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FERRUCCIO BUSONI - HIS LIFE AND TIMES

The Busoni heritage begins in Spicchio, a little village on the north bank of the Arno, inhabited mainly by barge-men, one of whom bore the name. The family is thought originally to have come from Corsica. Though reasonably well-off in their day, the Busonis fell on hard times, and upon the father's death, moved to Empoli. Additional misfortune followed when the second son of three, Giovanni Battista also died later of a long illness in 1860, his wife following shortly thereafter. From this group of three sons, it would be the eldest, Ferdinando who would produce the artist the world learned to know and cherish.

In Empoli his siblings became prosperous makers of felt hats, but Ferdinando would have none of that. He hid himself in corners to read the classics and practice the clarinet. Nothing would alter his intention to be a musician of prominence; he was capricious, self-willed, hot-tempered and impatient. These qualities would, lifelong, result in a reputation as difficult, highly-strung, opinionated, quarrelsome and to some a *jeffatore*...the possessor of the "evil eye." He was largely self-taught, attained a high degree of proficiency on his instrument, adopted a career as a travelling virtuoso. His son Ferruccio, said of him that he was a poor sight reader, with an erratic rhythmic sense, but everywhere he was heard, his tone was praised for its beauty and sensitivity, and he was regarded as a primary exponent of the old *bel canto*...transferred from vocal to instrumental form.

In 1863 Ferdinando was in Milan; then in June of 1864, Bologna, where he was made an honorary member of the famous Accademia Filarmonica. In Trieste shortly before, he'd been accompanied in concert by a local pianist, a Signorina Anna Weiss, who promptly fell in love with the handsome Italian. Though she had had many suitors, none proved satisfactory to her domineering father, known locally as 'Sor (for Signor) Giuseppe'; finally she made her own choice, and the two were wed within a few weeks, despite strenuous paternal objections. Ferdinando was turned out of Weiss' house, (in which the newlyweds had hoped to reside temporarily) resulting in considerable hardship for Anna, who however dutifully accompanied her husband in his peripatetic touring. Toward the end of March, 1866, they gave concerts in Rome, where Anna, a talented pianist was heard by Franz Liszt, himself. No word has come down as to his reaction to her playing.

In the fall, her confinement neared and husband hurried her off to Empoli, where she gave birth, with considerable difficulty to their only child on Easter morning, April 1, 1866. Ferdinando, believing that a son's name could exercise an influence on his future, ("like Tristram Shandy's father," his son remarked later), had him christened Ferruccio Dante Michelangelo Benvenuto...after celebrated Tuscan artists. In later years, Ferruccio would drop all but the first, feeling that retaining them placed too much responsibility to "be great."

When the Busoni's resumed travelling, Ferruccio was sent to Trieste, to live with his maternal grandfather, "Sor Giuseppe," widowed for some years, living comfortably with his daughters and a housekeeper (also his mistress) who dominated the household. Ferdinando and Anna, meanwhile, travelled to Paris, the center of the musical world at the time. Though Ferdinando was praised for his playing in concerts given there, it was clear by 1870 that war was imminent, and the couple returned to Italy, deciding to separate for a time. Anna would give lessons in Trieste, and live with her father for economic reasons, but Ferdinando was still "persona non grata" in the Weiss' household. It was here that Busoni formed a lifelong devotion to dogs, having cherished the first, 'Fede' from the outset. When the dog expired shortly afterwards in 1872, Papa promised a replacement. In the event, it would be nearly a year later that a chance encounter at a puppet show would reunite the parents. Busoni describes the scene thus: "After the performance, Mama and I made

our way homewards, almost in silence. We had walked about 20 yards when suddenly a gentleman stood in our way. He had a commanding presence, a big beard with two points, and high boots which came up to his knees. He was leading a very elegant and obedient poodle on a steel chain, as if it were a wild beast, and the man's whole appearance suggested a liontamer or a ringmaster at a circus." It was of course his father, and it would be, as he later remarked..."from that evening onwards my life underwent a complete change."

YOUTH IN ITALY - 1866 - 1876

Describing his father-in-law as "*quell' assassino di tuo padre*" (that old ruffian father of yours), he immediately took a couple of rooms nearby, removed wife and child and at once assumed control of his son's education. Remarkably, despite his Italian upbringing and musical pursuits, he taught the boy the music of Bach, Handel, Beethoven, Schumann and other German composers...an emphasis which Busoni cherished lifelong.

"For four consecutive hours a day," Busoni wrote in later years, "he would sit by me at the pianoforte, with an eye on every note and every finger." No mistakes were tolerated, but violent reproaches and temper tantrums by his father would be followed by displays of parental love and devotion..."It was all for my own good," Busoni added (according to his father)..."but rather than ending there, it was followed the next day by the whole story repeating itself."

The child learned rapidly and the next year, at age seven or so, made his first public appearance, playing a typical program of some of the easier pieces of Mozart, Schumann and Clementi. This would be followed soon by more challenging selections. In January of 1875, he played a recital of Bach, Rameau and Hummel, and was heard as pianist in Haydn's D Major Trio. In May at age nine, with his father conducting, he played Mozart's C Minor concerto at the Schiller-Verein 'with much precision and delicacy of detail' said the critics. It was soon evident that the young man might well be the "next Mozart."

THE PRODIGY IS HEARD, AND ADMIRERD - 1876 - 1886

And so he and his father travelled to Vienna, where although virtually penniless, they took rooms at the Hotel Erherzog Carl (the hotel for princes and celebrities). Ferdinando made the musical rounds to acquaint significant performers and critics with his gifted offspring...and though there were many disappointments and no few slights, managed to get an interview with the celebrated Russian composer/pianist/pedagogue, Anton Rubinstein. Rubinstein was so impressed with the youngster that he wrote a testimonial, urging the father to concentrate on educating the boy, instead of using his talent for personal gain.

Ferdinando, of course, would have nothing to do with this notion, being unshakably convinced that children were intended to support and care for their parents. Luck was with them when they met two sisters of the Gomperz family, Vienna's leading artistic and philosophical lights. Josephine (Frau von Wertheimstein) and Sophie (Baroness Todesco) immediately fell in love with the charming child and offered financial assistance. This love, devotion and unswerving dedication would follow Ferruccio throughout his life...and many times provide the help needed in a variety of situations and circumstances.

Rubinstein assisted in the presentation of a concert in February of 1876, which was a decided success, bringing praise from Vienna's influential principal critic, Eduard Hanslick. He played a Rondo of Mozart,

Hummel's *Theme and Variations*, and five pieces of his own, in addition to providing the piano part of the Haydn D Major Trio. Everyone remarked on his pianistic prowess, but were divided as to the worth of his compositions. It would seem that the young Italian had arrived. However, his health began to be a problem, as a result of contracting diphtheria, greatly affecting his strength. Doctors advised the family to leave Vienna. The dilemma facing the Busonis was twofold: to find a major city salutary to Ferruccio's well-being, which would also not hinder the progress of his promising career.

