



Wolfgang Schneiderhan plays Mozart, Henze & Martin

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Wolfgang Schneiderhan was a frequent performer at successive Lucerne festivals over the decades. The three works in this disc were recorded in the Kunsthaus in the period between 1952 and 1968 and reveal three differing aspects of his art; the Classicist, the purveyor of contemporary repertoire and the inspirer of new music.

I reviewed the earliest known example yet to have surfaced of Schneiderhan performing Mozart's A Major concerto. That was a wartime inscription where the Orchestra of the German Opera House, Berlin was directed by Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt in 1943. The two men later collaborated on a studio performance, though the one conducted by Leitner and in particular self-directed by the violinist in 1967 are probably better known. Schneiderhan was renowned for his Mozart which was clean as a whistle and pure-toned, sparing with overt expressive devices, but suitably and sufficiently plangent in the slow movement. The playful wit he so suavely delivers in the finale can hardly have been hindered by the substitute conductor, one Paul Hindemith, who took the place of an indisposed Furtwängler. Admirers of the violinist will recall that he and Carl Seeman recorded Hindemith's Third Violin Sonata.

Henze's 1947 First Concerto is the work of a precocious twenty-one-year-old. It's cast in four movements and is heard in this August 1964 traversal where the violinist is accompanied by Ferdinand Leitner, with whom Schneiderhan gave numerous concerto appearances and with whom he recorded in the studio. Though Henze parades a tone row the music is quite resolutely neo-classical in essence. With Leitner extracting a great deal of orchestral colour it's a perfect vehicle for Schneiderhan's stylistically apt musicianship. The scherzo is a sardonic march and the slow movement's communing qualities, reaching a slow-moving threnody, are superbly and movingly realised here. The strong rhythmic charge of the finale, with a paragraph of erotic cantabile, is equally well projected.

Frank Martin had promised the violinist and his wife, soprano Irmgard Seefried, a joint work. Schneiderhan had recorded Martin's Violin Concerto with Ernest Ansermet in 1952 so maintained a strong affinity for the composer's music. After a long delay, there came the Magnificat, heard in this 1968 world premiere performance directed by Bernard Haitink. The stridently austere vocal part – no texts, unfortunately, in the booklet – suggests something of an anguished piece but gradually the music lightens in tone to embrace a kind of raptness of spirit, supported by Martin's alert orchestral palette. Martin later incorporated this piece as the second movement of his Maria-Triptychon, a work the violinist was to perform in 1984 with

Edith Mathis.

Hartmut Lück's sleeve notes are excellent and the tapes, direct from the original masters, are in a particularly well-preserved state. This valuable triptych of performances shows Schneiderhan in the round in Lucerne.

