

# **Brendel** *plays* **Mozart** **in Vienna**

*Piano Concertos No 9  
K271 "Jeunehomme"*

*No. 14, K449*

*Piano Sonata K310*

*alto*



# Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

## Piano Concerto No. 9 in E-flat Major, K. 271 "Jeunehomme"

- |   |               |       |
|---|---------------|-------|
| ❶ | I. Allegro    | 10:14 |
| ❷ | II. Andantino | 12:49 |
| ❸ | III. Rondo    | 10:54 |

## Piano Concerto No. 14 in E-flat Major, K. 449

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|---|-------------------------|------|
| ❹ | I. Allegro vivace       | 8:53 |
| ❺ | II. Andantino           | 6:27 |
| ❻ | III. Allegro non troppo | 6:24 |

## Piano Sonata No. 8 in A Minor, K. 310

- |   |                                       |      |
|---|---------------------------------------|------|
| ❼ | I. Allegro maestoso                   | 6:09 |
| ❽ | II. Andante cantabile con espressione | 7:13 |
| ❾ | III. Presto                           | 3:06 |

## Alfred Brendel, *piano*

❶-❹: I Solisti di Zagreb

Antonio Janigro, *conductor*

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### NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

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**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** (1756–1791) composed his *Piano Concerto No. 9 in E-flat Major, K. 271* during the month he became 21, and dedicated it to a Mlle Jeunehomme (also spelt Jenomy or Jenomé), about whom little is known except that she was the daughter of a famous dancer in Salzburg at the time. In the absence of a known portrait Alfred Brendel has speculated that she must have been very good-looking to have inspired such a piece! Unconventionally the pianist enters in the second bar interrupting the initial march-like orchestral *tutti*. Once again the orchestra plays its opening fanfare and again the pianist cheekily repeats its witty interruption. The piano then interrupts the contrasting section, remaining very much in the foreground until the movement's closing moments. The dialogue between piano and orchestra continues in the substantial and emotive slow movement, which has often been compared in style to an operatic *scena* (with the piano as tragic heroine) whilst the finale shows Mozart once again as a ready wit as he inserts an old-fashioned minuet into the vivacious *rondo*.. This concerto, a rare example of Mozart's own decorations being in print and described by Brendel as one of the wonders of the world and a vision of everything the classical piano could become, was also a favourite of Busoni, who said that it is both as young as a youth and as wise as an old man. Charles Rosen in *The Classical Style* (Faber 1971) wrote that this concerto was 'perhaps the first unequivocal masterpiece in a classical style purified of all manneristic traces'.

The following year (1778), accompanied by his mother, Mozart visited Paris and produced a clutch of piano sonatas whilst there of which one, the *Sonata in a minor, K. 310*, is uncharacteristically dark-toned. Mozart's mother's health declined from April 1778 but she only consented to see a doctor in mid-June (she had insisted on seeing a German doctor, but they were not easy to locate). The doctor who treated her did not hold out much hope and indeed she died on 3 July. Although the basic temperament of Mozart's works was not often governed by background events, it was against this depressing background that this dramatic work was composed. The march-like opening leads into a contrasting section that becomes noticeably more anguished. Some temporary relief appears in the *Andante* but the first movement is recalled in the middle section of this slow movement. In a similar fashion the *Presto* finale opens uncomfortably before finding some consolation in the brief central episode, but the restlessness recurs possibly illustrating Mozart's concern for his mother. This sonata was published c1782 by Franz Joseph Hain, a former instrumentalist who had first encountered the Mozart family in 1763 and who had set up a publishing house in 1775. Hain showed great kindness to Mozart and his mother during their visit to Paris and gave moral support during her final illness. It is likely that in return for several pieces composed in the past few months Hain paid for Mozart's return to Salzburg.

The *Piano Concerto No. 14 in E-flat Major, K. 449* followed in 1784, by which time

the composer had left Salzburg and had settled in Vienna. It was the first of a series of six piano concertos completed in 1784, three of which Mozart himself premiered during a series of lucrative subscription concerts. Both this concerto and the *G major concerto K453* however were played by his pupil Barbara Ployer, daughter of a Court Councillor on good terms with Mozart. Although (as with its immediate predecessors) scored for modest forces (Rosen notes that with the wind parts removed they could easily be performed as piano quintets) it is by no means a conventional work: unlike nearly all other Mozart concertos this opens in triple time. The *Andantino* movement is highly expressive and charged with harmonic richness. The final *Rondo* is no ordinary set of variations, for as Rosen states each entrance of the main theme is not so much decorated as transformed and enlivened.

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## NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

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**Alfred Brendel**, born in 1931 in the present-day Czech Republic, is a man of many gifts. At the time of his first solo recital in 1948 a gallery in Graz was exhibiting his paintings. He has also published a number of essays on diverse subjects and refreshingly has questioned the need for classical music to be taken entirely seriously. His family moved to Zagreb when he was three and it was there that he began his studies in piano and composition, later moving to Graz. He studied with Paul Baumgartner and attended masterclasses given by Eduard Steuermann and Edwin Fischer, whilst developing his understanding of the piano by collecting recordings of Cortot, Kempff and Schnabel.

Having won a prize at the Busoni Competition in Bolzano (1949) he embarked upon his busy international career in which recordings (extending from Bach to Schoenberg) play a pivotal role. Many of his finest recordings stem from the 1960s when he first became known to a wide audience through his excellent performances on the Vanguard and Vox labels, and he became the first artist ever to record the complete piano works of Beethoven. He has also twice recorded the complete sonatas for Philips as well as recorded an acclaimed cycle of the Mozart piano concertos alongside Sir Neville Marriner. In a recent interview Brendel admitted that he struggled with Mozart in early years but found the key to his music and its interpretation during the Fischer masterclasses he attended as an 18 year old (playing the *K310 Sonata*). Fischer encouraged Brendel to look at Mozart in a new light, not to be afraid to let in the demon when the music spoke that way. From there, Mozart became a staple in his repertoire in concerts given in Vienna and Salzburg.

In addition to winning numerous awards for his recordings Brendel has also received honorary doctorates from Oxford and Yale Universities and in 1989 was awarded the KBE. For some years he has made his home in Britain.

Brendel has always remained an Austrian at heart and he chose to make the Vienna Musikverein (where he had played more than 120 times since March 1950) the scene of his final concert appearance on 18 December 2008, sixty years after his debut recital. The concert included Mozart's *40th* and Schubert's *4th Symphonies* conducted by Mackerras but the focus of the concert was of course Brendel's farewell (described by the German press as an *Abschiedsfest*) for which he played the Mozart *K271 concerto*. Even whilst the performance was in progress many in the audience stood in silent salute to those whom many consider the greatest living interpreter of Mozart. Brendel himself was in skittish mood, keeping his hands firmly in his lap for the opening orchestral bar as if trying to trick his audience. His performance as a whole was 'operatic' in contrast to this earlier recording in which grace and poise are predominant.

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