BUSONI AS COMPOSER - THE BEGINNING

After a number of disappointing journeys, they settled for a time in Graz, which proved to be personally and critically friendly. There Ferruccio would find the one teacher who could provide him the tools he needed most to advance his compositional aims. This was the composer, W. A. Rémy, who however, as Wilhelm Mayer (his real name) was regarded as the principal and for Busoni, the ideal teacher in the city. His rigorous course, followed to the letter by all his students was a two-year diet of harmony, counterpoint and fugue, with substantial emphasis on instrumentation and composition in all forms. Ferruccio completed it in 15 months to universal praise and the highest recommendation from Dr. Mayer. To this man Busoni owed his introduction to and life-long adoration of the music of Mozart. For Busoni, it was one of the happiest periods of his life. The Mayer family quickly adopted the young artist as if he were one of their own, and Busoni retained cherished memories of the kindness of Mayer's wife and daughter, Melanie. On Mayer's recommendation, in recognition for his outstanding talent and accomplishment, the Accademia Filarmonica in Bologna awarded him, as it had his father in earlier years, an honorary membership.

Five years passed: Busoni had grown from, as he had been described by one observer, a "lumpy and brooding child" to a darkly-handsome, bearded young man. Now he would once more assault Vienna, again accompanied by his father. Their goal was to achieve performance of one of his most mature compositions. At first all went well. They visited the publisher Gutmann, about the possibility of getting the Philharmonic to consider his *Symphonic Suite*. Contact was necessary, as well, with the conductor Hans Richter, who lived in a remote suburb of the city, Döbling. Time and again Ferruccio made the journey, only to find him not at home (to him, at least). When he finally was granted an interview, Richter's reactions were positive, and he promised, after looking through the Prelude alone, to perform it, with some alterations. The parts must be ready by November 13, said Richter, for a reading by the orchestra, whose members would vote on their willingness to perform it.

Hanslick had given him a letter of recommendation, advising him to make an appearance as a pianist; he visited the Conservatoire where he met the director, Hellmesberger, who promised to try his quartet. But that came to nothing, as the programs for the season had already been made up. And so it went. When finally, after many delays, it was given a read-through in September, 1884, performance was denied by one vote. There was nothing to be done but to make the best of it and Busoni, though bitterly disappointed, resolved to leave Vienna; eventually he would also part company with father Ferdinando (who had settled in Frohnleiten and wished "his boy" to live with him). The greener pastures, he felt, were to be found in Leipzig. There Henri Petri's quartet played his first effort and praised it. With that family he established what would be a lifelong close relationship, particularly with son Egon, then but 5 years old. Much of his early correspondence involves details of his work, with continued attention to the development of young Egon as pupil and artist. (see Antony Beaumont's "Selected Letters of Busoni").

FREE AT LAST - BUSONI MEETS HIS PEERS 1886 - 1896

Now twenty years old, Ferruccio felt freed of parental control. For the first time in his life, he was able to make his own decisions, and earn his living as he wished, with intent to provide support for both parents, as he was able. He met some success in getting his work published; at first with Peters (Dr. Abraham of the firm offered timely support); then with Breitkopf and Härtel, a relationship that would last for the rest of his life.

Leipzig was full of talented artists: Frederick Delius, Edvard Grieg, Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky, the to-be-great conductors, Felix Weingartner and Gustav Mahler, among others. It was an exciting and exhilarating time. Busoni blossomed...participating in the political scene, attending meetings and addressing the socialist party members on the doctrines of Karl Marx...with uproarious success, it was reported. Leipzig was to solidify his preference for urban as opposed to rural environment. He was always a "city boy"...appreciating the "delights" of the country, but having no particular desire to live in such an environment.

Now it was time to "get a job"...so to speak, in order to fulfill his determination to provide support for his father and mother. For Ferdinando, whatever Ferruccio was able to send was never enough. The now ailing and artistically declining clarinetist was perpetually in debt. He had never learned to manage his own affairs and was constantly on the brink of financial disaster. He would take no advice nor brook interference, and his wife, as was traditional with an Italian spouse, could never bring herself to criticize her husband, nor to permit her son to do so.

Ferruccio felt impelled to establish a life of near-constant touring, and this regimen would be maintained for most of the rest of his years. He would eventually come to despise and to dread playing the piano out of necessity; it was a humiliating denial of his life goal. "I always thought of myself first as a composer, and THEN a virtuoso," he would write to his associates. "The world, however, insisted on reversing the process, almost to the end of my life." Still, the rent, so to speak, must be paid, and the young artist suddenly received an offer in April of 1888 to fill the post of teacher of the pianoforte at the Conservatoire in Helsingfors (now Helsinki), for the term beginning in September. He had no idea where Helsingfors was, but accepted immediately and felt that his mother should accompany him to a home he would establish for her there...a long-cherished desire.

FIRST EXPERIENCES AS TEACHER: IN FINLAND

Though at first she reluctantly agreed, at the very last minute she refused to leave Trieste and Busoni made the journey accompanied only by his dog, the adored Newfoundland, Lesko. The train trip was followed by a short, but exceedingly rough sea voyage and Busoni, a poor sailor suffered intensely. When he finally arrived in Finland, he was met by a portly gentleman who promptly invited him to dinner. It was none other than the Director, the celebrated Martin Wegelius. Busoni liked the looks of the town, but lamented the artistic backwardness to be found there. No opera, no professional quartet, a fledgling orchestra and conductor, Robert Kajanus. .and above all a group of pupils who were average in all ways musical. "I felt like a clown in a circus with a troupe of performing geese," he wrote to Egon Petri; "Cramer and Clementi is about the limit of what these young girls (primarily...a few young men among them) can manage."

After settling in, he was soon in demand as a private teacher, although he felt that every hour spent in the private houses of his pupils was robbing him of precious time which could be spent in composition. His recitals of the music of Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Scarlatti and Handel created a sensation,

reminding older listeners of the earlier visits of Rubinstein and Bülow. He proceeded to bring the work of Brahms, Anton Rubinstein, Liszt, Grieg, and his own pieces to the concert hall. It would be a gradual process, which might have made significant advances in the level of musical culture there, had he been able to endure his personal and artistic isolation. But loneliness for all that he had left behind in cultivated Europe soon engulfed him, and he hurried back to Leipzig at the end of the term. Still, friendships were begun, some lasting for a lifetime: Christian Sinding and Frederick Delius would remain faithful; his encounter with Sibelius and Kajanus, the outstanding young artists at the school was cordial with the latter, but ongoing and fruitful with the former.

