



THE COMPLETE RECORDINGS • 6

HANDEL

HAYDN

TCHAIKOVSKY

MASSENET

DVOŘÁK

KREISLER

Fritz Kreisler

Recorded 1924-1925

**Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962):
The Complete Recordings • 6
Victor Talking Machine Co.**

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893): Concerto in D, Op. 35		Jules Massenet (1842-1912): Thaïs
1	II. Canzonetta rec. 24th January 1924; <i>mat. C-29401-2; unpublished on 78 rpm</i>	8
4:02		3:57
Eduard Schütt (1856-1933): Slavonic Lament (arr. Carl Friedberg)		Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904): Slavonic Dance in E minor, Op. 72, No. 2 (arr. Kreisler)
2	rec. 24th January 1924; <i>mat. B-29413-2; cat. 1043</i>	9
2:42		4:11
Joseph Haydn (1732-1809): Symphony No. 96 in D major 'Miracle'		Ernő Balogh (1897-1989): Dirge of the North (arr. Kreisler)
3	III. Minuet (arr. Friedberg) rec. 24th January 1924; <i>mat. B-29414-2; cat. 1010</i>	10
2:41		2:13
Traditional: Old French Gavotte (arr. Friedberg)		Johann Evangelist Brandl (1760-1837): Der liebe Augustin
4	rec. 24th January 1924; <i>mat. C-29415-3; cat. 1010</i>	11
2:28		2:40
Ede Poldini (1869-1957): Marionettes		Ignacy Paderewski (1860-1941): Paraphrase on Minuet in G, Op. 14, No. 1 (arr. Kreisler)
5	La poupée valsante (arr. Kreisler) rec. 27th March 1924; <i>mat. B-29841-5; cat. 1029</i>	12
2:33		3:11
Percy Grainger (1882-1961): Molly on the Shore (arr. Kreisler)		Charles G. Dawes (1865-1951): Melody in A major
6	rec. 27th March 1924; <i>mat. B-29846-1; cat. 1075</i>	13
2:36		2:19
Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957): Die tote Stadt		Victor Herbert (1859-1924): Orange Blossoms
7	Pierrot's Dance Song (arr. Kreisler) rec. 28th March 1924; <i>mat. B-29851-1; cat. 1062</i>	14
2:40		2:41

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759): Serse		Eduard Lalo (1823-1892): Symphonie espagnole
15	Largo 'Ombra mai fu' (arr. Kreisler) rec. 11th April 1924; <i>mat. C-14342-8; cat. 6184</i>	19
4:08		3:58
Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962): Caprice viennois, Op. 2		Charles Wakefield Cadman (1881-1946): Legend of the Canyon, Op. 68
16	rec. 11th April 1924; <i>mat. C-8940-12; cat. 6181</i>	20
3:17		3:05
Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893): Souvenir de Hapsal, Op. 2		Ernő Balogh (1897-1989): Caprice antique (arr. Kreisler)
17	No. 3: Chanson sans paroles (arr. Kreisler) rec. 15th April 1924; <i>mat. B-8952-7; cat. 716</i>	21
2:39		2:18
George Bass (?-?): Chansonette		Tracks 1-11 and 13-21 with Carl Lamson, piano Track 12 with Victor Orchestra • Rosario Bourdon
18	rec. 15th April 1924; <i>mat. B-29844-7; cat. 1062</i>	
2:09		

All tracks were recorded in Camden, New Jersey

Thanks to John Bolig and Lawrence Holdridge

Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962)

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Fritz Kreisler and his wife Harriet experienced one of the most fruitful periods of their joint life in the 13 months covered by these sessions. For the first time in 22 years of marriage, they had a home of their own: they acquired several acres in the Grunewald area of west Berlin and built 'a residential mansion for themselves, a comfortable house for the caretaker and his wife, a conservatory for hothouse flowers and vegetables, an Italian rose garden which was Harriet's special pride, and a parklike terrace with a lawn slowly undulating away from the verandah of the mansion and ending some hundred yards beyond in a sort of grotto with a large marble bench and several seats in white Italian marble'. The description comes from Kreisler's biographer Louis P. Lochner, who often visited them there. Sadly they were to enjoy hardly a decade in their home before the advent of the Third Reich began to make it difficult for them to live in Berlin; and the house was destroyed by Allied bombing at the end of World War II. Germany had just been through the terrible inflation of 1923, during which the Kreislers – flush with Fritz's earnings from overseas tours – had helped many people less fortunate than themselves. No doubt it was a good time to buy land and build, when labour was cheap.

