordings use a *vorsetzer* (push-up player) to play a modern piano, such as a Steinway concert grand. The limitation is then the *vorsetzer*, bearing in mind that there have been no advances in pneumatic player technology since the 1930s. In this project, the player system is state-of-the art, and is fitted to a new concert grand piano with a legendary tone.

Another feature of the CEUS project is the range of pianists and items that have been recorded, some for the first time. For example, few may have heard the Etude Op.15 No.8 by Sergei Bortkiewicz, or know of composers such as Halfdan Cleve. An important aspect too is the link between the pianists to composers such as Chopin, Liszt and Debussy. Performance practice in the 1920s differs from that of today, and these recordings might show just how different.

The Ampico

Ampico (American Piano Company) was one of several companies that developed, manufactured and marketed pneumatic reproducing pianos during the first half of the 20th century. This type of instrument was invented in 1904 by German company Welte and Sons, in which the piano roll contained all the information to reproduce a performance recorded by a live pianist. This differs from the so called 88-note player roll in which it was up to the pianist to introduce expression and rubato by operating the controls of the player piano while 'foot pumping' the player. The reproducing piano achieves its high level of performance from information stored as perforations in the piano roll, and incorporates a complex pneumatic system to control the volume of each note. Reproducing pianos have a vacuum pump powered by an electric motor.

The success of the Welte instrument caused Ampico to enter the market around 1912. By the early 1920s, the Ampico reproducing piano had reached a high level of development, and was marketed as the Ampico A, selling extensively around the world. A reliable mechanism, it was fitted to many brands of piano, including Bösendorfer, Mason & Hamlin, Chickering, Knabe and many others, except Steinway.

The success of the Ampico A led to the development of the Ampico B in the mid 1920s, which took the technology to its highest level. The new instrument, with all its technical advances, was intended to be compatible with previous models. However, the full capabilities of the Ampico B could only be realised by playing model B rolls, which were produced from around 1926. Subsequently, Ampico rolls fall into two main categories, model A and model B rolls. Early rolls (pre-1916) are referred to as Stoddard-Ampico rolls. (Charles Fuller Stoddard is the inventor of the Ampico system.)

Ampico rolls

These were produced from around 1911 to 1941, with the majority being produced in the 1920s. It is estimated that Ampico produced around 5000 rolls (both popular and classical). An important marketing aspect was the line-up of pianists who recorded exclusively for a particular reproducing piano company. Ampico secured exclusive contracts with pianists such as Rachmaninoff, Moiseiwitsch, Nyiregyhazi, Loesser, Rosenthal, Kreisler and Levitzki. Non-exclusive artists included Rubinstein, Godowsky, Carreño and many others.

Producing an Ampico piano roll was a complex, labour intensive process. After recording a performance, editors would convert the myriad of information stored as lines on recording sheets into holes in a paper master. Editing would continue until the pianist was satisfied. The technology used ensured a high degree of accuracy in the timing of note and pedal information. For example, each recording was made on a note sheet passing over a rotating drum whose surface was covered with a sheet of carbon paper. Small stylus points rested lightly on the top side of the sheet, such that when a piano key was pressed, a circuit caused a solenoid to press its stylus against the moving note sheet, thereby marking a line on the underside of the sheet while the key was played.

Master rolls were three times the length of marketed rolls, giving a high level of timing resolution. The expression information was derived in various ways, with skilled editors translating this information into roll perforations to operate the Ampico expression mechanism. After 1926, expression information was derived from a complex device called a spark chronograph, the only documented expression measuring system used by any of the reproducing piano companies. It recorded hammer velocity as the distance between two marks on a note sheet produced by electrical sparks.

The Cast

Producer: **Peter Phillips** (www.petersmidi.com)

Project concept and organiser: **Albert Frantz** – pianist and teacher

Acoustic and recording consultant: **Hans Deutsch** (www.hans.deutsch.akustikforschung.com)

Recording engineer: **Gernot Reetz** (www.one-world-music.com)

Music consultants: **Sally Sargent** – 19thC performance practice (www.sallysargent.com); **Albert Petrak** – Reproducing Piano Roll Foundation (www.rprf.org)

Piano technician: **Hans Muff**:

Piano roll MIDI technician **Peter Phillips**

Also, Monika Frank (Bösendorfer Audio), Mario Aiwasian and Fritz Lachnit (Bösendorfer CEUS), Eva and Paul Badura-Skoda (recording studio, Vienna), whose wholehearted support made the project possible. I am also indebted to Elaine Obenchain (author of *The Complete Catalog of Ampico Reproducing Piano Rolls*, 1977), and reproducing piano enthusiasts Wayne Stahnke, Albert Petrak (USA); Denis Hall (UK); Denis Condon and Ross Chapman (Australia).



