

RIAS Knabenchor



The RIAS Bach Cantatas Project

Johann Sebastian Bach

9CD aud 21.415

DeutschlandRadio Kultur - Radiofeuilleton 27.02.2012 (Claudia Dasche - 2012.02.27)



Klassik: "The RIAS Bach Cantatas Project"

Originalbänder aus dem RIAS-Archiv

Neun CDs umfasst die Box "The RIAS Bach Cantatas Project". Sie ist nicht nur ein musikalisches Ereignis, sondern veranschaulicht zugleich den kulturellen Wiederaufbau in Deutschland nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg.

Der Dirigent Karl Ristenpart leitete ab 1946 den RIAS Kammerchor und das RIAS Kammerorchester. Gemeinsam mit vielen Solisten, darunter die Sopranistin Agnes Giebel und der junge Baritonsänger Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, wurden 29 Kantaten aufgenommen. Für die Erstveröffentlichung der RIAS-Bach-Kantaten-Edition wurden die Originalbänder aus dem RIAS-Archiv verwendet, die in der Zeit zwischen 1949 und 1952 entstanden.

Die Einschätzungen unserer Musikkritikerin:

Die Einspielung aller erhaltenen und rekonstruierten Kantaten Johann Sebastian Bachs als Gesamtedition der Öffentlichkeit vorzulegen wäre nicht nur ein spektakuläres Unternehmen, sondern wahrscheinlich auch eine Lebensaufgabe.

Es handelt sich dabei um mehr als 200 Vokalwerke, die Bach's Biographie, seine kompositorische Entwicklung und Auseinandersetzung mit theologischen wie weltlichen Themen von Beginn an widerspiegeln. Karl Ristenpart hat sich als Leiter des RIAS-Kammerorchesters- und Chores an dieses Großprojekt gewagt und 1947 mit den ersten Aufnahmen begonnen.

"Nur" 29 Kantaten wurden letztlich realisiert; dokumentieren aber auf ganz eindrucksvoller Weise, wie nahe sie mit ihrer Interpretation bereits der heute gängigen Bach'schen Aufführungspraxis kamen.

Paulinus - Wochenzeitung für das Bistum Trier 10/2012 (Christoph Vratz - 2012.03.04)

WOCHENZEITUNG IM BISTUM TRIER
PAULINUS

Bach im Nachkriegs-Berlin

Bach im Nachkriegs-Berlin

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Rondo Nr. 722 / 10. - 16.03.2012 (Michael Wersin - 2012.03.10)

RONDO
von Wersin & Wersin

Das hat es noch nie auf CD gegeben: In den Jahren 1949 bis 1952 spielte der...

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[Der neue Merker](#) 01.03.2012 (- 2012.03.01)



The Bach Cantatas Project von Audite

The Bach Cantatas Project von Audite

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Mannheimer Morgen 22.03.2012 (urs - 2012.03.22)

MANNHEIMER
MORGEN

Bewegend

Bewegend

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Das Opernglas April 2012 (J. Gahre - 2012.04.01)

DAS
OPERNGLAS

CD-SPECIAL

CD-SPECIAL

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RBB Kulturradio 04.04.2012 (Kai Luehrs-Kaiser - 2012.04.04)



Das RIAS Bach-Kantaten Projekt

Von 1949 bis 1952 entstanden die hier versammelten 29 Bach-Kantaten mit dem frühen RIAS-Kammerchor, dem RIAS-Kammerorchester (mit Musikern des heutigen DSO) sowie mit Solisten wie Agnes Giebel, Helmut Krebs, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau und zahlreichen, heute nicht mehr so bekannten Sängern des Konzertrepertoires der frühen Nachkriegszeit (wie Gerda Lammers, Ingrid Lorenzen, Gerhard Niese u.a.). Die Auswahl enthält indes nur den harten Kern von ursprünglich 79 aufgenommenen Werken dieser Frühphase der Bach-Pflege für den Rundfunk. Sie haben hier erstmals den Weg auf CDs gefunden. Das Großprojekt wurde leider abgebrochen, als ihr Dirigent Karl Ristenpart Berlin 1953 verließ (aus Gründen der finanziellen Unsicherheit der damaligen Orchesterszene) und zeitgleich Elsa Schiller, beim RIAS zuständig für die Produktion dieser Aufnahmen, zur Deutschen Grammophon wechselte.