Meanwhile in January 1924 they were in America, where Fritz had concerts including three Carnegie Hall recitals with pianist Carl Lamson in New York: his repertoire included the Tchaikovsky *Concerto* and Percy Grainger's *Molly on the Shore*, both of which would feature in his recording sessions for Victor. The Kreislers set off for Europe in late April but had hardly arrived when they received a cable saying that Harriet's father had died in New York – so back to America they went, cancelling most of a European tour. On the voyage their liner, the SS Berengaria, picked up an engineer from another ship who had met with an accident: Harriet got up a collection for him among the passengers and raised \$1,200. The Kreislers were back in Europe in time for Fritz to give two recitals with Charlton Keith at the Albert Hall in London, including a Sunday-afternoon concert on 22 June. Besides a Handel sonata, the 'Pugnani' *Praeludium* and *Allegro* and short pieces, the programme included Kreisler's first performance of Mozart's *Sinfonia concertante, K364*, with the great violist Lionel Tertis. The pair played Hellmesberger's cadenza in the first movement, Mozart's in the second and one specially written by Kreisler in the finale. The critic of

The Times thought that 'the two were perfectly matched' and hoped they would give a performance with orchestra one day. Alas, it never happened.

Kreisler was back in Britain in November for two London concerts and provincial dates, then gave his only concert of the year in Vienna and spent Christmas at the new house in Berlin before setting off once more for America on the first stage of a world tour. For his initial New York appearance at a packed Carnegie Hall on 29 January, he had a surprise guest, Lionel Tertis. 'These two perhaps supreme artists of the respective instruments, with Kreisler's American pianist, Carl Lamson, as their "orchestra", gave one of the rare musical performances of this or any season,' reported *The New York Times*. 'Mozart's music, molten and liquid gold, entranced a modern audience, as it may have inspired humbler practitioners of old-time intimate gatherings of musicians.'

It would be good to have something of the stature of the Mozart work from Kreisler's nine Victor sessions in early 1924 and his five further sessions in February 25. As it is, from these many hours of recording only 22 published takes exist, of which we have 20 (the sole copy of the rare Victor 711, containing remakes of Kreisler's own *Berceuse romantique* and Townsend's *Berceuse*, that Ward Marston has located, is entangled in the Byzantine bureaucracy of the Johnson Museum in Dover, Delaware). It seems that in these final months of acoustic recording, the Victor engineers were either experimenting or having problems with their equipment. Other experienced recording artists such as the Flonzaley Quartet had similar problems with multiple takes; and the brief Victor career of Kreisler's colleague Cecilia Hansen, lasting from December 1923 to October 1925, was a nightmare, producing six published sides from 69 takes.

One positive aspect is that the repertoire at these Kreisler sessions is particularly rich in double-stops. This device was one of the best things in his armoury: his double-stops were always sensitively played and dead in tune. Victor records by the young Turk of the violin, Jascha Heifetz, had been selling well; and perhaps Kreisler wanted to show his supremacy in at least one aspect of technique. We last left him in Volume 5 [Naxos 8.111398] at his session of 18 January 1924. The final side recorded then was a lone take of the *Canzonetta* from the Tchaikovsky *Concerto*. On 24 January, after two more abortive takes of Scott's *Lotus Land*, two further takes

of the *Canzonetta* were taken down; and although they too were not passed for issue, a test pressing of Take 2 survives. It is beautifully played, with a hauntingly 'speaking' tone and lovely trills. Three takes each of a trio of Carl Friedberg arrangements yielded three published sides: in Schütt's mediocre *Slavonic Lament*, Kreisler is just going through the motions, but the *Minuet* from Haydn's '*Miracle*' *Symphony* has delightful rhythm and nice, tight trills, while an *Old French Gavotte* has fine rhythm, tight trills, double-stops and a splendid ending. On 27 March, 25 takes brought forth just two successes: Poldini's *La poupée valsante* took five takes but was worth it for the delectable result; and *Molly on the Shore*, well rehearsed for Kreisler's recitals, was done in one enjoyable take. Charles Wakefield Cadman's *From the Land of the Sky-Blue Water* and the *Largo* of Dvorák's *New World Symphony* would have to wait until Kreisler's second electric session for successful outcomes. George Bass's *Chansonette*, Victor Herbert's *A Kiss in the Dark* and Kreisler's own *Caprice viennois* were not passed. The following day, out of 19 takes, Korngold's *Pierrot Song* was successful at the first attempt: a typical Viennese waltz, it finds Kreisler on home ground, with fine double-stops. Dvorák's *E minor Slavonic Dance* (arranged in G minor) and the *Meditation* from *Thaïs*, already in the catalogue since 1915 and 1916 respectively, were given new recordings, perhaps to refresh tired master discs: the *Meditation* is gorgeously played, with lovely tone over virtually the entire compass of the violin, and the *Slavonic Dance* features wonderful double-stopping. On the 29th Ernő Balogh's undistinguished *Dirge of the North* was achieved, better played than it deserved. On 9 April Kreisler succeeded with just one take out of ten, a re-recording of Brandl's *The Old Refrain*, previously done in 1916: one hears marvellous G-string tone here, with one strain of the melody in double-stops. On 10 April the violinist was backed by a string trio of Messrs Alexander Schmidt, Josef Pasternack and Alfred Lennartz: the *Adagietto* from Bizet's *L'Arlésienne* was passed and given an issue number, but appears not to have been released. More fortunate was Paderewski's *Minuet*, accompanied by members of the Victor Orchestra, almost nonchalantly played with excellent rhythm, trills and a cadenza. Of four pieces played with Lamson, the only one to pass muster was a re-recording of the *Melody* in A by General Charles G. Dawes, previously done as recently