Back he went, however, and on an evening in March, 1889, he was invited to a concert, with afterwards a dinner and dance. He was introduced to Gerda Sjöstrand, daughter of a Swedish sculptor, who had settled in Helsingfors. They met again, and again, and in a very few days announced that they were engaged to be married. Gerda's parents had no objections to this artistically promising young musician; it would be a different matter indeed back home.

At the beginning of June he went to Weimar, where Liszt's efforts had created a quiet haven for poets, painters and musicians, still flourishing after the Master's death in 1886. He had decided to establish a home there, again in terms of his concern for his mother's welfare, but she was loath to leave Trieste. At last he summoned the courage to reveal his marriage plans to father and mother. Ferdinando, always an admirer of a pretty face, was agreeable, but Anna was torn by jealousy and mistrust of any female with designs on "her Ferruccio." Lifelong she considered him to be her child, but reluctantly gave her blessing in the end. Busoni then returned to Helsingfors, taking his mother with him.

Her presence and the problems created by her inability to accept Ferruccio's choice led poor Gerda almost to despair and she threatened to break off their engagement. Busoni, seeing his adored in danger, took firm charge of the situation and luckily for both, his winning of the 5,000 marks composition prize, for his *Konzertstück*, offered that summer by Anton Rubinstein resulted in an appointment to teach at the Moscow Conservatory. There he went in September, 1889, Gerda following shortly thereafter. Though a traditional ceremony had been planned, delays were encountered by church authorities, objecting to Gerda's Catholicism. A German Protestant pastor agreed to marry them, but it must be done immediately, as his vacation plans could not be altered. Gerda, unable even to unpack her wedding dress, became Signora Busoni in her old red knitted jersey.

MARRIAGE - HE BEGINS HIS PERIPATETIC LIFE - 1890 - 1900

Living conditions for the couple proved so appalling, because of the filth encountered in furnished rooms, that Busoni was forced to rent unfurnished, and outfit them at his own expense. As for his working conditions, only Alexander Siloti (Rachmaninoff's cousin) received him with unaffected cordiality. Other colleagues were jealous of his clear superiority in matters musical and in addition, allowed feelings of "Russianess" to color their behaviour; soon he began to yearn for Hamburg and Leipzig.

He returned to Moscow after his Christmas touring. While in New York, he had spoken of his dissatisfaction with the post in Russia to one of the Steinways, who then urged him to come to America...and in particular to apply for a teaching post at the New England Conservatory. That assured, he quickly began to learn English, resigned his position and he and his new wife sailed for Boston at the end of August, 1891.

Ah, but America was no better than Russia to the idealistic young artist. He bemoaned the “efficiency” with which the directors made use of their teachers. The stopwatch, he complained later was king. Lessons were given on the quarter hour, one pupil having to stop playing to make way for the next. One bright spot only in that year of 1892: a son, christened Benvenuto was born on May 24th. To escape the routine at the school, he resigned his position, and the Busonis moved to New York, Ferruccio regarding the life of a travelling virtuoso preferable to the drudgery he had endured at the Conservatory. At first his engagements were plentiful, but gradually declined to the point where he feared being stranded, unable to care properly for wife and child.

He wrote of America: “In this country, the *average* is better than elsewhere, but along with that there is much more *average* than elsewhere, and as far as I can see it will soon be all *average!*” Yet America was not without happy experiences: in Boston he renewed his friendship with Artur Nikisch, conductor of the Boston Symphony. Musicians such as Eugene Gruenberg, Charles Martin Loeffler and the Nováček family (a father and four sons) among others provided musical nourishment. But Busoni felt himself again deprived of the cultural delights of Europe and in the spring of 1894, returned to Europe, to resume his career as travelling virtuoso.

Privately he determined never again to become involved in an educational institution, but once again Weimar would prove to be a satisfying venue. A series of master classes he would give there in 1900 and again in 1901, under the auspices of Grand Duke Carl Alexander, would restore his faith and interest in the young...but that would be a pleasure to come. For the time being, the Busoni's took a flat in Berlin, and settled down comfortably. One particular sadness occurred in that year: the death of Frau von Wertheimstein, who from their first encounter in Vienna years before, had befriended and supported him when needed. Busoni remembered her with a profound sense of affection and gratitude.

BUSONI AS EDITOR AND TRANSCRIBER - 1890 - 1900

For the next few years, Busoni was known only to the musical world as an executant. “I have great successes,” he wrote to a friend in 1896. “The composer I conceal for the present.” And well he might, judging from the almost invariably hostile response to his work from the critics. But he was learning, altering his approach to the classic forms of the past, gradually forging ahead to the music he felt he would ultimately write. In 1890 he began to produce his editions of the music of Bach, with first the *Inventions*; to be followed by the first book of the *Forty-Eight Preludes and Fugues of the Well-Tempered Clavier*. He would go on to publish in all 27 volumes of a complete edition, some in collaboration with both Egon Petri and Bruno Mugellini.

While in Finland, Wegelius had introduced him to Liszt and his monumental pianistic *oeuvre*. In Boston, a lady pupil gifted him with some rare original editions; he wrote to his mother asking her for early editions she might have acquired in girlhood. These formed the basis for an impressive collection of the “complete works”...particularly in light of Liszt's constant revising of certain of his pieces. (Present day enthusiasts know of the complete edition of in all 96 CD's!, performed by Leslie Howard on HYPERION). Bach and Liszt would henceforth make frequent appearances in his programs for the next few years. In the summer of 1894 he was working hard (*come un cane...like a dog*) on the second book of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, and practicing five hours a day for his upcoming concerts.

In October he played in Hamburg under Gustav Mahler, Weber's *Konzertstück* and his own arrangement of Liszt's *Rhapsodie Espagnole*, adding a contrapuntal introduction based on the *Folies d'Espagne*. In

November at the Singakademie in Berlin, Liszt's A Major Concerto and the European premiere of his stupendous transcription of the Bach: *Chaconne* (from the Violin Partita No. 2, in d) and his reworking, as invariable encore, of the 3rd "Paganini" Etude, *La Campanella*.. Both works would not only establish his name as a formidable transcriber, but as well be always in demand at concerts for the remainder of his performing career. He made reproducing piano roll recordings on Duo-Art of both pieces for the Aeolian Company.

