



Edition Sergiu Celibidache | The complete RIAS recordings

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EAN: 4022143214065



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[American Record Guide](#) (David Radcliffe - 01.09.2011)

Celibidache, famously, was the conductor who didn't make recordings; he was long a cult figure, though since he died in 1996 he has been, if anything, overexposed through reissued broadcasts. This collection has particular interest, both historical and musical. Celibidache conducted the Berlin Philharmonic from 1945, when Furtwangler was banished, to the beginning of Karajan's tenure in 1952. It was still very much Furtwangler's orchestra, though some things had changed, as a glance at the contents indicates: this is music banned by the Nazis and so new to Berlin audiences in 1948-50. (The three pieces by Heinz Tiessen, Celibidache's teacher, were recorded for the RIAS in 1957). Celibidache was, like Furtwangler, a fundamentally subjective artist. In these early performances, the personal seems less significant than the social as the orchestra rejoices in the new liberal era. The Rhapsody in Blue is performed in the best sleazy-jazz Berlin manner reminiscent of Klemperer's Three-penny Opera suite of an earlier day. By contrast the Hindemith seems mere cacophony as the spirit of the composer proves more elusive. The Tiessen works are middle-brow Teutonism that leaves one wondering what he could have done to run afoul of the Nazis. Reinhard Schwarz-Schilling's piece is a pleasing homage to Bach; the Busoni concerto can be heard to much better advantage elsewhere. Harald Genzmer's Flute Concerto is a neoclassical gem of the first water: I would very much like to hear more from this composer. The outstanding performance is Copland's Appalachian Spring. Here one relishes the meditative qualities that made Celibidache a cult figure and an elfin grace and lightness that quite lift the spirit out of the body. Presumably this has more to do with the conductor's relish for Buddhism than any feeling for Americana, but whatever the source, his gift for simplicity proves abundant. Anyone with a serious interest in Celibidache should seek this out. Audite's production is first-rate, a far cry from the dismal pirated LPs where we first encountered Celibidache in the West. The orchestra is splendid. The conductor, the repertoire, and the epoch make this a historical reissue worthy of particular notice.