Fundstücke

Wir haben es mit einer Fundgrube einer Pioniergeneration von Bach-Aficionados zu tun. Und doch muss man sogleich einschränkend hinzufügen, dass etwa der – inzwischen weltberühmte – RIAS-Kammerchor um die Zeit von 1950 herum noch nicht das war, was er heute ist. Sein Ruf geht auf spätere Zeiten, nicht zuletzt auf die Aufbauarbeit von Günther Arndt (ab 1954) und vor allem von Uwe Gronostay zurück (ab 1972). Noch Gronostay sagte mir vor Jahren, als er den Chor seinerzeit übernahm, habe noch das Witzwort vom „RIAS-Jammerchor“ offen kursiert. Von Homogenität, Klangschönheit oder Textverständlichkeit kann daher nur eingeschränkt die Rede sein. Der Chor klingt – für heutige Ohren – eher wie ein Laienchor. Auch die technischen Standards der Instrumentalisten und sogar der Solisten erinnern daran, dass man die hochempfindlichen Rundfunk-Mikrophone offenbar noch nicht ganz gewohnt war.

Von historischem Wert

Trotzdem enthält die Sammlung z.B. die Erstaufnahme der „Kreuzstab“-Kantate mit Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau aus dem Jahr 1950 und eine Vielzahl von Einspielungen, die unter Sammler-Aspekten allerhöchstes Interesse verdienen. Die am Legato-Ideal Wagners orientierten, aber klein besetzten Aufnahmen vermitteln ein völlig anderes Bach-Bild als etwa der (etwas spätere) Karl Richter dies tat. Insofern doch von historisch erheblichem Wert!

www.europalibera.org 05.04.2012 (Victor Eskenasy - 2012.04.05)



Proiectul RIAS al Cantatelor de Bach

Dirijorul Karl Ristenpart și un proiect cultural germano-american din anii 1946-1952.

Proiectul RIAS al Cantatelor de Bach

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Pizzicato N° 222 - 4/2012 (RéF - 2012.04.01)

pizzicato
Henry Franck's Journal about Classical Music

Für Sammler Pflicht

Die hier von Audite vorgelegten Aufnahmen von 29 Bach-Kantaten waren Teil eines Projekts, das Karl Ristenpart 1947 beim RIAS Berlin initiierte: die Einspielung aller Kantaten. Als der Dirigent 1953 zum Saarländischen Rundfunk wechselte, waren freilich nicht alle Kantaten aufgenommen. Dennoch sind diese Tondokumente wichtig, zeigen sie doch ein damals zukunftsweisendes Bach-Ideal: kleine Besetzung bei Chor und Orchester, eine Auswahl von Solisten, die sich als Bach-Sänger einen Namen machten. Trotz aller Unterschiede zum heutigen Bach-Stil ist dies ganz klar ein Vorläufer der historischen Aufführungspraxis! Und als das muss es auch angesehen werden. Ristenpart erreichte freilich hier noch nicht das interpretatorische Niveau, das er später im Saarland erzielen sollte. Musikalisch ist nicht alles optimal, zumal die ungenügend für dieses Vorhaben ausgebildeten Solisten mit Ristenparts Auffassungen nicht alle wirklich klarkamen. Dennoch gibt es in der Box auch höchsten Ansprüchen genügend Gesang, und da ist Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, der in mehr als der Hälfte der hier aufgenommenen Kantaten mitsingt, die Leitfigur. Allein um ihn singen zu hören, lohnt sich der Ankauf dieser Box, die, wie man das bei Audite gewohnt ist, höchsten editorischen Anforderungen gerecht wird. Neben dem Booklet gibt es im Internet hoch interessantes Informationsmaterial.

Für Bach-, Ristenpart- und FischerDieskau-Sammler ist diese Veröffentlichung ein Pflichtkauf.

Suplimentul de Cultură Anul VIII, Nr. 351 (7–13 aprilie 2012) (Victor Eskenasy - 2012.04.07)

Suplimentul
 DE CULTURĂ

Karl Ristenpart și „Proiectul Cantatelor Bach“ (Audite)

Karl Ristenpart și „Proiectul Cantatelor Bach“ (Audite)

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International Record Review April 2012 (Nicholas Anderson - 2012.04.01)

INTERNATIONAL
RECORD REVIEW

Karl Ristenpart's recordings of a dozen or so of Bach's cantatas, dating from the late 1950s and early to mid-1960s, are probably well known to lovers of the repertoire. The contents of this box, by contrast, will be familiar only to radio-listening readers who were living in Germany in the years immediately following the Second World War. Although Ristenpart managed to record just about a third of Bach's cantatas between 1947 and 1952, thus running concurrently with Günther Ramin's radio recordings with the Leipzig Thomanerchor (Berlin Classics), his aim to record them all was never realized, owing to a change in management at the broadcasting station RIAS Berlin. The whole sorry story is lucidly related by Habakuk Traber in an informative booklet essay.