History

The following outlines the 30 years that led to the CEUS project CDs:

1. During the late 1970s I pioneered a method of transferring the data on Ampico piano rolls to magnetic tape, and playing these recordings on my Ampico reproducing piano. This also required developing an “adapter” so the electric signals could operate a pneumatic player piano, such as the Ampico.
2. I later computerised the recording and playback systems, which allowed an Apple II computer to play selected Ampico “eroll” items from 5.25" floppy disks into an Ampico fitted with my so-called PA (Phillips-Ampico) playback system. This technology was the first of its kind, giving my Ampico piano the distinction of being the first computerised piano.
3. The playback system was marketed to a number of collectors in Australia, who also loaned their Ampico rolls for transfer to computer.
4. By 1990, I had developed a library of 1500 Ampico erolls, stored on floppy disk, but in my own data format, as my system predated MIDI.
5. During the 1990s, a colleague, Ross Chapman (Melbourne) took on the task of converting my eroll files to MIDI format, which I subsequently adjusted for best performance on a mechanical MIDI piano, such as Yamaha’s Disklavier.
6. Around 2002 I had the MIDI eroll library in a marketable form, and developed a website for the purpose of offering the collection to owners of mechanical MIDI pianos. (www.petersmidi.com)
7. This website caused the collection and my work to become more widely known, bringing me in contact with like-minded people from around the world. I donated copies of my MIDI files to a range of organisations, including the Reproducing Piano Foundation. It was this donation that subsequently triggered the recording project.
8. During November 2006, I received a phone call from Albert Frantz, a pianist who was living and studying in Vienna through a Fulbright scholarship. He asked if I would participate in a recording session involving my Ampico erolls and a Bösendorfer Imperial piano fitted with Bösendorfer’s CEUS (as in Zeus) MIDI player system I accepted, believing my role would be to travel

to Vienna for a two week period, my reward being to eventually see my work culminate in audio recordings. (I had previously attempted to interest people in Australia about making such recordings, but to no avail.)

9. The recording session took place in March 2007, and involved a team of enthusiastic, professional people from various backgrounds who combined forces to make the recordings. Bösendorfer sponsored the event by loaning the piano, and paying for a piano technician to attend daily. Without this support, the project would never have taken place.

10. On my return to Australia I received a phone call from Frantz, who informed me that the contract that was to pay for the recording session had not eventuated and there were now unpaid fees. After several weeks of listening to the recordings I decided to pay the outstanding bills and thereby gain ownership of the 200 or more audio recordings we had made in Vienna.

11. From that point, I realised I had a big project on my hands, as I would need to produce 12 commercial quality CDs, each requiring artwork, booklet notes and mastered audio files. This work took three years to complete.

Why this project?

There are times in one's life when things just happen. Out of the blue comes an event that changes your life. That is how this recording project started, with a phone call from Vienna. That it took place at all is remarkable, as just days before the recording session began, the recording contract was cancelled. Yet the two week session went ahead anyway in the belief something would happen to rescue the project. Under normal circumstances, I would not have been sufficiently financial to come to the rescue, but these were not normal times it seems. And so, I write this after three years of work to reflect on what these recordings represent. To answer the question as to why I have put so much effort and money into something that will very likely run at a loss. Why this project?

The reasons

Piano roll music has been a major part of my adult life and has taught me more about repertoire and performance practice than any other source. I have always believed in the integrity and musicality of piano rolls, and that the best reproduction would be achieved only with the best possible playback instrument.

Taking the leap from old pneumatic technology to today's MIDI technology is therefore a logical step towards gaining a better reproduction. There are many reasons that the reproduction will in fact be better, not the least of which is the quality of the piano. In this case, there is the added significance of a MIDI mechanical player system that has all the technology to deliver a high level of performance. It's unusual to have the opportunity to put one's beliefs into practice, which is what this project represents; a vindication of my belief in the quality of reproduction when reproducing piano rolls, converted to MIDI files, are played on a top-line instrument.

Historians and musicologists might argue about the authenticity of the performances, others will contest the tempos, some will think the reproduction of a piano roll can only be accurately achieved on an original instrument. Others will love the performances, for their particular reasons. But it's the range of diverse opinions that keep alive the interest in our musical heritage, and if these CDs give cause for discussion, then good! Certainly there is much history embedded in the series,

enough to keep a few musicologists occupied for a while.

In the end, this a project driven by passion, perhaps obsession. Financial return, though important, is not the motivator. It would normally not be financially viable to produce such a series of recordings, but when something like this comes along in your life, rationality takes a back door. Bringing the project to completion, and on the way meeting like-minded people are two rewards. There are bound to be others.

The results

Today's listeners will probably have never heard of any these pianists, except perhaps Rachmaninoff. But will people listen to the pianist, or to the piece? Prior to this project, my listening was based on repertoire, with passing interest in who was playing a particular work. So perhaps it doesn't matter that the pianists are unknown today. What matters is how well they play, and there is little doubt they are all of a high calibre. The range of music on the CDs covers most areas of the piano repertoire, and gives an insight that few collections of piano pieces generally provide. But ultimately it comes down to the musicality of the performances. This is a matter of opinion, but so far my friends and peers have expressed their amazement: "Is that really a piano roll?"

Despite its historical nature, the series is aimed at anyone who likes or studies piano music. It's not intended to make a statement, or to imply anything more than the artwork says: *Music from the Ampico Catalogue*. I make no claims that these performances are definitive, that they truly represent the artist in every detail, or that pneumatic player pianos are now superseded. I simply say enjoy the music, and in particular the playing style and romanticism of pianists who were concertising over 100 years ago.

(Peter Phillips, March 2010)