# Wolfgang Schneiderhan plays Mozart, Henze & Martin

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In the spotlight of this latest volume in Audite's Lucerne Festival edition is the Austrian violinist Wolfgang Schneiderhan (1915-2002). He was one of several artists who made an outstanding contribution to the Festival over the years since its inauguration in 1938. He first appeared there in 1949, and went on to make annual visits most years until 1985. His trio, in which he was joined by the pianist Edwin Fischer and the cellist Enrico Mainardi, appeared there several times. Schneiderhan also gave master-classes at Lucerne. The attraction of the present release is that it features three recordings revealing the diversity of the violinist's work at the Festival. All are broadcast performances, culled from the archives of Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen (SRF).

Schneiderhan studied with Otakar Ševčík in Pisek and later with Julius Winkler in Vienna. He fulfilled the role of first Concertmaster of the Vienna Symphony Orchestra from 1933 to 1937, and then went on to lead the illustrious Vienna Philharmonic from 1937 to 1951. He later pursued a solo career, becoming one of the mainstays at Deutsche Grammophon. His repertoire focused on the Viennese classics, but he later developed an interest in contemporary music, and made commercial inscriptions of works by Martin, Henze and Stravinsky.

The Mozart A major Concerto is the earliest surviving example of Schneiderhan at Lucerne, dating from August 1952. At the helm of the Swiss Festival Orchestra is none other than Paul Hindemith, who had stepped in at short notice for an indisposed Wilhelm Furtwängler. I've long been familiar with Schneiderhan's DG recording of this work from February 1967, where he directs his own performance with the Berlin Philharmonic. In fact, on that occasion, he set down all five concertos, the Adagio in E and the two Rondos. The same poise, refinement and elegance informs this earlier live airing. Tempi feel comfortable, and phrasing natural and unforced. The slow movement is beautifully realized, with Schneiderhan eloquently shaping the phrases, and Hindemith providing sensitive support.

Hans Werner Henze wrote three violin concertos, and the first dates from 1947 when he was twenty-one. This live performance was taped in August 1964. The violinist later went on to record it for DG in May 1968 with the composer, himself, conducting. The work, with its echoes of Hindemith, Bartók and Stravinsky, is set in four movements, and covers a wide emotional range. It makes formidable technical demands on the soloist. Schneiderhan delivers a confident and assured performance. The opening movement is deftly scored with some colourful orchestration, which Ferdinand Leitner points up effectively. Schneiderhan brings



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energy and panache to the scherzo-like second movement. The slow movement which follows has a dream-like quality, and reminded me very much of the second movement of the Berg Concerto. The finale has a neo-classical flavour, and is here performed with verve and vigour. The success of the performance is confirmed by the enthusiastic applause at the end.

The live performance of Frank Martin's Magnificat for soprano and solo violin from 1968 happens to be the premiere. The vocalist is the distinguished German soprano Irmgard Seefried (1919-1988). Seefried was married to Schneiderhan and the work was written for and dedicated to the couple. The conductor on this occasion is Bernard Haitink. Schneiderhan had already performed the composer's Violin Concerto with Haitink at the Festival two years earlier. Martin originally set out to write a Stabat Mater, but changed course. Seefried adopts a declamatory tone in the opening pages, with the violin very much consigned to the background. Four minutes in, the mood becomes more settled, with the violin emerging from the shadows. After a while the music becomes more rhythmically charged and strident. I was surprised how well the violin and singer blend in the mix. Martin's orchestration is brilliantly scored and colourful. The work ends in an atmosphere of serenity and peace. It's regrettable that no text is provided.

Transferred from the original master tapes, the performances sound very fine. Audite are to be commended for restoring these archival treasures.



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