

Carlo Grante - Selected reviews

Musicians and critics on Carlo Grante's playing:

1. **“Carlo Grante, a fearless, flawless knight of the piano...”** Wilhelm Sinkovicz, chief music critic of *Die Presse*, Vienna, 14 January 2010

Wilhelm Sinkovicz, chief music critic of the main Viennese newspaper *Die Presse*, 14 January 2010, announcing the Busoni concerto for piano, orchestra and male voice choir, op. 39, performed in the Konzerthaus, Vienna. The German original reads:

“Carlo Grante, ein Klavier-Ritter ohne Furcht und Tadel aus Italien, hat sich in den letzten Jahren als Spezialist für solche Sonderaufgaben [such as Busoni's hour-long concerto] etabliert. Er hat auch andere, als schier unspielbar geltende Werke einstudiert und für CD dokumentiert, etwa (auf Music & Arts) die „Etüden über die Chopin-Etüden“ von Leopold **Godowsky**. In **hypertropher Virtuosität** wird da alles, was Chopin an technischer Fertigkeit verlangt, noch potenziert: Manchmal werden zwei Etüden gleichzeitig gespielt, andere nur von der linken Hand.”

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2. The music critic of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* described Carlo Grante's **Mozart's D minor Fantasia**, played in encore to his performance of the Schmidt concerto under Fabio Luisi in Leipzig, 22 September 2005:

“Carlo Grante is a **marvelous pianist...** In his encore with Mozart's D minor Fantasy, he ... caressed the keys sumptuously and, as if under a spell, **made them sing**; they

seemed to **represent the world itself. A little quiet miracle.**”

[German full text: “**Carlo Grante ist ein wunderbarer Pianist...**

... Nur gut, dass Grante in seiner Zugabe beidhändig unbehelligt bleibt von derlei Unzulänglichkeiten und mit **Mozarts zauberischer d-moll-Fantasie kostbar tupfen**, überlegen gestalten, **entrückt singen kann auf den Tasten, die die Welt bedeuten.**

Ein stilles kleines Wunder.”

3. Critic John Bell Young described Carlo Grante’s playing in a review of his CD of Busoni: works for piano and orchestra, Music & Arts, CD-1047, *Tower of Babel*, 1999:

“Grante's suave, streamlined playing is abundantly detailed, but never fussy, and **puts me in mind both of POLLINI, for its icy precision, and of BOLET, for its appealing combination of reserve and intensity.**”

4. Pianist **Paul Badura-Skoda:**

“Carlo Grante should be renamed: Carlo Grande. He is one of the best pianists around, “the man of all seasons”, from Scarlatti spring to the autumn of Busoni and Franz Schmidt. (No winter yet.)” (handwritten testimonial, February 27, 2014)

5. Conductor **Fabio Luisi:**

“Carlo Grante is **one of the most astonishing artists I have ever known and worked with.** And a challenge for every artist, since his artistry is permeated with the deepest knowledge in almost every artistic field – but not only...Interesting for me as a musician and as a conductor is the way he approaches a musical work: considering it as expression of time, environment, as well as the composer’s own personal, social and cultural experience... then, with Carlo’s **fantastic skills** (technical as well as analytical) it becomes **alive in a way which sounds new, sometimes unexpected, but**

always both logical and natural. Working with Carlo Grante is an enrichment in musical experience and understanding, and so it is for his audience.” (letter of testimonial, February 9th, 2014)

CARLO GRANTE: REVIEWS OF SOLO PERFORMANCES:

1. Carlo Grante’s **Chopin, the Ballades and Scherzi**, reviewed by Frank Daykin in *New York Concert Review*, 31 October 2014:

“Mr. Grante’s fluid and rapid fingers absorbed Chopin’s use of the “little” notes, arabesques, filigree, and other ornamental strategies, creating **delicious harmonic washes of sound surrounding melodies that are often in the left hand**, the one most ignored by amateur pianists. He **revealed the contrapuntal mastery of Chopin**, one of whose idols was Bach, which is too often glossed over.”

2. Carlo Grante’s recital of Robert **Schumann’s 3 Sonatas** in NY’s Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center, 15 December 2014, reviewed by Rorianne Schrade, *New York Concert Review*:

“Grante [**demonstrated**] **such thorough pianistic mastery onstage that, if his concerts were recorded straight to disc, one would be hard pressed to think of a single spot to edit. He is unflappable in the face of tremendous technical, musical, and intellectual challenges**, reminding this reviewer in many ways of Marc-André Hamelin, but with a mellower persona.”... “[The] pianist was **in flawless form.**”

3. Grante’s recital of 3 sets of **Brahms Variations** in the Chamber Music Hall of the Berlin Philharmonic, 12 April 2015, reviewed by Isabel Herzfeld in the Berlin *Tagesspiegel* on 14 April.

With Lucid Clarity

Pianist Carlo Grante has been working his way through the High Romantics...

“The Italian pianist Carlo Grante completed his “Masters of High Romanticism” series ... with 3 sets of Variations by Johannes Brahms. After the complete Ballades and Scherzos of Frederic Chopin we heard the 3 seldom-played piano sonatas of Robert Schumann: in all, an **unprecedented feat involving mastery of the scores, stylistic adaptiveness, and an ability to clarify the musical processes - not to speak of the hair-raising technical difficulties of these programmes.**

Schumann’s music fascinates by its extreme, passionate fantasy in a sensitive and at the same time unsentimental presentation. The flow of feeling in Brahms on the other hand seems somewhat restrained, sometimes hidden behind the finicky aspects of his arts of variation.

