

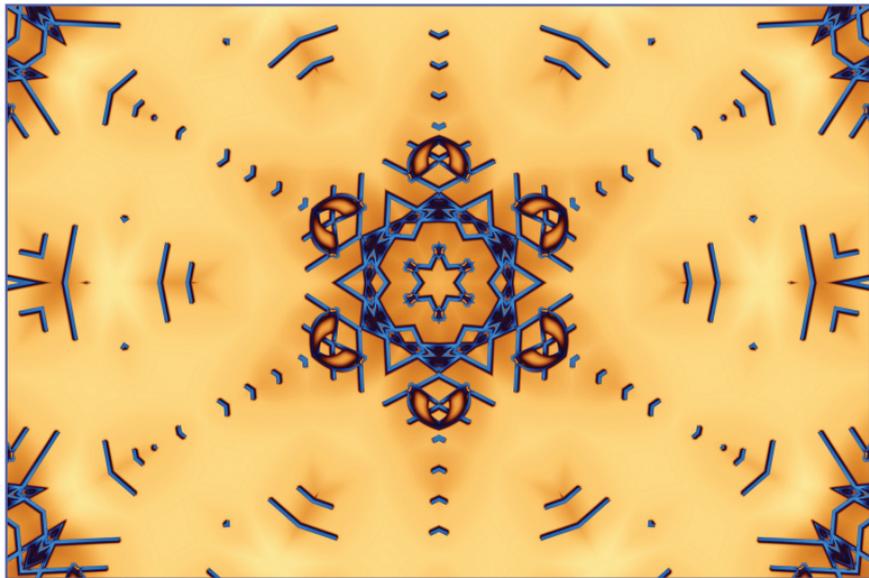
NAXOS

BUSONI

Piano Music

**Indian Diary • Trois Morceaux
Two Dance Pieces • Ballet Scenes**

Wolf Harden, Piano



Ferruccio
BUSONI

(1866-1924)

Piano Music • 3

	Bach arr. Busoni: Organ Toccata, Adagio and Fugue, BWV 564	17:03
1	Toccata (Preludio)	6:28
2	Adagio (Intermezzo)	5:10
3	Fugue	5:26
	Trois Morceaux, Op. 4-6, K 197	9:40
4	Scherzo, Op. 4	4:48
5	Prelude –	2:12
6	Fugue, Op. 5	2:40
7	(First) Ballet Scene, Op. 6	3:39
8	Second Ballet Scene, Op. 20, K 209	5:31
	Two Dance Pieces, Op. 30a, K 235a	6:18
9	Waffentanz (Contrapuntal Dance Piece), Op. 30a	3:10
10	Friedenstanz (Third Ballet Scene), Op. 30a	3:08
11	Fourth Ballet Scene (in the Form of a Concert Waltz), Op. 33a, K 238	7:39
12	Tanzwalzer, Op. 53, K 288 (piano version by Michael von Zadora)	8:42
	Indianische Tagebuch, Book 1 (Indian Diary), K 267	10:58
13	I. Corn Blossom: Allegretto	2:30
14	II. Song of Victory: Vivace	1:40
15	III. Bluebird Song/Corngrinding Song: Andante	3:59
16	IV. Passamaquoddy dance song; The broad Mississippisave: Maestoso ma andando	2:49

Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924): Piano Music • 3

Dante Michelangeli Benvenuto Ferruccio Busoni was born at Empoli (near Florence) in 1866, the only child of a clarinetist father and pianist mother. He made his piano debut in Trieste in 1874, going to Vienna the next year. On the advice of Brahms he moved to Leipzig in 1885, studying with Carl Reinecke, before teaching in Helsinki and Moscow. Performance occupied much of his time until the turn of the century, when composing began to assume a new importance, though never dominance, in his career. Apart from living in Zurich during the First World War, he made his home in Berlin from 1894 until his death in 1924.

The essence of Busoni's music lies in a synthesis of his Italian and German ancestry: emotion and intellect, imagination and discipline. Despite acclaim from both composer and performer colleagues, his work for long remained the preserve of an informed few. Neither inherently conservative nor demonstratively radical, his harmonic and tonal innovations were bound up with a re-creative approach to the musical past that has only gained wider currency over recent decades.

Bach was a pervasive presence from the outset, whether in the contrapuntal aspect of Busoni's music, or his repertoire as performer, culminating in the *Bach-Busoni Edition*. While Busoni's later Bach-related work is more interpretation than arrangement, his personality is inherent in the earliest transcriptions. One such is the *Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in D minor, BWV565*. Among several reworkings of organ pieces made around 1900, and allotted to Volume Three of 'Bach-Busoni', it represents the virtuoso transcription, derived from Brahms and Liszt, at its most commanding.

A peremptory call to attention, and the *Toccata* sets off in determined fashion, the theme given in unison octaves before opening out into expansive part-writing across the keyboard. At length the theme is restated and the piece brought to a powerful conclusion. By contrast, the *Adagio* receives a limpid and affecting treatment, moving forward in measured paragraphs towards a brief climax before regaining its initial poise. An imposing cadenza-like passage prepares for the *Fugue*: among Bach's most witty and animated, this expounds its main

and subsidiary ideas with due purposefulness, before moving into a stretto that draws constituent parts into a decisive and affirmative conclusion.

The years 1883-84 saw the composing of the young Busoni's most impressive and virtuosic piano works, not least the *Sonata in F minor* and the *Variations and Fugue after Chopin* [Naxos 8.555699]. Of the smaller pieces from this time, the *Trois Morceaux*, published in Vienna as the composer's *Op. 4, 5 and 6* respectively, are among the most engaging. The *Scherzo* is a finely-worked miniature whose incisive outer sections enclose a more lilting, though not necessarily more relaxed, trio which returns as the basis for an understated coda. Bachian in its melodic inspiration, the *Prelude* exudes a robust charm, while the *Fugue* is a forceful example of the form, highly-wrought both in its texture and part-writing. The influence of Liszt pervades the (First) *Ballet Scene*, whose lively and impulsive themes are perhaps more redolent of the country-dance than the ball-room, with a distinct rigour that pointedly offsets any more suave or gallant tendency.

