

Pianist, conductor, composer and music educator Rudolph Ganz was born in Zurich, Switzerland in 1877. He first performed publicly as a cellist at the age of ten, and as a pianist two years later. After studying at the conservatories of Zurich, Lausanne and Strasbourg, he went to Berlin for further training under Ferruccio Busoni from 1899 to 1900. At that time, he made his mature debut as a pianist with the Berlin Philharmonic, and shortly afterward as their conductor in a performance of his own Symphony No. 1.

Ganz then embarked on a major tour as a pianist of Europe and ultimately the United States, where he would make his home, becoming head of the piano faculty of the Chicago Music College from 1901 through 1905. During this period, he also made his debut as soloist with the Chicago Symphony (1903) and the New York Philharmonic (1906). He continued to tour throughout the U.S. and Canada over the following two decades before becoming the fourth music director of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra in 1921.

The orchestra, which traced its roots back to 1880, is the second oldest symphonic ensemble in the U.S. after the New York Philharmonic. In 1923, during Ganz's third season there, the St. Louis Symphony was signed to a recording contract by the Victor Talking Machine Company. For three consecutive winters, engineers from Victor traveled to Missouri to record the ensemble, at first using the acoustical process, and later the new microphone-based electrical recording technology for their final discs in 1925. All sixteen published sides from those sessions are included here.

Besides the expected "calling cards" of standard repertoire typical of recordings of the time, these also include several less well-known works, like the Festival Overture of Danish-born Belgian composer Eduard Lassen; three dances from British composer Edward German's incidental music to Anthony Hope's play, *Nell Gwyn*; and the overture to the opera *Der Improvisator* by another virtuoso pianist-turned-composer, Eugen d'Albert. Ganz's conductorial style favored swift but flexible tempi, with string portamenti still the norm during this era.

Ganz left the St. Louis Symphony in 1927, returning to the Chicago Music College in 1929. He would remain there as director until his retirement in 1954. During the 1930s and 1940s, he would conduct series of Young People's Concerts with the New York Philharmonic and the San Francisco Symphony. He also continued to appear as a pianist in recitals, concerts and on the new medium of radio. Ganz had already recorded over forty sides acoustically for the Pathé label in New York between 1917 and 1921 before he made his first electrical piano discs for Victor in 1930. They display the old-school high Romantic approach to interpretation in which Ganz was raised, particularly in the Chopin and Liszt sides. Their addition to this release completes his Victor recordings.

Throughout his career, Ganz was interested in contemporary music, although this was not reflected in his discography. Ravel dedicated the "Scarbo" movement from his *Gaspard de la nuit* to Ganz, a reflection both of the pianist's commitment to new works as well as to his technical prowess. Late in life, he was said by one of his pupils to have had a score by Boulez on his piano. Ganz died in Chicago where he had lived most of his life in 1972 at the age of 95.

Besides the Pathé acoustics and four Victor electric sides, Ganz left behind few other piano disc recordings: an album of his own Animal Pictures for music publisher Carl Fischer's label around 1932; a 1944 American Decca set of solo works by Edward MacDowell, a composer he particularly championed; and a 1956 two-piano recital with his student Parthenia Vogelback on the obscure Chicago-based Tiffany label. He made dozens of piano rolls, however, some of which have been transferred to LP and CD. His only other recording as a conductor was a 1946 set of Grieg's Holberg Suite with the Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, a New York pickup group unrelated to the opera company, for the short-lived Pilotone label. As far as could be researched, none of the recordings on the present release have been available since the 78 rpm era.

Mark Obert-Thorn



1. **WEBER** Euryanthe - Overture (8:09)
Recorded 29 October 1923 · Matrices: C 28852-2 and 28853-4 · First issued on Victor 55229
2. **LASSEN** Festival Overture (8:47)
Recorded 30-31 October 1923 · Matrices: C 28857-4 and 28858-6 · First issued on Victor 55202
3. **SINDING** Rustle of Spring (2:52)
Recorded 31 October 1923 · Matrix: B 28859-5 · First issued on Victor 45389
4. **D'ALBERT** The Improvisator - Overture (3:20)
Recorded 31 October 1923 · Matrix: B 28860-1 · First issued on Victor 45389
5. **J. STRAUSS II** Artist's Life - Waltz (4:26)
Recorded 1 November 1924 · Matrix: C 28854-6 · First issued on Victor 55255
6. **ELGAR** Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1 (4:19)
Recorded 1 November 1924 · Matrix: C 28855-8 · First issued on Victor 55255
7. **ROSSINI** The Barber of Seville - Overture (8:01)
Recorded 4 December 1925 · Matrices: CVE 31134-9 and 31135-7 · First issued on Victor 55290
8. **MENDELSSOHN** Hebrides Overture (8:59)
Recorded 5 & 7 December 1925 · Matrices: CVE 31136-8 and 31137-6 · First issued on Victor 9013
- GERMAN** Three Dances from Nell Gwyn
9. Country Dance (4:07)
10. Pastoral Dance (2:36)
11. The Merry-makers' Dance (2:08)
Recorded 5 December 1925 · Matrices: CVE 31138-8 and 31139-5 · First issued on Victor 9009
12. **BOLZONI** Minuet (3:25)
Recorded 5 December 1925 · Matrix: BVE 34021-1 · First issued on Victor 45531
13. **RIMSKY-KORSAKOV** Song of India from Sadko (3:17)
Recorded 7 December 1925 · Matrix: BVE 34023-5 · First issued on Victor 45531
14. **JENSEN** (arr. *Niemann*) Murmuring Zephyrs* (3:08)
Recorded 23 April 1930 · Matrix: BVE 58642-7 · First issued on Victor 1508
15. **MENDELSSOHN** Spring Song* (2:15)
Recorded 23 April 1930 · Matrix: BVE 59472-2 · First issued on Victor 1508
16. **LISZT** Liebestraum No. 3* (4:18)
Recorded 23 April 1930 · Matrix: CVE 58643-8 · First issued on Victor 7290
17. **CHOPIN** (arr. *Joseffy*) Valse Brillante, Op. 34, No. 1* (4:54)
Recorded 27 June 1930 · Matrix: CVE 58644-9 · First issued on Victor 7290

St. Louis Symphony Orchestra (Tracks 1 – 13)
Rudolph Ganz, conductor or *pianist

PRISTINE
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PASC 739

Producer and Audio
Restoration Engineer:
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Cover artwork based on a
photograph of Rudolph Ganz

Special thanks to Nathan
Brown, Jim Cartwright's
Immortal Performances, Inc.,
Frederick P. Fellers, Donald
Manildi/International Piano
Archives at the University of
Maryland (IPAM), and Charles
Niss for providing source
material

St. Louis Symphony recordings
made in St. Louis, Missouri
(venue unknown); piano solo
recordings made in the Victor
Studios, Camden, New Jersey

Total duration: 79:01

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