How he hated the life of a travelling virtuoso! But the next few years of his life are described as made up of little more than a list of his repertory, a diary of concert engagements, and a collection of press criticisms. How was his revelatory playing received? In Germany with hostility. He alienated the sentimental adorers of Chopin, and was charged with eccentricity in his readings of Beethoven. And his devotion to Liszt? Beneath contempt. But there were always those who realized that Busoni was: "...an enigmatic artist, ironic lightning-flash hurled at all pianists and pianofortes, swift meteor that vanishes as soon as it appears." (*Journal de Liège*, Brussels, 1894). Busoni retorted (to a critical charge of "modernizing" the classics): "I try to restore their youth, to present them as they sounded to people at the moment when they first sprang from the head and pen of the composer." And clearly, at least to some, he succeeded. His "modernizations" were designed with aesthetic purpose and worked out with careful skill.

BUSONI BEGINS TO HIT HIS STRIDE - 1900 - 1910

1897 would be the "composition year" ...the beginning of an annual practice of sending his wife and child away on vacation, and concentrating on the particular work of the moment. He had been astounded by Verdi's late masterpiece, *Falstaff*, describing it as "futuristic." In it he discerned a new direction not only for the Italian master but also an indication of the path he would take toward creating an "Italian" opera. The main work at hand was the *Comedy Overture*, set down overnight on a sudden inspiration. The German romantic manner of his previous work was dropped forthwith; he suddenly felt that Mozart's operas would lead him on to *Arlecchino* and *Turandot*.

In the autumn he visited London for the first time. It would be among his "great cities;" he loved the Dickensian characters he seemed to meet everywhere. He also encountered Emil Sauer, Ignace Jan Paderewski, Enrique Fernandez Arbós, and Arthur Friedheim, among others. They all felt that London was a bad place for their art. It was, said Arbós: "passing through a period of decadence, over-refined, superficial and constantly demanding new sensations." Still, Busoni made his mark there and would return many times, touring the major cities, though confessing that with the exception of Cambridge and its enlightened educational environment, he despised the audiences in Nottingham, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Bradford, Manchester and elsewhere.

The summer of 1900 saw the beginning of the cherished experiences of Weimar, mentioned earlier. Under the auspices of the Grand Duke Carl Alexander of Saxe-Weimar, he spent July, August and September in the company of a number of advanced pupils, some of whom would carry on the tradition begun by Liszt. The Tempelherrenhaus, a picturesque building in the park was placed at his disposal and there about 15 pupils met regularly. Each would prepare a piece, play it for the audience and then the group would discuss the interpretation under Busoni's guidance. There was a distinct flavor of Bohemianism, with lively evenings at the Hotel Erbprinz. Busoni's pupils enjoyed scandalizing the town with their eccentric dress and behaviour; he made no attempt to discipline his unruly charges. The Grand Duke was not offended at the "outrages" visited upon the good burghers. Always a loyal supporter of the arts, it was he who said to Busoni "Liszt *was* what a Prince *ought to be!*"

A few months earlier a second son, Raffaello had been born. Both children would be drawn not to music, but to art, with "Lello" as he was called, becoming an outstanding painter in his day. After Weimar, his touring resumed. Each year it would be October to the end of the season in July, with England always the most lucrative. Ferdinando continued to pester him for money...unceasingly...and Ferruccio felt himself obliged to send whatever he could...never enough for his father. Back in Berlin, he formed the plan of a series of orchestral concerts to be devoted entirely to new works or to older works which were seldom performed (see listing of the complete programs). As always it was his desire to assist young and unknown composers, and each was invited to come to Berlin and conduct his piece. It was only if they refused or were unable to do so, that he made himself their interpreter. He had discovered at Helsingfors that musicians enjoyed playing under him, and that he had a certain ability in conducting.

BUSONI AS CONDUCTOR - THE HISTORIC 12 CONCERTS

His first concert of new works was given on November 8, 1902. All subsequent programs, save one would take place in the Beethovensaal, and this would provide critics with many opportunities to express outrage at what echoed within those hallowed walls. The *Prelude and Angel's Farewell* from Elgar's "*Dream of Gerontius*" and Delius' "*Paris*" were singled out by the critic of the *Berliner Neueste Nachrichten*, as particularly barren music-fabrication. That would establish a pattern of abuse, characterising the entire series up to and including the final one, given in January, 1909. Bela Bartok conducted the Scherzo from his Orchestral Suite, Op. 4. "Another of those outrages on good taste; an insult that such music should be played in a concert-hall which bears the sacred name of Beethoven." Busoni was entirely unabashed by these rebukes, and continued his services to the young composers, with inventive and imaginative programming...not altogether unappreciated. Always there would be a small, but intensely loyal group of followers and admirers.

MASTERPIECE PRESENTED...AND REVILED - 1904/5

The ten years between 1890 and 1900 had brought about a remarkable change and development in Busoni's personality. Tours in Italy revived his devotion to the land of his birth and parentage, stimulated to some extent by his study of Liszt's impressions in the *Années de Pèlerinage* and as mentioned earlier Verdi's *Falstaff*. Much of this transformation from a German to Italian artist would be realized in his Piano Concerto, Op. 39, generally considered to be his instrumental masterpiece. When introduced after long incubation on November 17, 1904 under Dr. Karl Muck's baton, it was described by the critic of the *Roland von Berlin*, Dr. Adolf Weissmann as a *Hollenspektakel*...which may be translated as 'Pandemonium let loose.' The work was greeted with abuse from almost the entire press.

The concerto was the fruit of some two and a half years' thought...partly inspired by a reading of Oehlenschläger's *Aladdin*. Though Busoni had originally planned a *Gesamtwerk*...a staged drama combining music, dance and magic, this was abandoned for practical reasons. In the end he found that a more manageable evocation of the spirit of the original would be the "Cantico" portion (the finale), sung by an invisible male chorus. Before that, the vast work would contain two Italian-inspired sections, a *Pezzo giocoso* and *Tarantella (All' Italiana)*, reflecting his recent Italocentric thinking. The two lively movements frame a lengthy *Pezzo serioso*, and the whole is introduced by a *Prologo e introito*, wherein all the work's highly plastic themes are germinated. Over an hour in length with a piano part of legendary difficulty, concert performances of the concerto were few until the 1950's, when Gunnar Johansen, John Ogdon, Pietro Scarpini, and more recently, Victoria Postnikova, Garrick Ohlsson, and others restored it to its rightful place in the repertoire.

By the middle of the first decade, Busoni's life had settled into a routine. He would work by himself all the morning; after luncheon visitors would drop in until about five, when he would either retire to his work again or go for a solitary walk. He found the streets of Berlin as fascinating as those of London, and encountered there odd characters, again evoking reminders of Dickensian invention. Evenings were spent at an Italian restaurant on the Potsdamerstrasse, where eventually a small circle of young painters was accustomed to join him for music and conversation. He was always fond of the society of women, and many liked to pretend that he was in love with them. A well known German pianist, attending such a gathering at Busoni's house, dubbed the ladies 'the caryatides of the house of Busoni.' But his marriage to Gerda proved to be the one constant, the one ingredient in his busy life that furnished his need for *Empfindung*...intuitive sympathy, uncritical adoration. And one might add to that his lifelong fondness for dogs...and theirs for him.

