

Michele Campanella biography

Internationally acclaimed as one of the major virtuoso interpreters of Liszt, three-time winner of the Grand Prix du Disque awarded by the prestigious Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest (1976, 1977 and 1998), the latter for his recording “Franz Liszt-The Great Transcriptions, I-II” (Philips), Michele Campanella has interpreted in over 45 years of career most of the major piano repertoire. He has been awarded the “Liszt high merit” medal by the Hungarian government in 1986 and the American Liszt Society Medal in 2002.

Trained at the Vincenzo Vitale School in Naples, Michele Campanella is a very versatile artist. This has enabled him to face composers like Clementi, Weber, Poulenc, Busoni (1980 “Italian Discographic Critic Award” for his Fonit Cetra recordings), Rossini, Brahms, Ravel and Liszt. He has recently recorded an anthology of Liszt paraphrases, the 12 Transcendental Studies, and a selection of works from the late period played on Liszt’s own original Bechstein piano. This is the first chapter of an important 12 CD series dedicated to Liszt that will be released under the “Brillant” label.

His discography includes recordings for Emi (Ravel), Philips (Liszt, Saint-Saëns), Foné (Chopin), PYE (Liszt, Tchaikovsky), Fonit Cetra (Busoni), Nuova Era (Tchaikovsky, Liszt, Mussorgsky, Balakirev), Musikstrasse (Rossini), P&P (Brahms, Liszt, Scarlatti) and Niccolò (Schumann). In 2005, the Rossini Opera Festival published a recording of the Petite Messe Solennelle in Pesaro, conducted by Michele Campanella.

Mr. Campanella has performed with the principal European and American orchestras (Philadelphia Orchestra, Chicago Symphony, San Francisco Symphony) and collaborated with conductors such as Claudio Abbado, Gianluigi Gelmetti, Elisha Inbal, Charles Mackerras, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, Georges Prêtre, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Thomas Schippers, Hubert Soudant, Pinchas Steinberg and Christian Thielemann. He is frequently invited to Australia, Russia, the United Kingdom, Argentina, China, as well as being a regular guest at international festivals such as Lucerne, Vienna, Berlin, Prague and Pesaro (Rossini Opera Festival). Recent performance highlights include all Beethoven and Mozart concertos as well as the complete piano works by Brahms.

Together with Salvatore Accardo and Rocco Filippini he established an ideal musical partnership during the 1990’s for the chamber music repertoire. In the last years, Campanella’s career as conductor/soloist has been further developed performing with several prestigious Italian orchestras, such as the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia Orchestra in Rome, the ORT-Orchestra della Toscana, the Orchestra da Camera di Padova e del Veneto, I Filarmonici di Verona, the Haydn Orchestra of Bolzano and Trento. His repertoire includes works by Ravel, Fauré, Poulenc, Franck, Saint-Saëns, Schumann, Weber, Liszt, alongside Mozart and Beethoven.

A dedicated and passionate teacher, Campanella was head of the piano department at the Accademia Chigiana (Siena) from 1986 to 2010, as well as conducting advanced training courses for eight years in Ravello. He is the director of the Vincenzo Vitale Center for Piano Studies at the University Suor Orsola Benincasa of Naples. He has been celebrated by the prestigious “Premio Napoli” and “Guido e Roberto Cortese” foundations. He is also a member of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Accademia Filarmonica Romana and Accademia Cherubini di Firenze. For nine years he has been artistic director of three different concert seasons sponsored by the Naples, Benevento and Catanzaro Universities. He has recently been nominated artistic director of the “Maggio della Musica” festival in Naples. Since 2008 he has been President of the “Società Liszt”, the Italian chapter of the American Liszt Society. In 2011, as the world celebrated the bicentenary of Franz Liszt's birth, Campanella dedicated his entire musical activity, both as pianist and conductor, to the Hungarian composer he studied and loved from the age of fourteen, engaging himself in a long series of solo concerts in Italy and abroad: Accademia

Nazionale di Santa Cecilia (Rome), Unione Musicale (Turin), Cini Foundation (Venice) for the Wagner Society, Verdi Conservatoire (Milan), San Carlo Theatre (Naples), Accademia Musicale Chigiana (Siena), L'Aquila, Piacenza, Cremona, Udine and Parma. As a part of the prestigious Ravenna Festival, acting as conductor/soloist together with the Luigi Cherubini Orchestra, Campanella performed in one single evening the complete Liszt piano and orchestra compositions.

His most important international engagements in 2011 included concerts in Buenos Aires, Tokyo (Tokyo Suntory Hall) and Chicago, where Campanella gave three performances of the Liszt Concerto No.1 for piano and orchestra together with Riccardo Muti and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra as part of the Liszt bicentenary celebrations.

In collaboration with the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia and the Accademia Musicale Chigiana, Campanella conceived and directed a series of Liszt marathons where the composer's complete piano works were performed in Rome's Parco Della Musica. A project of this magnitude (including the participation of seventy five Italian pianists) generated great interest since nothing of the kind had ever before been attempted.

In addition to his work as a musician, Campanella is also a writer. In 2011 Bompiani published his book "Il mio Liszt. Considerazioni di un interprete". The book is a literary homage dedicated to Campanella's beloved composer. In 2012 Campanella was awarded the prestigious prizes Premio Scanno and Premio Grotta di Tiberio for musical performance.

In 2013, the bicentenary of both Richard Wagner and Giuseppe Verdi, Campanella engaged in a long series of concerts dedicated to Franz Liszt's Paraphrases, intended as a musical meeting place for both composers' lives and work. A Special Edition 3CD set was published by Brilliant Classics. During that year, Campanella toured Italy, Hungary, Spain, Russia, Germany, Croatia and China confirming his important role of Music Ambassador in the World.

During 2014, Campanella is a protagonist both as soloist and orchestra leader in the performance of "Mozart's last concerto K 595 and Brahms' concerto n.2". He also performed a recital entitled "Chopin vs Liszt: La Battaglia" -a peaceful match between two of piano literature's best composers. Also that year, he toured the United States with the "Fine Arts Quartet" and later South America with violinist Boris Belkin. In the same year Campanella produced a CD, edited by Cam Jazz, based on jazz improvisation with saxophonist Javier Girotto. He was also awarded the national honor "Cavaliere dell'Ordine Al Merito della Repubblica Italiana".

During 2015, Campanella's polyhedric activity led him on a concert tour with Javier Girotto entitled "Music sans Frontières", performing music by Ravel and Debussy. In October 2015 he celebrated the 50th anniversary of his debut at the San Carlo theatre, in Naples.