Meanwhile, we must be grateful for the 29 cantatas, albeit one of which is by Telemann, which have been preserved and now most skilfully transferred to CD from the original analogue tapes, rather than 78rpm records. Listening to them has been a veritable epiphany, for not only did Ristenpart clearly have ideas well ahead of his time but also the discernment to engage what were probably the two finest German Bach Singers available to him. These are the late Helmut Krebs and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, not forgetting a very young Agnes Giebel. Krebs sings in all the cantatas requiring tenor voice, Fischer-Dieskau in comfortably over half of those containing recitatives and arias for bass.

Though I well remember an icy-cold day on a railway station platform in Berlin-Dahlem in 1977, when Krebs told me about these recordings, he never intimated that any of them were still in existence. I assumed they were not, and so this box of treasures has been affording particular delight, both for its element of surprise but, above all, for the pleasure generated by the imaginative and individual musicianship of Ristenpart, his soloists and instrumentalists.

Compared with those of Karl Richter and Fritz Werner, Ristenpart's choir is small, bringing with it effective degrees of lucidity and athleticism. The vocal diction is enunciated with clarity by choir and soloists alike, a feature by which Ristenpart evidently set some store. Internal balance is well maintained for the most part and it soon becomes apparent that textural transparency in which instruments and voices are allowed to converse without having to compete was of prime consideration. All this is par for the course nowadays, but in the late 1940s and early 1950s it comes as something of a surprise to hear such a light-footed, chambermusic approach to Bach. With only one or two exceptions Ristenpart favours brisk tempos; indeed his Christ lag in Todesbanden (BWV 4) knocks a full half-minute off Masaaki Suzuki's (BIS).

It is inevitable that in a sizeable clutch of cantatas such as this not everything will come across uniformly well – the clipped articulation of the voices in some of the choruses is dated, though in Ristenpart's hands by no means inexpressive, as you can hear in the opening chorale fantasia of Herr Jesu Christ, wahr' Mensch und Gott (BWV 127). It is a pity, too, that occasionally da capos are shortened, but such instances are exceptions rather than the rule. Any other lapses are few and far between, often, I suspect, deriving as much from the limitations of recording technique as from any shortcomings in the artists themselves.

It is wonderful to hear Krebs in his prime. Seldom do we encounter recitatives sung with such urgent communication and such poetry as he had at his command, though just occasionally even he sounds uneven, as in the exacting tenor aria of Es ist euch gut, dass ich hingehe (BWV 108). In this lyrical piece it is Peter Pears who has the edge in an early recording with Karl Richter (Teldec-Warner). The youthful Fischer-Dieskau likewise seldom disappoints and then only with a hint of excessive vibrato, but almost entirely without the declamatory extravagances which occasionally caricature his later recordings with Karl Richter. Giebel's intimately expressed and radiantly coloured singing is already in place, though her voice is not fully matured and her performance of Weichet nur, betrübte Schatten (BWV 202) is less evenly controlled than her later version with Gustav Leonhardt (Teldec-Warner). There are other fine voices here aplenty, from among which I should mention soprano Gunthild Weber, who was a regular of Fritz Lehmann's (DG Archiv) in the early 1950s, soprano Johanna Behrend and contralto Charlotte Wolf-Matthäus, who made some notable contributions to the Bärenreiter-Cantate series of Bach's cantatas during the early 1960s. However, though listed among the soloists, soprano Edith Berger-Krebs does not, in the event, take part in any of these recordings.

In summary, here is an anthology which cannot fail to enchant most Bach enthusiasts. Readers will find cantatas which few if any other of the early pioneers committed to disc: BWV 88, for instance, with its twin images of the fishermen and huntsmen in its opening aria, sung with robust theatricality by Fischer-Dieskau. Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis (BWV 21) is among the most poignant that I know, Krebs and Fischer-Dieskau firmly impressing a stamp of immortality upon Ristenpart's performance. Likewise, Wachet auf! ruft uns die Stimme (BWV 140), whose opening chorale fantasia is as thrilling as any I can recall. What a pity that the booklet omits the name of every single instrumentalist. Surely some of them, at least, must be known and if so they certainly should be included here since they play such a prominent role in the music. Ristenpart, by the way, remains faithful to Bach's precise instrumentation almost without exception, only preferring flutes to recorders, doubtless for practical reasons, in the opening chorus of Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele (BWV 180).

Audite must be congratulated on this invaluable rehabilitation. At times one can scarcely believe the modernity of approach and in all but one or two instances the excellence of the sound. A revelation.