AMERICA AGAIN, AND ENGLAND - 1905 - 1910

Autumn came. His public performances resumed and this time it would be a lengthy tour to America in the first three months of 1904...New York, Boston, Chicago and Detroit. Finding America unchanged from his previous visits ten years earlier, Busoni treated everyone to his usual scathing denunciations. "Really," he maintained, "my poor, despised fellow-citizens of Empoli are geniuses when compared to American men." The women fared worse, Busoni castigating them severely for their impertinence and ignorance. He escaped as quickly as he might, and the voyage home gave time for rest and meditation. Richard Strauss' *Sinfonia Domestica* had been recently published. After studying it carefully on the way home, he remarked only that: "The score looks like the streets of New York."

1905: Busoni returns to England, where fog and frost suggest to him that Manchester is "an ingeniously contrived department of Dante's Hell, where travelling virtuosi, who threw away the best part of their lives for the sake of fame and money, gnash their teeth in blindness." In December he returned to Berlin and began his proselytization in the "great cause of Liszt." The *Paganini-Etudes* and *Transcendental Etudes* played complete brought cries of horror from the city's critics. Then it was on to Madrid for the tercentenary celebrations in honor of Cervantes...his *Don Quixote* a lifelong enthusiasm for Ferruccio. Concerts were given there and in Portugal at Lisbon and Oporto, arranged by his good friend and colleague, José Vianna da Motta. Fritz Kreisler joined them for some touring. He would remain a good friend and advocate, playing Busoni's Violin Sonata.

TURANDOT AND DIE BRAUTWAHL - BEGINNINGS - 1905 - 1910

Carlo Gozzi's fantastic play *Turandot*, caught Busoni's fancy about this time, providing another link with his Italian aesthetical ethos. In Busoni's view, both Schiller (who freely adapted it for the German stage) and Weber, who provided incidental music, had merely ruined a great work of Italian literature. It was up to him to redress that historic wrong. But no production of the play materialized and the music was put aside, to be rearranged for stage purposes only in 1911 for Max Reinhardt's Berlin production. However, a *Turandot-Suite* was sketched as early as 1904, and when completed in 1905 was included in a program in Bologna, whose principal attraction was the newly- introduced Concerto. *Turandot* would eventually supply the basis for a libretto to his one-act opera.

Opera was not dismissed, however. A new work, to be called "Die Brautwahl" (The Bridal Lottery) was taking shape in his mind. It would be another half dozen years before it was ultimately performed (1912 in Hamburg). Meanwhile, more pupils came to the flat on the Augsburgerstrasse, and Busoni, now nearing 40

came to see that his chief interests lay in composing and teaching. In 1907 he was approached to teach a master class at the Vienna Conservatoire. Remembering his experiences of long ago in that unfriendly city, he hesitated long, promising only one year and with provision for leave if concert tours materialized. All was agreed upon and in September he began the examination of potential students. All proved disappointing: mostly girls of little talent (and no looks!) and a few men who showed some intelligence, he wrote. Gradually things improved, with now three at least who would go on to attain some distinction: Louis Closson, Léo Sirota and Louis Gruenberg. Trouble began in February, with misunderstandings about the nature of his free time. Previous engagements forced him to cancel classes; as a result, the Directorate informed him that his contract would be terminated because of his irregular scheduling. Worse, his dismissal was publicized in the Viennese press.

No one would back down...Ferruccio least of all, as he was convinced that he had been treated unjustly. But none had anticipated the passion for his guidance on the part of his students. An American girl, Georgine Nelson confronted the authorities after consulting with her classmates. The decision was that all would withdraw from the school unless their beloved teacher was reinstated. "You must come back to us as we should *die* of grief, otherwise!" The upshot was that to save face, the intimidated directors yet refused to alter their decision. Busoni countered by agreeing to continue the class at the Palais Todesco-Oppenheimer, placed at his disposal by his old friend, Jella Oppenheimer, daughter of the Baroness Todesco, from April 21 to July 15. Having done his duty, he left Vienna in the middle of July and returned to Berlin.

It might be useful at this juncture to consider his gradual development as an artist, result of the influence on his work of four great composers: Liszt, Verdi, Bach and Mozart. "I began," he wrote, "by getting beyond Schumann and Mendelssohn; I was at first hostile to, then amazed by Wagner, and experienced the greatest difficulty in differentiating good from bad Beethoven. Finally I came to terms with Liszt, having first been interested in him as a pianist." The more intensive study of his works resulted in an important mission: to spread the knowledge of his work as pianist and conductor, and to promote understanding of his role as developer of almost all that was new and forward-looking in music. Bach would always remain uppermost; so too Mozart, the study of his concerti leading to the serenity of his own piece. And finally his discovery of Verdi's *Falstaff* gradually led to his own operatic contributions...*Arlecchino*, *Turandot* and ultimately *Doctor Faust*.

THE AUTHOR MAKES HIS DEBUT - 1907

Editorial work on Bach and Liszt had further turned Busoni's thoughts in a literary direction. To this period belongs the *Entwurf einer Neuen Aesthetik der Tonkunst* (An Outline of a new Aesthetics of Music), published in 1907. In it, Busoni attempts to define his concept of "Universal Music." At the head of the treatise appears this quotation: "...I wish for the Unknown! what I already know is limitless. I want to go still further." In essence, he hoped for a final artistic synthesis, a culmination of all thought and resource, leading to absolute perfection. If he were successful, he would create music which would defy all boundaries: ethnic, geographic, political...spiritual.

Attention to the writings of E.T.A. Hoffmann provided the subject for his new opera, *Die Brautwahl*. So influenced was he by Hoffmann that he came to believe almost that the spirit of Hoffmann had taken a sort of demoniac possession of him. To Gerda he wrote in July, 1906 that he had exclaimed: "Oh, E. T. A. Hoffmann! can it be that thou still livest in the spirit? and takest possession of me by night. I almost believe so."

