

# ALFRED BRENDEL

Pianist

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*The New York Times*

March 26, 2005

MUSIC REVIEW | ALFRED BRENDEL

## Finding the Innocence in Experience

By **BERNARD HOLLAND**

Performance in its purest state would come ideally from small children, direct and unencumbered by second thoughts. For adults, study and consideration - the asking of the question "What does this mean?" - get in the way. Interpretation, for lack of a better word, becomes both a necessary step and an unfortunate loss of innocence in the lives of musicians. Only a few find their way to innocence regained.

Listening to the pianist Alfred Brendel play Schumann's "Kreisleriana" at Carnegie Hall on Thursday night was to hear a great rush of inspiration that had been taken apart piece by piece, had its every gesture weighed and examined, and had then been put back together. The result was a studied spontaneity, thoughtful thoughtlessness. In a sense, this was Schumann not played but considered. But in the end, the power of thinking served the heart.

It was nice to hear Mr. Brendel in such good technical form at age 74. "Kreisleriana" is not an easy piece, and Mr. Brendel was its master. On Thursday, he surrounded himself with the music he has spent a long life examining. There were Mozart's "Duport" Variations, three of Schubert's "Moments musicaux" and the Beethoven "Pastoral" Sonata. Some musicians spread their arms and embrace the world of composers. Others, like Mr. Brendel, choose a handful of friends and dig deeply into their characters.

The Schubert items, with their amiable surfaces and sporadic glimpses of terror, are some of the biggest little pieces ever written. The Mozart mixes charm with virtuoso complication. The Beethoven finds music's great architect in the best of moods. A black-and-white pianist in his early years, Mr. Brendel has discovered both color and tone in his later ones. The sound carries easily in this big hall. The differentiation of colors in his playing becomes a tool as important as correct rhythm and choice of tempo.

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