Financial Times - Deutschland Montag, 23. April 2012 (Dagmar Zurek - 2012.04.23)



Rias Kammerorchester und Chor

Rias Kammerorchester und Chor

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www.klavier.de 14.05.2012 (Johanna Schubert - 2012.05.14)



Bach, Johann Sebastian: The Rias – Bach Cantatas Project

Ein Stück deutscher Musikgeschichte

Bach, Johann Sebastian: The Rias – Bach Cantatas Project

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klassik.com 14.05.2012 (Johanna Schubert - 2012.05.14)
source: <http://magazin.klassik.com/reviews/review...>



Bach, Johann Sebastian – The Rias - Bach Cantatas Project

Ein Stück deutscher Musikgeschichte

Bach, Johann Sebastian – The Rias - Bach Cantatas Project

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[Il Venerdì di Repubblica](http://ilvenerdi.di.repubblica) 11.05.2012 (Claudio Strinati - 2012.05.11)



Quando Berlino si senti libera ascoltando Bach

Quando Berlino si senti libera ascoltando Bach

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Ristenparts Bach-Kantaten bei audite – ein Wiederhören mit legendären Sängern der Berliner Nachkriegszeit im RIAS Berlin 1949-1952. Die audite 9-CD-Box mit Erstveröffentlichungen aus dem RIAS-Archiv präsentiert den historisch ersten Versuch einer Gesamteinspielung der Bach-Kantaten. Für jeden, der sich für die Geschichte der Bach-Interpretation und für die Linien des kulturellen Wiederaufbaus in Deutschland nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg interessiert, sind die Aufnahmen in dieser CD-Box eine bedeutende Bereicherung. Karl Ristenpart baute ab 1946 die Chor- und Orchesterarbeit des RIAS Berlin auf und leitete den RIAS-Kammerchor und das RIAS-Kammerorchester. Mit diesen Ensembles und aufstrebenden jungen Sängern wie Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Helmut Krebs und Agnes Giebel planten Karl Ristenpart und Elsa Schiller, die damalige Leiterin der RIAS-Musikabteilung, ab 1947 eine Gesamteinspielung aller Bach-Kantaten. Das Projekt konnte allerdings nicht vollständig verwirklicht werden. Die heute noch im RIAS-Archiv vorhandenen 29 Kantaten dokumentieren ein auch aus heutiger Sicht zukunftsweisendes Bach-Ideal: Durch die kleine Besetzung erscheint die Musik transparent und strukturell deutlich, die Sänger kooperieren klar artikulierend mit den Instrumentalisten. Durch diese Interpretation, die sich von aller Monumentalität frei macht, wurde die spätere historische Aufführungspraxis ästhetisch vorbereitet. Zu dieser Produktion gibt es wieder einen „Producer's Comment“ vom Produzenten Ludger Böckenhoff unter (http://audite.de/de/download/file_373/pdf.html): „Die Produktion ist Teil unserer Reihe „Legendary Recordings“ und trägt das Qualitätsmerkmal „1st Master Release“. Dieser Begriff steht für die außerordentliche Qualität der Archivproduktionen bei audite, denn allen historischen audite-Veröffentlichungen liegen ausnahmslos die Originalbänder aus den Rundfunkarchiven zugrunde. In der Regel sind dies die ursprünglichen Analogbänder, die mit ihrer Bandgeschwindigkeit von bis zu 76 cm/Sek. Auch nach heutigen Maßstäben erstaunlich hohe Qualität erreichen. Das Remastering – fachlich kompetent und sensibel angewandt – legt zudem bislang verborgene Details der Interpretationen frei. So ergibt sich ein Klangbild von überlegener Qualität. CD-Veröffentlichungen, denen private Mitschnitte von Rundfunksendungen oder alte Schellackplatten zugrunde liegen, sind damit nicht zu vergleichen.“ Neben der Dokumentation des Schaffens von Karl Ristenpart, zu Unrecht heute vergessen und gern fälschlich als Mittelklasse-Dirigent abgeschrieben, beschert diese bedeutende audite-Produktion eben ein Wiederhören mit den ebenso wichtigen Sängern der Berliner Nachkriegszeit. Neben so bekannten wie Giebel oder Dieskau finden sich hier Gertrud Birmele (Foto OBA) oder die stimmige Gunthild Weber, die viel mit dem Berliner Dirigenten Werner auftrat und eingespielt hat, auch Charlotte Wolf-Matthäus – eine bedeutende Altistin jener Jahre – und natürlich Helmut Krebs, der Allround-Tenor der Berliner und Hamburger Opernhäuser und unerreichter Interpret für die Moderne ebenso wie fürs Barocke. Ein Cornocopium also an exzellenten Sängern und eine wichtige Korrektur unserer Wahrnehmung jener Zeit, die wir heute nur noch wegen ihrer Schallplattensänger der DGA oder Electrola in Erinnerung haben, als es noch die Exklusivbindungen gab. Wie in anderen europäischen Ländern auch (namentlich Italien und Frankreich) korrigierte das Radio diesen Exklusiv-Eindruck und bot die weniger glücklichen Sänger, die keinen Fuß in den Plattenfirmen hatten.