These variations bring together the entire corpus of compositional achievements since the time of Bach, which can unfold to the hearer’s pleasure only when played with utmost clarity. Grante did not have it easy in a first instance. The Bösendorfer Imperial that made possible a rich palette of colours in the earlier concerts was this time not available... The folkloric theme of the “Variation on a Hungarian Song” and its triumphal intensifications seemed impenetrably massive [on the replacement piano]. In the shaded piano registers Grante could nevertheless **thanks to delicate and sensitive handling of touch and pedalling conjure up a filigree [of magical sounds].**

It is to the artist’s credit that he did not seek to dazzle with excessive, superficial effects but to communicate what was substantial. The *Paganini Variations* however require an element of the spectacular and of the circus. The final variation of the first book nearly touched the realm of Rachmaninov and not for nothing called forth a round of **spontaneous applause.** The exhausting tour de force through intricacies of the most virtuosic kind... In the *Handel Variations*, **Grante provided a continuous, electrifying arc of tension, full of contrasts and**

built up with lucid clarity. Magnificently, with well-judged intensifications and rich colour registers, the Fugue unfolded. Not only in the trill-embellished, relaxedly swinging Siciliano did one think of Scarlatti, of whom Grante played two sonatas as encores...”

4. Carlo Grante’s recital of **J.S. Bach, Partita no. 2** and **Busoni, Fantasia Contrappuntistica**, reviewed by Wolfgang Wicht, *Thüringer Allgemeine*, 27 July 2005:

“The Italian Carlo Grante **enraptured** his audience. **With an extremely cultivated but also clearly accentuated touch, he turned [Bach’s Second Partita] into a poetic event... finely-chiseled dynamic gradations...**

“After the interval Grante **overwhelmed the audience with a spectacular performance** of the powerful Fantasia Contrappuntistica by Busoni.. with technical and creative bravoura **bringing together the titanic and monumental ...with the greatest possible finesse and transparency...**”

[German original: “Pianistische Delikatessen: Der Italiener Carlo **Grante verzückt** in der Dornheimer Pfarrkirche das Publikum”

“...**Mit extreme kultiviertem, aber auch klar akzentuierendem Anschlag machte er Bach zu einem poetischen Ereignis.** Eine fein ziselierte Stufendynamik, die nachdrueckliche Hervorhebung von Details gaben der Musik etwas Grueblerisches and Versonenes. ...”

Nach der Konzertpause überwaltigte Grante... das Publikum mit einem Parforceschritt durch die zerkluefteten Klanggebirge **von Busonis gewaltiger “Fantasia contrappuntistica”.** **Mit technischer und gestalterischer Bravour verknüpfte der Pianist das Titansich-Monumentale mit aeusserster Finesse** und Durchsichtigkeit bei der Vermittlung der immer komplexer werdenden Fugenkontrapunktik. ... En schliessiges Programm.”

5. Review of Grante's recital of **Bach-Busoni, The Chaconne**, other works and **Balakirev's Islamey** at Wigmore Hall, London, on 9 January 1998, reviewed by the critic of *Musical Opinion*, Spring 1998:

“At the Wigmore Hall on 9 January the Italian pianist Carlo Grante played a formidable programme with commanding authority. He showed that a **full fortissimo can still be rich in sonority**: never harsh and going through the floor. His **soft playing would woo the most bellicose of souls: again, ample in overtones, but pure bliss to the ear. These qualities are backed by a sterling technique**, so his reading of Busoni's great transcription of the *Chaconne* from Bach's Fifth Solo Violin Partita was **awesome in its blend of keyboard mastery and spiritual perception**.

Busoni himself was worthily represented by **perceptive performances** of his Seventh Elegy: Berceuse and his elaborate Toccata. Godowsky made an exquisite arrangement of a Sarabande from Rameau's Renaissance Suite which was played with memorable **tonal eloquence**. After all this the evening's tour-the-force had yet to come: a **dazzling account of Balakirev's Islamey**.”

6. John von Rhein of the *Chicago Tribune*, reviewing a series of recitals of works at Northwestern University by **Busoni, Sorabji, Godowsky, Flynn, Finnissy, Paolo Troncon and Roman Vlad**, quotes Derus on 22 November 2001:

“**Grante is one of the handful of pianists who can pull off something of this monstrous difficulty.**”

7. Review of Carlo Grante's recital in New York, reviewed by Bernard Holland in *The New York Times*, June 7, 1997:

“Carlo Grante's piano recital...systematically demonstrated technical ability, but it was a prowess that went beyond muscle and speed. Interestingly, Mr. Grante's **pianistic skills were clearest in the least showy of his music: pieces by Debussy**...Here was not just attractive color but **color with a purpose. The voicing in Debussy's**

chords explained their character and direction. The separations of timbres clarified textures. The difficult passages were made not to sound difficult at all.”

8. Review of a recital in Teatro Ghione, Rome, in the *Corriere della Sera*, January 2002:

“An **outstanding stylistic sensitivity**, as well as an **impressive technical virtuosity** have characterized Carlo Grante's performance the other night...virtuosity, suggestive colors and **sonic magic** in the variety of digital play, touch and phrasing.”