By June of 1906 he had finished the first act; the libretto, written, as would be those of his three operas, by himself. By March of 1907, the second act and some other scenes had been sketched; but not until early 1909 was the orchestration completed; in July the complete score would come back from the binder. His characters involve the hero, Edmund Lehsen; Leonhardt, his mysterious protector; another lover of the heroine Albertine, a middle-aged State official, fussy, pedantic and self-important, named Thusman. There is a considerable injection of the fantastic into the tale...Leonhardt and an old Jew, Manasse (both seeming to have survived from some remote age), quarrel and display their magic powers as part of the action. It all concludes, of course, with Albertine's agreeing to marry Edmund, (who "wins" the Bridal Lottery) while an invisible chorus sings an ode in Latin to the glory of art. After unsuccessful attempts to mount the opera in Milan, London, and finally in America, (Toscanini was briefly interested, but never agreed to conduct it), in the spring of 1912, it was brought out at Hamburg. There was a *succés d'estime*, but it did not survive more than three performances. Revivals were limited to a production in Mannheim in 1913, conducted by Artur Bodanzky and much later, in Berlin in 1928, but without success. No performances are known to have taken place until recently, and a new recording (see discography) has been released.

BACK ON THE ROAD - 1910 - 1915

Though determined to continue composing, Busoni had to return to the dreary life of a performing artist. "Everything within me is asleep," he wrote. "I dream restlessly; of unattainable things, great works, beautiful countries...and rest!" A successful recital in London provided some comfort and he was able to further the careers of two young artists: Joseph Szigeti and his own pupil George Boyle (from Australia). Szigeti received lessons from Eugene Ysaÿe and Boyle an engagement as soloist with orchestra under Sir Henry Wood. Back in Vienna in 1909, he received bad news from Trieste. Both parents were ill, his father's case considered hopeless. He tried to prolong his stay with the two, being cared for by nieces, but engagements intervened, and it was not until March that he was able to pay a short visit. His mother gave him her final blessing; his father expired on May 12....Anna surviving him by only a few months, departing on October 3. Busoni wrote in his diary what might have served as her epitaph: "Our Lady of Sighs."

A new stimulus came to him in January 1910 in Chicago. There he met Bernhard Ziehn and former pupil Wilhelm Middelschulte. Both had settled there and were teaching counterpoint. Their encouragement and information would lead him to attempt the solution to Bach's unfinished *Kunst der fuge* (Art of the Fugue). During the concert tour to Cincinnati, Louisville, New Orleans, Atlanta, Dayton and Toledo (Ohio), he sent Gerda news of his progress toward what would become the monumental *Fantasia Contrappuntistica*. Back then to Europe and to Basle, for a master class and in the autumn the setting down of the pieces called *An die Jugend*, the first of the six Sonatinas and the touching *Berceuse Elégiaque* written in memory of his mother.

Busoni was always presented the work of his young pupils and opinions were frequently sought. To the American artist, Louis Gruenberg he wrote: "Composing only deserves the name when it busies itself ever with new problems. A composer who knows that he has nothing new to say has no business to write music at all." In New York he met Mahler, who conducted (in his very final concert) his *Berceuse Elégiaque*, but the work met with little success. The tour continued to the West, where he played in Kansas City and there conceived the notion of doing something with the Indian themes he had been given by one of his former pupils. The eventual results were the *Indianische Fantasia* and *Indianische Tagebuch* (Diary). From there it was on to Los Angeles and San Francisco, meeting emigrés from Germany and Italy; and thence to London.

PARIS. D'ANNUNZIO AND ARLECCHINO

Towards the end of April, with son Benni he visited Bologna, attending a performance of an old mask comedy, based on the Italian *Commedia dell'arte*. An actor in the part of Harlequin gave him the idea for what would become his second opera, *Arlecchino*. In August of 1912 he paid a visit to Paris where he encountered the poet Gabriele d'Annunzio, finding him "charming, a quick and lively thinker, a fascinating *raconteur*...a little 'scented' and affected, yet sometimes shy and confused." Though there would be many encounters and some suggestions that Busoni should compose music for his stage work, nothing ever materialized. Still, Busoni left Paris thinking that his operatic plans had been carried a step further.

In January of 1913, again in London, he attended a play with music, *Turandot*, which he found to be a disgraceful mish-mash: an orchestra of 20 playing out of tune; some bits played four or five times over, other parts cut; pieces by Saint-Saëns and Rimsky-Korsakov interpolated (Busoni, writing to Gerda says "shoved in! Imagine!"). But it evoked faint stirrings. "What do you think about *Turandot*?" his letter continued. "...as an opera, in Italian of course, to the words of Gozzi?" His homage to Bach (one among many) the *Fantasia Contrappuntistica* surfaced briefly at a London Philharmonic concert in an orchestration by Frederick Stock. Busoni had originally followed Bach's plan of a piece of pure music without any consideration of the instrument on which it would be played, and had already published the *Fantasia* in versions for pianoforte solo, and two pianofortes. Middelschulte had also arranged it for organ. The London Philharmonic programmed the Stock arrangement, somewhat puzzled as to why Busoni would allow another musician to orchestrate his piece, unaware of all the other versions. At the rehearsal, Busoni found some parts of Stock's work unsatisfactory and began suggesting alterations. Unwilling to wait until the composer was finished with his tampering, and because the parts needing adjustment could not be copied in time, the orchestra's directors cancelled the performance, much to Busoni's chagrin.

OPERA CONTINUES TO SEDUCE - LEONARDO AS SUBJECT?

Further to his operatic plans: again while walking in London, he caught sight of a poster advertising a film called "Dante's Hell" and the notion of creating a stage work based on Dante's picture of medieval Florence flashed through his mind. Nothing came of it and he reverted to Leonardo, who had been suggested by Gerda as a possible subject at one point. Back in Paris in June, he revisited d'Annunzio with the notion of collaboration on such a project. The poet had "stolen" the famous "Gioconda" from the Louvre ("...out of adoration and love," he wrote.) After four days it was returned voluntarily; no charges were filed.

Though the poet, initially hesitant was won over by the composer's enthusiasms, Busoni's innate suspicions of d'Annunzio's motives convinced him that nothing would develop as HE desired. "I felt as if I had been offered a glass of poisoned wine," he wrote to Gerda, when Tito Ricordi's name as potential publisher was mentioned. Everything apparently would depend upon Ricordi's approval. Saying that he would think it over, he made his way back to Berlin.

LICEO ROSSINI, BOLOGNA AND FAILURE - 1912

Now comes the final experiment involving the post of Director of a musical facility: the famed Liceo Rossini at Bologna, on Enrico Bossi's retirement in 1912. That he would consider such a move puzzled many of his admirers. He had, after all determined never to become involved in administration again, in light of his distaste for previous assignments in Moscow, Boston, and Vienna. But this was Italy, and Bologna was the site of the

oldest music establishment in Europe, the Accademia Filarmonica (founded in 1666). Mozart, at the age of fourteen had been prepared for his examination there by Padre Giovanni Battista Martini, the most learned contrapuntist and musical historian of his time. Both father Ferdinando and Busoni himself had been awarded honorary membership. The temptation to create an ideal center of music education was great.