as 1921: again the double-stops are lovely. The following day Handel's *Largo*, accomplished in one take in 1914, was given a re-recording after seven attempts, but lacked the spontaneity of the original: Lamson sounds insensitive, while Kreisler's ascent by an octave for the reprise now seems meretricious. Victor Herbert's charming waltz tune, a showcase for Kreisler's parlando bowing, finally succeeded at the twelfth attempt; and Kreisler's own *Caprice viennois* achieved a re-recording after nine tries, with the reprise of the opening flourish restored at the end – it had been cut in the otherwise excellent Takes 2 and 3 of 1910. The last session of 1924, on 15 April, was the most productive of the year: for every piece attempted, one take found favour. Those we have here are a lovely remake of one of Kreisler's favourite pieces, Tchaikovsky's *Chanson sans paroles*, and Bass's rather ordinary *Chansonette*, with nice double-stops.

The first four sessions of February 1925 produced not a single release from 45 takes. Much frustration was caused by Arthur Hartmann's fine transcription of Debussy's piano piece *The Girl with the Flaxen Hair*: reaching Take 11 without success, it carried on accumulating takes in the electric era, getting to Take 27 in 1928 – Take 25 was finally published. Even sadder were the cases of Kreisler's own *Tempo di minuetto* in the style of Pugnani and *Aubade provençale* in the style of Couperin, which never achieved a release. Fortunately a test pressing of the *Scherzando* from Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole* has survived from 13 February 1925: it is superb and, as with the test of the *Canzonetta* from the Tchaikovsky *Concerto*, makes one all the sorer that Kreisler did not record more of the work – like all his contemporaries, he played only four of the *Symphonie espagnole*'s five movements. Out of the 21 takes waxed at the very last Victor acoustic session, on 25 February, just two were published: Cadman's *The Legend of the Canyon*, an original piece dedicated to Kreisler, and Balogh's jolly *Caprice antique*, given a delightful performance.

On 2 February 1925, Kreisler turned 50, an age at which many violinists of his era were beginning to decline. He was playing better than ever; and when he next entered a Victor studio, on 27 August 1925, a microphone would catch his unique tone with even greater fidelity.

Tully Potter



ADD

FRITZ KREISLER (1875-1962) THE COMPLETE RECORDINGS • 6

Playing
Time
62:26

Victor Talking Machine Co.

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3	Joseph Haydn: Symphony No. 96 'Miracle': III. Minuet	2:41
4	Traditional: Old French Gavotte	2:28
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1-11 and 13-21 with Carl Lamson, piano
12 with Victor Orchestra • Rosario Bourdon

Arrangers: Carl Friedberg (2-4); Fritz Kreisler (5-7, 9-12, 14-15, 17, 21);
Martin Pierre Marsick (8)

All tracks were recorded in Camden, New Jersey, 1924-1925

Volume 6 of this series completes Kreisler's acoustic recordings for the Victor Talking Machine Company. The February 1925 sessions were the final months of acoustic recording techniques and, despite numerous takes, many of the sides were regrettably not passed for release. Fortunately an extremely rare test pressing of the *Scherzando* from Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole* has survived (Track 19) as has an unpublished test pressing from 24 January 1924 of Take 2 of the Tchaikovsky *Canzonetta* (Track 1), which preserves Kreisler's hauntingly 'speaking' tone and lovely trills. Kreisler turned 50 in February 1925, but with his sensitive tone and impeccably tuned double-stops he was playing better than ever.

Producer and Audio Restoration Producer: Ward Marston
Thanks to John Bolig and Lawrence Holdridge
Cover Image: Fritz Kreisler, 1913 [Private Collection]
A complete track list can be found inside the booklet

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