9. Review of a recital at Wigmore Hall, June 1996, in *Musical Opinion*:

“Grante offered one of the very **few really fluent accounts of Mazeppa** that I have ever heard... Grante can find his way through these keyboard labyrinths [Godowsky Etudes] with exactly the fluency which his records suggest... **hypnotic beauty of sound...**”

CARLO GRANTE: REVIEWS OF CONCERTO PERFORMANCES

1. Carlo Grante's Franz **Schmidt concerto** with the Vienna Symphony under Fabio Luisi. A review entitled “**Full sound from one hand alone**” ... *Wiener Zeitung*, 2008

“With a full, rich sound the Steinway rushes on: **wide-ranging arpeggios, lightning changes from powerful bass notes to silvery fiorituras in the highest registers, one can hardly believe that one hand alone suffices to conjure all that out of the piano. ...**

“**Clearly differentiated attacks, secure technique and last but not least a fulminating performance from memory** ensured ... Carlo Grante a resounding success. “

[The German original reads: “Voller Klang aus einer Hand – Mit vollem, **sattem Klang** rauscht der Steinway auf: Weiträumige Arpeggi, rasanter Wechsel zwischen **machtvollen Bässen** und **silbrigen Fiorituren** in höchster Lage – kaum möchte man glauben, dass eine **einzige Hand genügt, all das aus dem Flügel zu zaubern**. Die drei Kadenzen in Franz **Schmidts** Klavierkonzert in Es-Dur (für die linke Hand) sind es vor allem, die dem Solisten hierfür beste Chancen bieten. In zumeist ruhiger Kantabilität fließt daneben der Orchesterpart der ersten beiden Sätze hin, ehe das Finale lebhaftere Töne anschlägt.

“Eine der äußerst seltenen Begegnungen mit der Komposition, geschrieben 1934 für den einarmigen österreichischen Pianisten Paul Wittgenstein, erlebte man jetzt im Konzerthaus. **Klar differenzierender Anschlag, sichere Technik und nicht zuletzt eine fulminante Gedächtnisleistung** sicherten dem hier noch kaum bekannten Italiener Carlo Grante einen **durchschlagenden Erfolg...**”

2. Carlo Grante, piano, **Prokofiev, Concerto No. 3**, reviewed by Ulrike Löhr, *Volksstimme*, Magdeburg, Germany, 2010:

“Carlo Grante has made his appearance in Magdeburg in a technically and musically challenging work. Grante is one of the leading Italian concert pianists and one of the artists with the most CDs out. Characteristic is his **impressive technical security, which seemed to give him peace of mind for the rapid and complicated cross-hand passages.**

“Grante has **impeccable finger and tone-production technique**, enabling him to execute **lightning fast hand crossings, big leaps and brilliant chordal passages with accuracy at a frenetic pace.**”

[the German original reads: “Technische Raffinesse und harmonisches Zusammenspiel”

“In Magdeburg stellte sich der italienische Pianist Carlo Grante diesem technisch und musikalisch anspruchsvollen Werk... Doch schnell tritt der Solist ein,

und ein kompliziertes verwobenes Gewirk an Orchestrierung und solistischer Virtuosität entwickelt sich.

Carlo Grante ist einer der führenden italienischen Konzertpianisten und gehört zu den Künstlern mit den meisten CD-Einspielungen. **Ihm ist eine beeindruckende technische Sicherheit eigen, die ihm die innere Ruhe zu geben schien für die rasanten Passagen und kompliziert ineinandergreifenden Figuren.**

Grante hat eine **makellose Finger- und Anschlagstechnik, sodass blitzschnelles Übergreifen der Hände, große Sprünge und brillante Akkordfolgen in rasendem Tempo akkurat möglich waren.**

Die Variationsarbeit im zweiten Satz gestaltete Grante durch Stilsicherheit und gefühlvolles Zusammenspiel mit dem Orchester. Auch im dritten Satz gelang dies mit gemeinsamen heiklen rhythmischen Passagen gut.”

3. Carlo Grante, piano, Franz **Schmidt's concerto for left hand alone** under Fabio Luisi and the Vienna Symphony. Review in *Die Presse*, Vienna, 2008:

“... with stupendous success Grante mastered the hellish difficulties in the solo part with a maximally differentiated attack...”

[The German original in full: “Unzeitgemäß nannte man einstens auch Franz Schmidt. Doch als die Wiener Symphoniker unter Fabio Luisi jüngst dessen Zweite Symphonie darboten, lernte man, dass es in Zeiten der radikalen Moderne noch Komponisten gab, die das Erfinden bildmächtiger musikalischer Gestalten, die große Formen mühelos zu tragen helfen, nicht verlernt hatten. Nun setzte man mit dem Pianisten Carlo Grante **Schmidts Klavierkonzert** nach – ebenfalls im Konzerthaus und mit stupendem Erfolg. **Grante bewältigt den höllisch schweren**, für den einarmigen Auftraggeber Paul

Wittgenstein geschriebenen Solopart mit **differenziertester Anschlagkultur**. Wie er – tatsächlich „mit Links“ – kontrapunktische Stimmenverläufe deutlich macht und der melodischen Führungslinie jeweils noch Leuchtkraft und Eleganz verleiht, wie er die Schlusskadenz aus zartester Tongebung nahtlos ins krönende Orchesterfortissimo führt, das prädestiniert ihn für die Einladung zu einem Soloabend, bei dem er demnächst hoffentlich auch seine Rechte in Wien einsetzen darf.”