And so he began to explore the possibilities. After protracted negotiations it was agreed that Busoni would be given an absolutely free hand in contemplated reforms and improvements. Further, it was accepted that his summers would be free, that he would be given leave to give concerts and travel. He dreamed of owning a villa, becoming "Italian" at last, giving up forever the life of a musical rover. After much hesitation, he agreed. The appointment was for life, but he was free to resign after the first year if he were not satisfied. He would be relieved of all administrative and business duties, and he was not required to give regular teaching. It seemed ideal and he left Berlin in September intending to make a leisurely journey to Bologna...excited at the prospect of the new season.

Alas, although he was impressed by the Liceo, with its historic reminders of past glories, Bologna almost at once began to be depressing. Despite the assurance that no non-musical duties would be required, he found himself with chores: local authorities to be interviewed, concert programs to be drawn up, collaboration in producing a new musical periodical, etc. etc. In the end, his only accomplished improvement was the result of a demand to the town council (which oversaw the facility) to improve the sanitary arrangements...probably untouched since the time of Padre Martini. After months of disappointment, he requested a year's leave of absence, declined a similar offer from America and returned to Berlin.

WAR IN EUROPE - BUSONI ADRIFT- 1914

War broke out in August, with the assassination in Sarajevo, quickly becoming a disaster for most of Europe. In all countries, curiously enough, it was believed that the war would be of short duration and that Germany would undoubtedly win. Three days after that Christmas of 1914, he had completed the poem to *Doctor Faust*...written down almost with a sense of inspiration, without hesitation or interruption. Then it was off to America on January 5, after a number of enforced stoppages at Zurich, Genoa and Naples. America welcomed him cordially, but it was quickly clear that after completing the prearranged concert tour to the Western states, his return to New York would place him in the "also ran" category. The city was filled with celebrated pianists...some twenty of them, with the result that nobody would pay to hear them play. While there, despite some inaction and disappointments, he took the opportunity to finish the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, his edition of the *Goldberg Variations* and completion of both his *Indian Fantasy* and *Rondo Arlecchinesco*. Besides these considerable accomplishments, he had written the libretto for his opera *Arlecchino*, resisting the urgings of influential musical friends to complete the score at once for possible production at the Metropolitan Opera. Busoni knew well that *Arlecchino* would be no opera for that house and he resolved to return to Europe as soon as possible.

But where would he go? Berlin proved to be impossible; the situation at Bologna, with a change of administration had become hopeless and once again, the new directors felt his frequent absences to be an indication that he was neglecting his duties. They quickly appointed a new director. Busoni allowed the dereliction! to go unchallenged and settled in Switzerland in Zurich by the end of October 1915. Welcomed warmly by many friends, no relationship proved more rewarding than that of the conductor of the Zurich municipal orchestra, Dr. Volkmar Andreae. He was an outstanding musician, entirely free from virtuoso conductorial vanity...a model of efficiency, punctuality and organizing ability. He had been a colonel in the Swiss artillery, but no touch of military precision marred his attempts to further

the cause of music and the artistic support of other musicians.

Busoni gave concerts in January of 1916 and substituted on the podium for Dr. Andreae, called up for military service. In February, he presented an entire program of Liszt's works, including the A Major Concerto (played by Petri), *Les Préludes* and the *Faust Symphony*. In July, his opera *Arlecchino* was accepted for production at the Zurich opera house, and as it was not long enough to occupy a whole evening, Busoni suddenly determined to convert his incidental music to *Turandot* into a short opera with spoken dialogue. It should be noted that this feat of rapid workmanship gave considerable satisfaction to the composer: the score of 300 pages had been completed in just over a hundred days. First performance of the combined offering took place in Zurich on May 11, 1917. Both were described by the composer as examples of a new "comedy of masks"...though *Arlecchino*, which would prove to be the most popular of any of his operas, was seen more as a ferocious satire on convention: the theatre, the opera, war and human nature.

THE ARTIST AT THE HALFWAY POINT - 1916

"And where do I go from here?," he wrote on the occasion of his 50th birthday on April 1, 1916. "The greater part of my life," he continued, "is now behind me. How can I now make up for the lost hours which might have been spent in composing? I must make the best of the little time left to me." It was a disturbing paean, heard often by Gerda and those intimate friends in whom he knew he could confide. Busoni was intensely lonely, the feeling of abandonment made more painful by the departure of his colleague, José Vianna da Motta, appointed Head of the Conservatoire in Lisbon. His house in Zurich, small, cramped and uncomfortable was yet a haven for aspiring young musicians, including a bright youngster from France, Philipp Jarnach. He soon became Busoni's *famulus*, as he dubbed him, employing the excellent pianist to make transcriptions for his instrument of both operas.

Besides these activities, time was spent in train watching, promenades which would be described in contemporary parlance as "watching all the girls go by"...and last but not least, excursions with the newly-acquired St. Bernard, Giotto. Work resumed on *Doctor Faust*, but spasmodically... and little other than the *Sonatina in diem Nativitatis Christi* could be entered in his composition book as 1917 ended and another depressing year "wasted" in Switzerland began. "Finally, finally the agony, the interminable agony of war," said Busoni, "has brought relief." (Letter to his friend the Marchese Casanova, 1918). Curiously, Ferruccio regarded it as a signal for Germany's spiritual resurrection...an indication that she would find a nobler way in which to show her greatness. How tragic that conviction would be in light of events following his demise in 1924. Benni, who had elected to remain in America, and who had been conscripted in the war effort, arrived in Zurich. His father wrote to Gerda from London: "Kiss Benni for me and tell him I want him to feel happy and to like the little town that has given us so much that was good. He ought now to consider what path he means to follow and whether or not he wishes to return to America." Benvenuto decided to settle in Berlin, where he married the one girl he had met, "who had never heard of my father."

LAST YEARS - HONOR. GLORY AND DOCTOR FAUST

In 1920 Busoni gave concerts in London and Paris, to great acclaim. He wrote to Andreae from England, thanking him for his friendship and service. "Parting will not be easy," the letter concluded, "but my sense of form tells me that the length of this movement must not be exceeded." He visualized his new life as divided among Paris, London, Berlin and Rome. America should see him no more, he resolved. As a result of his pupil, Leo Kestenberg's being given an important educational post and the young man's offer of

employment for Busoni there, he decided to move permanently to the Prussian capital. It would be a move he would soon regret, as the economic situation began to deteriorate and in a short time, accelerate to impossible proportions.