'Ballet-scene' is a term that appears frequently in Busoni's music at this time, there being four examples (and also an unfinished fifth) over the course of a decade. Written in 1884 and published as *Op. 20*, the *Second Ballet Scene* is more extended than its predecessor. Related in key and also texture, its two main themes (the second in tarantella rhythm) evince a more effervescent approach to the title; building a rhythmic momentum that carries through into the sparkling coda.

The 'Third Ballet Scene' was actually entitled *Little Ballet Scene* and, as the second of *Two Pieces* (the first entitled *Contrapuntal Dance Piece*) composed in 1889, was published as Busoni's *Op. 30*. In 1914 he revised and republished these pieces as *Waffentanz* and *Friedentanz* respectively. *Waffentanz* is a finely-argued study in contrapuntal dexterity, and exhibits a modulatory freedom in its middle section. *Friedentanz* is among Busoni's most resourceful pieces: one that exudes wit and ingenuity in the transformation of its melodic ideas.

The *Fourth Ballet Suite* – or, to give its full title, *Fourth Ballet Scene in the Form of a Concert Waltz* – appeared in 1894 and is among Busoni's most impressive display pieces. A brief introduction presents the salient melodic ideas in outline, before the main theme, suave and sophisticated in equal measure, unfolds over two, progressively more elaborate stages. An intricately-wrought central section makes passing reference back to the opening bars, and then the main theme intently resumes its course; this time leading up to a hectic galop which brings the whole piece to a tumultuous and exhilarating conclusion. Busoni's virtuosity, as pianist or composer, is nowhere better demonstrated.

Tanzwalzer presents a radically different concept of music designed as entertainment. Composed as an orchestral piece in 1920, and heard here in the idiomatic transcription from 1921 by Busoni's pupil Michael von Zadora, this is one of many pieces that emerged as 'satellites' around the music-drama *Doktor Faust* on which Busoni worked (and left unfinished) during the last eight years of his life. Not that its lofty aspirations are evident from *Tanzwalzer*, whose dedication 'to the memory of Johann Strauss' indicates its intention: a homage to the golden-age of the Viennese waltz as pertinent as, if less sardonic than, Ravel's *La valse*. Dispensing with the dryly humorous introduction, the transcription commences with the elegant first waltz, taking in the energetic second waltz before heading into

the respective elegance and whimsy of the third and fourth waltzes. The music passes through an ambivalent review of its earlier ideas, at length recalling the first waltz, after which, a spirited coda brings about the decisive ending.

The years 1913-15 saw an intense preoccupation with Amerindian culture and music. Brought about by the presentation to Busoni by Natalie Curtis (a former pupil) of her collection *Indians' Book* in 1911, it offered a way forward from the introspection that pervaded his music of the previous three years. After the *Indian Fantasy* for piano and orchestra, Busoni composed his *Indian Diary* in 1915. The opening *Allegretto* (closely related to the initial unaccompanied section of the *Fantasy*) has an improvisatory quality. This is followed by a hectic *Vivace*, drawing on a Cheyenne melody in music as fluid in motion as it is quixotic in manner. The *Andante* is a 'romance' of tender simplicity, its main melody derived from the song '*The Blue Bird*' and with a central section, derived from the '*Laguna Corn-Grinding Song*' whose repose confirms Busoni's identity with the source of his inspiration. A fervent *Maestoso* concludes the set with questing and determined resolve, also introducing an element of counterpoint that reconciles the American and the European in Busoni's creativity with a subtle conclusiveness wholly typical of the composer's maturity.

Richard Whitehouse

Wolf Harden

Born in Hamburg in 1962, Wolf Harden is one of the most versatile pianists of his generation. The son of a piano teacher and a musicologist, he studied at the Detmold Music Academy and made his Berlin début to critical acclaim in 1982. In 1980 his interest in chamber music led him to found, with two friends, the Trio Fontenay, an ensemble that has won various awards and with which he has toured the world's major music centres. Harden devotes himself not only to chamber music but also, with equal success, to the solo piano repertoire. His concert tours have taken him to South America and India as well as to countries throughout Europe, and his special affinity with unusual repertoire is attested by numerous recordings. For Naxos/Marco Polo he has recorded Pfitzner's *Piano Concerto* (Marco Polo 8.223162), the first to do so, and the piano music of Busoni (Naxos 8.555034 & Naxos 8.555699). He has also recorded piano music by Ernő Dohnányi, and a sonata by Franz Lehár. Wolf Harden has collaborated with singers, including Juliane Banse, Wolfgang Holzmair and Theo Adam, and with many instrumentalists, among them Kolja Blacher, Michael Goldstein, Kim Kashkashian and Giora Feidman.

The essence of Busoni's music lies in a synthesis of his Italian and German ancestry: emotion and intellect, imagination and discipline, often allied with a re-creative approach to the musical past. His arrangement of Bach's *Toccat, Adagio and Fugue in D minor, BWV565* represents the virtuoso transcription, derived from Brahms and Liszt, at its most commanding. *Tanzwalzer*, dedicated 'to the memory of Johann Strauss' is a homage to the golden age of the Viennese waltz. Drawing on Amerindian rhythms and melodies, the *Indian Diary* depicts life among the North American Indians whose wretched plight Busoni had witnessed on a visit to America in 1910.

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Wolf Harden, Piano

A detailed tracklist can be found on page 2 of the booklet

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