4. Carlo Grante, piano, **Busoni, Concerto op. 39**, reviewed by Mario Bortolotto, *Amadeus*, May 2006:

“In this Busoni [Concerto in C for piano, orchestra and male choir] the pianist seemed to surpass himself in a **staggering performance, extremely accurate and visionary, as is intended in the score, and with exceptional freshness.**”

5. Carlo Grante, piano, **Bartok, Concerto No. 2** in Chemnitz, 2002, under Balazs Koscar, reviewed by Werner Kaden in *Die Freie Presse*, 19 April 2002:

“...**Absolutely secure in the rapid, full-grip passages, [Carlo Grante] differentiated his attack in the highest degree and pulled the difficult work off as if in one huge sweep. .. this phenomenal pianist...**”

[The German original reads: “Nun hielt damit in Chemnitz der Italiener Carlo Grante in Atem. **Absolut treffsicher in den rasanten, vollgriffigen Passagen, differenzierte er den Anschlag auch noch in höchstem Maße und zog das schwierige Werk wie in einem großen Schwung durch.** Nie gab **dieser phänomenale Pianist** die musikalische Führung aus der Hand. Und Balazs Koscar hatte alles fest im Griff, umschiffte souverän die heikelsten Stellen, so dass im Zusammenspiel des Solisten mit dem Orchester nichts ins Wanken kommen konnte.

“Danach schlug natürlich die Begeisterung im Saale hoch, und es bedurfte schon einiger Zeit, bis der Puls nach solchem Höhenflug wieder regelmäßig pochte.”

CARLO GRANTE: REVIEWS OF HIS CD RECORDINGS:

- 8.** Review of Carlo Grante, **Domenico Scarlatti, the Complete Sonatas, Volume I**, Music & Arts, 2010, **Gramophone, UK, 2010:**

“Grante's meticulous, thoughtful virtuosity and stylistic insights have markedly evolved... **Like Horowitz, Grante is a master at creating a multicoloured portfolio of legato shadings through fingers alone, pedalling** ever so discreetly.”

- 9.** Review of Grante's **Liszt CD**, “Art and Literature” by Gary Lemco in *Audiophile Audition*, February 5, 2015:

“Italian piano virtuoso Carlo Grante (b. 1960) points (from Vienna 2012) his inflamed Boesendorfer Imperial concert grand – courtesy of Paul and Eva Badura-Skoda – at the music of Franz Liszt, and the results can be **staggering**. Carlo Grante has compiled a detailed essay to trace Liszt's extensive reading and literary associations, given Liszt's personal desire in 1856 to eschew public performance to concentrate on composition, especially sensitive to impulses inspired in other media, art and literary expression. The case in point, the grandiose Dante Sonata, absorbed Liszt's attention from 1839-1856. No less an influence upon Liszt's concept – besides Dante's own Divine Comedy - Victor Hugo's “Après une lecture de Dante” from the collection of *Les Voix intérieures*, “The Inner Voices,” resonated in Liszt's consciousness while he proceeded with his Weimar compositional endeavors.

There have been many fine inscriptions of the Dante Sonata, and connoisseurs will name Cziffra, Berman, Leonskaja, and Bar-Illan as potent digital visionaries in this work. Carlo Grante seems to consume the work whole, attending to its sectionalized evolution that **does not speed for its own sake, but builds incredible tension between those “spiritualized” moments in F-sharp Major and its infernal impulses in D Minor.** The guiding rhythmic kernel, an iambic thrust that we likewise find in the Twelfth Hungarian Rhapsody, provides the metric glue that underlies the personae that infiltrate and even dominate this colossally intense sonata. **The boundless sweep and poetic energy of Grante’s inspired reading make this disc essential for the Liszt aficionado.**

Liszt chose Schubert as his musical model in addressing (1838-1839) the Petrarch sonnet sequence, a kind of unity-in-variety of linear sequences that parallel the poet’s verses without falling into predictable constraints. The Petrarchan conceits, of fire and ice, of Manichean struggle within the same breast, ring in elevated, transparent textures for the Sonnet 47. The ubiquitous Sonnet 104 in E Major capitalizes on the process of polarity in registration, articulation, dynamics, and passing nuances and grace notes. The gentle, upward arpeggios and harmonized arpeggios achieve a rarified bliss worthy of the Liszt greats Cziffra, Horowitz, and Bolet. The Sonnet 123 exploits a spirit of repose, a dream-vision of remembered rapture. **Grante’s middle-voice harmonization, beautifully captured by Audio Engineer Gerhard Kanzian, pours liquid gold.**

The last two selections proffer the demonic Liszt we know from Gyorgy Cziffra, Byron Janis, and Earl Wild. Inspired by the Faust of Nikolaus Lenau (1802-1850), Liszt explores in the Mephisto Waltz its Byronic fascination with weltenschmerz and tragic fate. Ferruccio Busoni envied the orchestral treatment of the Dance at the Village Inn and transcribed a deliberately “symphonic” texture for his piano version. The plastic, relatively serene middle section becomes a theme-and-variations in D-flat Major, with hints at the fate motif from Beethoven. Busoni, moreover, exalts the epic dramatic onrushes of energy and shifting

dynamics, as opposed to Liszt's originally deft, whimsical approach to his own piano version. Grande's right hand antics in gossamer runs prove mesmerizing. The Totentanz (1849; rev. 1853, 1859) utilizes the Twelfth Century sequence from the Latin Mass, but Liszt also took his cue from Berlioz in his *Fantastic Symphony*. The famous woodcuts by Holbein and the Orcagna fresco on the subject of "The Triumph of Death" contribute to Liszt's massive color spectacle, whether in the accompanied or solo rendition. The use of counterpoint, parlando, tremolo, recitative, and multi-layered strettis contribute to the overwhelming, bravura effect.