His health, never robust in recent years, had begun to decline. To friends who had been cut off from him during the war years, his outward appearance was indeed distressing. It was the beginning of the kidney dysfunction which would ultimately carry him off. The Berlin of 1920 was a changed city. War had spawned poverty, and poverty, crime. Shortages of every kind developed. The once-proud hotels and cafés reflected the absence of textiles, leather, metal. But the flat in the Victoria Luise Platz was in perfectly sound condition; one of the "caryatides" had watched over it throughout the war and on Busoni's return, he would find everything to be exactly as he left it. Berlin at once stimulated him to composition. He quickly finished the *Toccata* for pianoforte and amused himself by writing a set of waltzes for orchestra (*Tanzwalzer*) suggested by the accidental hearing of a Strauss waltz at the door of a café.

Concert giving resumed as well, in London in February, and Rome in April. The Berlin recitals, meantime, proved to be triumphs such as he had never before experienced. What did he play? Chopin's *24 Preludes*, the *Hammerklavier* Sonata of Beethoven and Liszt's *Paganini* Etudes. Three orchestral concerts of his own works were planned...and given in January, 1921...culminating in a vivid demonstration of affection when he played his Concerto on the 27th.

With the German currency deteriorating rapidly he could not afford to neglect England and those odious provincial tours. In London he played Beethoven's Sonata Op. 111, his new *Toccata* and the last of the Sonatinas, on *Carmen*; Chopin's Op. 35 Sonata and Liszt's *Venezia e Napoli*....and as encore? the great *Legende* No. 2, *St Francis of Paul Walking on the Water*.

In 1919 and again in 1922, he made phonograph records for Columbia (now EMI)...two separate sessions involving the same repertoire (see discography). From London Busoni went on to Rome, where a title of Commendatore was conferred upon him. Two concerts made up of six piano concerti of Mozart further exhausted him, but he persevered...to the extent of adopting the practice of conducting from the keyboard when disputes about tempi with the conductor Gustav Brecher developed. Audiences applauded the substitution.

Performances of his operas, *Turandot* and *Arlecchino* were scheduled at the State Opera on his return to Berlin, under Max von Schillings and Leo Blech. The May 19 evening was a decisive success under Blech, one of the great German conductors of the time. But this success proved to be a personal handicap in light of the Opera people's talking already of *Doctor Faust* as a *fait accompli*. Busoni alone knew how much had not been completed. He estimated that fully 1/6th was yet to be.

ILLNESS. LAST CONCERTS. FINAL ENTHUSIASMS

In the autumn work was suddenly interrupted by a sharp attack of illness which compelled him at last to place himself in the hands of a doctor. He had always resisted attempts on the part of friends to avail himself of treatment or even advice. Now he had to deal with serious problems, to be concealed from his wife (although she of course was the first person to detect it.) After concerts of Mozart piano concerti in Berlin, the illness passed, and he finished the year with a feeling of confidence and hope. Next spring there would be concerts in London, Paris, and Rome...if only the doctor would make up his mind and give a definite decision! He did, and England was managed with some difficulty, particularly the regional concerts in Glasgow, Manchester and

Bradford. On to Paris then, where he was greeted with an extraordinary ovation of approximately ten minutes. His good friend the composer Isidor Philipp tried...valiantly and unceasingly... to persuade him to accept a lucrative engagement in South America, at the behest of the President of the Argentine Republic. Busoni's reaction? "You take me for a commercial traveller for the *Campanella*? Jamais!"

Busoni's one longing was to get back to *Doctor Faust*; it was, as he remarked, "always difficult to start the machine" after so long an interruption. The concerts had left him physically exhausted, but he remained always hopeful, and confident of the future. "Shall I live to see a new dawn? *Qui sait?* Well, when I take my departure, I shall be comforted by the conviction that I have not wasted my time. One is not yet old, but one is no longer young. The evil is not in growing old, but in being unable to admit it."

The autumn brought another and more severe attack of illness, which kept Busoni an invalid for four months. Years of neglect of minor illnesses and hygienic precautions had weakened the body, and the constant strain of work at high pressure had resulted in nervous exhaustion, aggravating any physical disorder. Berlin doctors told him that only complete rest and abstention from work of all kinds would prolong his life. To this Busoni responded that to adopt such a procedure might as well be death itself. He could not countenance it. The old firehorse would continue to respond to the bell...now the establishment of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) in Salzburg. As quickly as his health would permit, he told its members, he would be happy to serve in any way possible: as pianist, conductor or simply member of the International Jury.

One project fascinated him: a collaboration with Petri in January of 1923. His letter to Petri suggested a complete edition of the piano concerti of Mozart, to be printed in three pairs of staves: Mozart's original, Busoni's transcription of the solo part, and Petri's pianoforte arrangement of the orchestra. It was to be a project never even begun. The planned English concerts had to be cancelled, their abandonment a serious financial blow in the light of the daily deterioration of German currency.

Among the disappointments of 1923, the collapse of the optimistic plans for the ISCM. Ethnic differences emerged, with jealousy among the various artists: German, French and Italian members could not agree on even forming a committee to decide works to be performed. Busoni was eventually to abandon any participation in the Society.

LAST DAYS - BUSONI EXPIRES IN 1924

The illness made its gradual, inexorable progress, and he became increasingly unable to function, particularly as a pianist. No further thoughts of London, Paris or elsewhere for recitals. *Doctor Faust* progressed, slowly, but it was clear that the Dresden Opera, anxiously awaiting word of production, would not receive even an incomplete torso, although they were willing. All that remained to be written was the final scene. But this would be a project for young Philipp Jarnach, after Busoni's departure. By the end of June in 1924 he was so weak that he hardly seemed to realize either his surroundings or his own condition. As he lay in silence, he suddenly heard the sound of an old-fashioned cab, making its way down the Victoria Luise Platz. "Horses' hoofs!" he whispered. "That reminds me of Helsingfors. Those were wonderful times!" He took Gerda's hand in his. "Dear one" ...the words came slowly.. "I thank you for every day that we have been together." Unconsciousness followed, and he died on July 27th at about half-past three in the morning.

N.B. This consideration of the life and times of the great artist is an expansion of material contained in the web site: <http://www.rprf.org/index.html>. In this lengthy recounting, you will find a shorter biography, by the late David Mason Greene (used with permission from his estate); the aforementioned historic concerts, given in Berlin from 1902 to 1909. Further, his repertoire, including the celebrated series of performances given in the early part of the last century. Finally, his compositions, transcriptions, and an up-to-date consideration of recordings, both current and historic.

Albert M. Petrak



Gerda Busoni (née Sjöstrand), with sons Raffaello and Benvenuto
(Photo taken about 1905/6)



Ferruccio Busoni at the Mupfeld Studio