



**Clara Haskil plays Mozart: Piano
Concerto K. 466 - Robert Casadesus
plays Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 5**

aud 95.623

EAN: 4022143956231



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Gramophone (01.10.2013)

GRAMOPHONE

Gems from Lucerne

If Audite's series 'Lucerne Festival Historic Performances' continues as it has begun, we're in for a sequence of unmissable treasures. The first CD to come my way couples performances that, in addition to being musically exceptional, are, for their period, extremely well recorded. Clara Haskil's symbiotic relationship with Mozart's D minor Concerto, K466, is documented on numerous recordings but the performance she gave in 1959 at Lucerne with the Philharmonia under a consistently insightful Otto Klemperer is, if memory serves, a cut above the rest. Aside from the obvious rapport between pianist and conductor, there's Haskil's pellucid phrasing, her firm but elegant touch and, as ever with her, an unflinching feel for musical timing, striking the note at precisely the right moment. She plays her own first-movement cadenza, and her unhurried pacing of the central Romanze is perfection itself. I'd call it a performance in a million.

Audite's coupling, from two years earlier, could hardly mark more of a contrast. As with Haskil and the Mozart D minor, we're not exactly short of recordings of Robert Casadesus playing Beethoven's Emperor Concerto, including a (New York) version under the baton of the same conductor who leads the present performance with the VPO, Dimitri Mitropoulos. Casadesus gives a strong, combustible yet classically proportioned reading, with sky-bound first-movement cadenzas and a liltingly rumbustious finale that finds Mitropoulos and his players goading Casadesus on. At once extrovert and, where appropriate, thoughtful, this big-boned performance surveys the full measure of the most heroic among Beethoven's concertos. Sold? I sincerely hope so.