A delight for the ear and mind, this Liszt recital by Grante, and so among the **first of the Best of the Year candidates** for any piano lover's collection."

- 10.** Review of Grante's **Scarlatti** sonatas, boxed set, Vol. I, Music & Arts 1236, by Rob Haskins, *American Record Guide*, July/August 2010:

"Grante gives me hope for the future of baroque and early classical performance.... The tone is almost always singing and expressive, with a phenomenal range of tonal variety and refreshingly heartfelt sentiment... you will find Grante's collection an almost limitless source of new discoveries and pleasures."

- 11.** Review of Carlo Grante, piano, **Mozart, Concerti K. 356, 449, 488**, Orchestra of the Academy of St. Cecilia under Bernhard Sieberer, reviewed by Steven Ritter in *Audiophile Audition*, 2009:

... "these are very fine readings [Mozart's Concerti K. 356, 449, 488] done with panache and a **sweetly singing piano tone that has few rivals**. On top of it all, the Orchestra dell' Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Rome, possibly the best orchestra in Italy, plays with a stunning warmth and adeptness at phrasing and dynamic variance that surely would ordinarily place these readings near the top of the list.

“... formidable two-piano expertise with Grante's young seventeen-year-old partner Barbara Panzarella in Mozart's finest two-piano concerto, and a superbly realized A-major concerto...”

12. Review of Grante's CD, **Godowsky, Schubert Song Transcriptions and Passacaglia**, Music & Arts 984, reviewed by NY Times critic Harold Schonberg, *American Record Guide*, March 1998:

“...This was real, **stylish virtuoso playing, nimble and confident, backed by a splendid piano tone. Fingerwork is impeccable. Rhythm is flexible. And the playing has colour and imagination.** Other good pianists have had a go at this kind of Godowsky material ... but Grante has more flow and elegance, and **not even Jorge Bolet has surpassed this...** The big thing here is Grante's remarkable playing...”

13. Review of Grante's CD of **Sergei Rachmaninov, Preludes Op. 32, Corelli Variations, Isle of the Dead** (transcr. G. Kirkor), Music & Arts CD-1128, by Gary Lemco, *Audiophile Audition*, 28 August 2009:

“The collaboration between Sergei Rachmaninov and Carlo Grante seems an aesthetic inevitability, given their comparative virtuoso status...**Spectacular artistry from one virtuoso to another.**”

14. Review of Grante's CD **Liszt: Art and Literature in Fanfare**, July –August 2015 by Colin Clarke:

Carlo Grante has already been gathering superlatives from critics for a while. **Firmly in the bracket of the super-pianist (think the likes of Hamelin)**, for the present recital he intelligently links some of Liszt's most taxing works and some of his most lyrical with art and literature. Grante's own booklet notes are an absolute model of their kind, and he justifies the art and literature theme more than persuasively.

“The declamatory opening to the Dante Sonata is supremely managed. There is more than a **touch of Arrau in patrician mode** here; Grante's tone is almost,

but not quite, as burnished as that master's, too. There is magic later, in Grante's almost watery delivery of internal lines; balancing this is the vocal quality of the declamatory, recitative-like gestures.

“The three broadly equidurational Petrarch Sonnets encompass the whole world of the Romantics in their brief, six-to-seven-minute spans. Grante's use of piano **tone is hypnotic, even magical.** Yet he does not take the easy way out and simply relax into the warm plateaux of sound; rather they all make complete sense heard in the context of the larger span. Grante also proves **he is far more than mere technique. There is a real sense of communion with the composer** in these Sonnets.

“Talking of technique, Busoni's version of the First Mephisto Waltz is rugged, what Grante describes as an orchestral version for piano (it is Liszt transcribed for piano “after Liszt's orchestral version,” to quote the CD cover); it also includes the small harp solo that is present in Liszt's orchestral version but not his piano one. In keeping with the grittiness of this version, Grante refuses to relax completely. His **layering of lines and textures** is quite remarkable, and where appropriate he seems keen to point out the deeper textures of this version. Comparison with the established greats in this piece (Berman and Cziffra) is slightly skewed by the Busoni edition, anyway, which actually feels quite fitting. Grante's **voice is very much his own.** This is absolutely worth the price of the disc on its own.

“The solo version of the Totentanz is remarkable in its bare power, and Grante has not only the **blackness** (only Nyiregyházi goes further, surely, in repertoire such as this) but also the sense of desolation, plus the concentration to sustain the piece across its 17 minutes.

“In summary, this is a gem of a Liszt recital, in **terrific sound** (Studio Glanzing, Vienna). The Bösendorfer Grante plays on appears “courtesy of Eva and Paul Badura-Skoda” and is clearly expertly maintained by piano technician Gerald Stemnitzer.”

15. Review of Grante's CD of **Robert Schumann, Three Piano Sonatas**, Op. 11, Op. 14, Op. 22, Music & Arts CD-1120, in *American Record Guide*, 2009:

"...No shrinking violet, and possessed of a huge technique, [Grante] now spreads his wings further... Grante delivers outstanding performances of charm, grace, and depth.

Not only does he embrace this music with understanding and appropriate rubato, but he has the ability to communicate his enjoyment to the listener. His pedaling is a model of restraint, and his tone is always lovely. These performances easily compete with, and sometimes surpass, ones by better-known artists.

The recording is very good, and Grante's own notes are intellectually perceptive. The painting of Zwickau on the cover adds to the enjoyment."

16. Review of Grante's CD of **Busoni and Vlad**, Music & Arts, in *American Record Guide*, 2006:

"Grante is one of maybe a handful of pianists who could bring this work off. This is a world premiere recording that must be considered definitive. The 'Fantasia Contrappuntistica' exists in several versions (piano, two piano, organ) and are all currently available on CD... none can match the superb sound, very detailed analytical notes, and spectacular performance of Grante."

17. Review of Grante's CD of the **3 Schumann Sonatas**, Music & Arts, in *Fanfare*, 2009:

"Grante seems to forego pedal unless absolutely necessary, and when he does use it, there is such a judicious and economical application that you still come away amazed at how well some of the inner lines of Schumann's always-critical middle voices are heard."

18. Review of Grante's CD of **3 early Mozart Concertos** with the Orchestra of the Accademia of Santa Cecilia under Bernhard Sieberer, Music & Arts, in *American Record Guide*, 2009:

"The Godowsky cadenzas for the double concerto are the most significant additions to the Mozart discography, and it would be disingenuous to omit mentioning how radically they affect the temper and proportion of this E-flat work. For these are not timid tributes offered at Mozart's altar. The first, in the opening Allegro, develops into a flamboyant fantasia in the dreamy, chromatic manner of Rachmaninoff. Timing here for Carlo Grante and 17-year-old protégé Barbara Panzarella is 11:33, compared with 9:51 for Alfred Brendel and Imogen Cooper, 9:38 for Radu Lupu and Murray Perahia. The spirit of Mozart is hardly even an anchor for **the sensational cadenza duet** in the closing rondo, unfolding in flashes of Beethoven, Rachmaninoff and even Gershwin, clocking in at 7:25, compared with 6:53 for Brendel-Cooper and 6:35 for Lupu-Perahia. Acquiring a new Concerto 23 will not be such an urgent matter for Mozart collectors, where the field of contenders is already crowded. Once again, **we find a different sound world** with the Godowsky cadenza in the opening Allegro, leaning more to Chopin amid the Rachmaninoff grandeur, yet the re-entry is admirably smooth...

"Grante has recorded much of the Godowsky repertoire over the past 15 years, so there's always a **sense of enthusiasm and confidence** when he digs into the virtuosic passages.

"Any hesitation about listening to Grante in Mozart's lighter idiom may be discarded. **On the light-to-dark spectrum of Mozart interpreters, [Grante] lies between the Perahia and Brendel extremes.** ... Sieberer and his orchestra capture the Italianate aspects of all three concertos as advertised in Anton Guido Onofri's booklet notes.

"... overall **clarity and atmosphere are unsurpassed** for audiophiles.... ...engineering perfection."

19. Review of Grante's CD of **3 Mozart Concertos** by Riccardo Risaliti, in *Musica*, 2009:

"... the **performance is in perfect Mozart style**, and the soloist (two soloists in the Double concerto) are aided by the very good performance of Orchestra dell'Accademia di Santa Cecilia conducted by Bernhard Sieberer. Also Grante's preparation with his young colleague is very good, such that if one didn't know that the teacher is sitting at the first piano and his pupil at the second, it would be difficult to tell one from the other."

[The Italian original reads: "Non so quante edizioni discografiche [Sonate di Schumann] offrano le tre opere sullo stesso disco; comunque questa della casa americana per la quale Grante registra i suoi dischi va seriamente considerata soprattutto per la bellezza delle interpretazioni. Il virtuosismo di base dell'interprete viene controllato attentamente per evitare sonorità eccessive e tempi veiriginosi, restando nel mondo visionario di Schumann chiarificandone gli equilibri strutturali, le tensioni dinamiche e le esigenze del testo. Mai si avverte la difficoltà di certi passaggi, che sono superbamente dominati e resi con incredibile naturalezza e bellezza di suono. Della Sonata in Fa minore (op. 14) Grante esegue la prima versione del primo movimento, ma suona anche (a differenza ad esempio di Maurizio Pollini, che privilegia in toto la prima versione in tre movimenti lo Scherzo, secondo dei quattro movimenti. Della Sonata in Sol minore (op. 22) ascoltiamo naturalmente la versione definitiva, quella ufficiale, col finale composto successivamente su richiesta di Clara Wieck. E francamente ci dispiace che il disco non avesse spazio per il primo Finale pezzo straordinario e terrificante che solo pianisti quali Horowitz e Gilels hanno saputo risolvere e in cui certo anche Carlo Grante avrebbe potuto dire qualcosa di suo."

20. Review of Carlo Grante's **Mozart Concerti CD** in *Fanfare*, 2009:

"Mozart's Concerto for Two Pianos in E flat (K 365) receives a spirited performance by these artists. Mozart treats both solo parts with equal measure, and both soloists, teacher and pupil, are up to the task."

“Grante and Sieberer take the first movement of No. 14 with a graceful and relaxed tempo. Grante's phrase shaping is admirable, with Mozart's part-writing clearly presented by both Grante and Sieberer. The cadenza is by Grante in the style of Godowsky. The final two movements are again admirably played, with the last movement especially spirited.

“The high point of this disc is the great A-Major Concerto No. 23, K 488. **Grante and Sieberer shape their phrases with tempo and dynamics to match or even surpass Perahia**, and certainly to surpass Barenboim's brusqueness. **Inner part-writing is especially clear** here.

“The second movement's F-sharp minor melancholy is especially revealed by these artists **without hint of bathos**. The third movement enters with its contrasting exuberance immediately felt.”

21. Review of Grante's recording of the **Schmidt concerto for left hand alone** in *All Music*, 2008:

“Grante, a two-handed pianist best known for his recordings of Liszt and Busoni, shows himself as a **heroic single-handed virtuoso** here, and Luisi elicits firm and forceful playing from the MDR Symphony Orchestra, the former Leipzig Symphony Orchestra. Anyone who enjoyed Luisi's recordings of Schmidt's symphonies need not hesitate. MDR's digital recording is a bit close, perhaps, but quite colorful and very present.”

22. Review of the **Schmidt concertos** in *Fanfare*, October 2008:

“... the **superb performances** makes this an easy recommendation [Franz Schmidt's works for piano and orchestra]... Grante plays with a **lovely variety of color**, and Luisi has clearly developed a strong feeling for Schmidt's idiom, as his earlier set of the four symphonies showed.”

23. Review of **Schmidt CD**, *Gramophone*, 2007:

“Grante sets new standards in both works: a noted Busonian, one would expect so keen a response to the elusive coherence of the Variations and revived classicism of the Concerto. Ironic, then, that both works have long been available only in two-hand editions: expertly prepared, but no match for the poise and subtlety of the originals - as Carlo Grante's performances so eloquently attest.”

24. Review of Grante's **Godowsky** in *Classical CD Review*, Nov. 2006:

“Italian pianist Carlo Grante has been playing his music for years and is in the process of recording all of his piano music for Music & Arts. Previous releases have received highly favorable reviews and the latest offers 15 "romantic transcriptions and arrangements" with perceptive extended comments on each by Grante, **who glides through the millions of notes effortlessly**. Splendid piano sound marks this worthwhile addition to the catalog.”

“Grante gives these compatriots' music [Busoni; Troncon] its full due and recorded quality is top rate.”

25. Review of Grante's **CD of Godowsky, Studies on the Etudes of Chopin**, 2 discs, Altarus, by Bryce Morrison in *Gramophone*, January 1996:

“Few pianists could or would take on this assignment. The difficulties are outlandish and immense yet Carlo Grante's **surpassing ease and aristocratic musicianship** remain unruffled and **superb**... these records [Godowsky's Studies] seem ripe for selection **among the most outstanding discs of the year**.”

26. Review of **Godowsky** CD in *Tempo*, Boosey and Hawkes, 1994:

“Grante's grasp of the infinite variety of Godowsky's characterisations is unailing... every number displays **Grante's warmth and sensuousness of tone and colouring**, splendid **polyphonic clarity**, exquisite phrase-

moulding, **dazzling fingerwork** and the sort of **precision-engineered pedalling** without which every detail of Godowsky's multi-layered vision cannot speak for itself... he is already a master-pianist...”

27. Review of **Godowsky** CD in *CD Review*, BBC London, March 1994:

“That the quality of the music comes across so shinningly is due in enormous measure to the **towering pianism** of Carlo Grante. He copes with the unspeakably demanding technical requirements of Godowsky's writing as if its difficulties didn't exist—as for him they obviously don't.”

28. Review of **Godowsky** in *Fanfare*, March/ April 1994:

“Who is Carlo Grante? A **pianistic superman, obviously...** and certainly, an artist one is avid to become more acquainted with... his lightning-like coruscations establish a **stratospheric level of execution, with a corresponding sense of complete security for the listener**, which never flags. Grante suffuses the left-hand tour de force with such **eloquent poetry** that one forget how these are single-handed triumphs. Only those following in score will know what a miraculously seamless aural tapestry Grante is spiriting up, though the uninitiated listener cannot but respond with amazement and delight to Godowsky's ever more lovingly fantasicated transformations of the familiar.”

29. “Quite simply, Grante appears to have all the answers, both musical and pianistic, for these ferociously demanding pieces. Grante so well differentiates between, and actually characterises, the **many strands of texture and the different simultaneous rhythms**. An **unflagging clarity** reigns here and the final impression left by these astonishing performances is a **glowing sense of finely nuanced beauty**.”

Musical Opinion, UK – 1994

30. Review of Carlo Grante's CD of **Busoni: Concerto for piano and string** quartet; Concertstück for piano and orchestra; Indian Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra, with I Pomeriggi musicali under Marco Zuccarini, Music and Arts 1047 (Koch) 64 minutes, © John Bell Young, molodoi@innet.com, October 1999:

“Carlo Grante, an **exceptionally intelligent and elegant pianist** who puts his gifts in the service of an unusual repertoire, has quite a following among critics...

“As thorny as the music of Busoni is (or Godowsky, for that matter, whose music I've heard Mr Grante play as well), there is no sense of that whatsoever in these performances. On the contrary, Mr **Grante is preternaturally free, and lets nothing get in the way of a sharply defined but fluid rhythm, supported by a command of motivic articulation second to none. His suave, streamlined playing is abundantly detailed, but never fussy, and puts me in mind both of Pollini, for its icy precision, and of Bolet, for its appealing combination of reserve and intensity...**

“[In saying that neglected music probably deserves its neglect], Mr Kissin simply jettisons the aesthetic values of exploring repertoire other than the Tchaikovsky concerto, the Chopin Ballades, and the overplayed, over-recorded fare by which he continues to make his reputation as conventional as possible.

“Of course, Mr **Grante, whose musical maturity and subtlety goes light years beyond anything Mr Kissin has demonstrated** to date, knows better. That said, if the recordings Mr Grante has en route (including the complete Scarlatti sonatas and works by Italian composers) turn out as superb as this one, music lovers have a great deal to look forward to.”

31. Review of **Sorabji** CD in *Musical Opinion*, 1995:

“I suggested that Altarus let us hear Grante in other repertoire so as to put his pianistic achievement in

perspective. That is what they have now done, and to memorable effect. Such pieces must be played as original Liszt works in which ... Mozart themes are used to fresh ends. These are Liszt's reminiscences, and Grante, who seems **perfectly suited to such music**, communicates all their symphonic grandeur, their richness and eloquent diversity. Carmen was an outsider who might have been expected to appeal to Busoni in the end, and although Sonatina n.6 opens with a gaiety that seems obvious, the music later almost invites the audience not to applaud, for this is the dark side of Carmen's story. And Grante well conveys the ironic disillusionment of this ending. Sorabji decorates Carmen's Habanera elaborately and **Grante is fully the master of this fine-spun elegance.**

32. Review of **Clementi** CD in *Fanfare*, Nov./Dec., 1995:

“Carlo Grante's insightful notes are obviously that of a scholar—he is deep into the writing of a study called “**Clementi: the Cornerstone of Pianism**”... He has thought long and hard about this music and knows what he wants from it (indeed, that he suggests Clementi's proto-Romanticism with such early works reveals an acute sympathy with the underlying sentiment of the music)... Grante offers the **best-balanced view of the music**, and asks his audience to take their seats for what is likely to be a **revelatory journey.**”

33. “His **staggering technique** is at its most obvious; he takes the appalling difficulties in his stride, and it is this ease of execution which allows him to concentrate on bringing out the strength of the music... He knows very clearly **how to make a melodic line sing**, and above all, he sees each work as a whole; whereas in lesser hands they can sometimes appear as a patchwork quilt of Bellini's, or Mozart's melodies, in Grante's they hang together as rarely before. It gives the music a structural strength that owes Liszt fresh respect.”

CD Review, London – 1994

34. Review of Grante's CD of **Godowsky Studies on the Etudes of Chopin** in *Fanfare*, May/June 1996:

“... **pianism of the highest order** in music of astonishing complexity and instant appeal. It takes a rare pianist to do justice to these miracles of technical imagination (Harold Schonberg said that they were "probably the most impossibly difficult things ever written for the piano"). But Carlo Grante tackles the music without a hint of discomfort, not the tiniest of micropauses before some pianistic hurdle; his mastery of fingers, arm, feet, and intellect is complete.”

35. “Carlo Grante is **one of those few pianists** before the public today that can afford the luxury (thanks to his abilities) of performing works that demand a real **transcendental technique** and a **surpassing understanding of the music**. This performance deserves mention as one of the most precious, as well as enjoyable, releases of contemporary piano discography.”

Riccardo Risaliti, CD Classica

36. “Grante is **one of the best super-pianists of the new generation...** He is a musician who plays like a musician, but with a super-pianist's technique. Grante's **superlative performances** in such a demanding pianism no longer astonish those who know his skills of musicality, intelligence and virtuosity.”

Riccardo Risaliti, CD Classica – Nov. 1999

37. “The performance of **Liszt's Sonata** is **brehtaking**, rendered with **irresistible panache and power**. The **incredible suppleness** with which even the hardest and most intricate passages are made easy is not to be considered the prime aspect of this interpretation (certainly one of the most interesting in recent years): Grante's funambolic skills, in fact, are always subordinate to a **poetic and rhythmic attentiveness** that represent the most attractive components of every performance of his... One of Grante's great virtues is that of **sublimating** even the most shallow and evident athleticism into **elegance** and **coloristic** fantasmagory.”

Piano Time – Jan. 2000

38. Review of Carlo Grante's **Scarlatti** Vol. I, Music & Arts, 1236, by Christopher Brodersen in *Fanfare*, Sept. – Oct. 2010:

“...Here is an artist whose approach to Scarlatti is **so self-effacingly musical** yet so thoroughly absorbing... The technical mastery is all there... what is really needed in Scarlatti, is the **utmost in musical integrity and clarity**... Grante has that in spades—it's possible to sit back and enjoy his **flawless keyboard work** for its own sake, divorced from any stylistic considerations.”