Neue Zürcher Zeitung am Sonntag 03.06.2012
(Franz Cavigelli - 2012.06.03)



Nach dem Krieg

Nach dem Krieg

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BBC Music Magazine July 2012 (Andrew McGregor - 2012.07.01)



A groundbreaking pilgrimage

CD Review's Andrew McGregor explores an undeservedly forgotten JS Bach Cantata project

When it comes to JS Bach's Cantatas on disc, the deservedly famous Nikolaus Harnoncourt and Gustav Leonhardt series for Telefunken was first to finish. But it turns out they weren't the first to set out on that richly rewarding journey. In post-war Berlin, conductor Karl Ristenpart was tasked with directing music for the new RIAS broadcasting corporation (Radio in the American Sector). His most ambitious enterprise was the RIAS Bach Cantatas Project (Audite 21.415; 9 CDs): recording, performing and broadcasting the complete Cantatas with the new RIAS chamber choir, chamber orchestra and boys' choir. In 1946 they began recording Cantatas for Sunday mornings. Those first performances were deleted, but better quality recordings and soloists for the Bach anniversary in 1950 meant that Ristenpart's Cantata efforts from late 1949 onwards have survived.

The 29 Cantatas chosen here are fascinating. Ristenpart pioneered many of the enlightening ideas of Harnoncourt and Leonhardt's series: small forces, a well-drilled choir sometimes with boys' voices, a focus on detail, and emotional engagement with the texts. The soloists are well chosen, and one name leaps out: Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, just a couple of years into his career. He's immediately recognisable. The set's only tenor, Helmut Krebs, has the timbre and communicative qualities of a German Peter Pears. The pick of the eight sopranos is Agnes Giebel, who makes a lovely job of her duets with the virtuoso oboe soloist in one of Bach's wedding Cantatas, BWV202, while the Actus Tragicus is seriously moving. Wachet auf is urgent and theatrically potent: a success. While some movements might be on the slow side for today's authentic performers, others are brisk and crisp. The recordings are sometimes shockingly good for their age, and these performances stand apart from anything else around for a good 20 years. Changes at RIAS brought this revelatory project to a premature end in 1953, but at least this intriguing box should ensure that Ristenpart is restored to his rightful place as a Bach pioneer.

www.opusklassiek.nl juni 2012 (Aart van der Wal - 2012.06.01)



Het Bach-cantateproject: de RIAS-opnamen 1949 ~ 1952

Het Bach-cantateproject: de RIAS-opnamen 1949 ~ 1952

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[Junge Freiheit](#) Nr. 19/12 | 4. Mai 2012 (Sebastian Hennig - 2012.05.04)



Klage und Lobpreis

Klage und Lobpreis

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The RIAS Bach Cantatas Project, Berlin, 1949-1952

On the strength of an enthusiastic BBC Radio 3 review by the much respected Nicholas Anderson, I lashed out and bought this 'Audite' boxed set: 9 CDs (29 Cantatas in all) for around £ 50 (Audite 21.415). If you're interested in this repertoire – or, indeed, in the post-war development of "Early Music" performance – you'll find this set a real eyeopener, I think.

I did already have a few 'historic' Bach Cantata recordings, including some fascinating (if incomplete) performances recorded in Leipzig's Thomaskirche under the direction of Karl Straube in 1931 (the year when I was born!) The style may sound a bit quaint to us, now, but it affords an interesting glimpse into the past. I also have some recordings made by the Thomanerchor in the early 1950s under its post-war Kantor, Günther Ramin, but they too seem of little more than historical interest today. So – it was a big surprise to put on these newly-issued Berlin CDs, remastered from tapes which date from around 1950, and to discover how "modern" and thoroughly enjoyable many of the performances sound.

Following Berlin's almost total destruction at the end of the war, its radio stations had to start from scratch. RIAS stands for 'Radio in the American Sector'; the RIAS-Symphonie Orchester was formed in 1946, the RIAS-Kammerchor two years later. From 1946 onwards, Karl Ristenpart started directing regular Sunday broadcasts of Bach Cantatas, using a chamber orchestra drawn from the RSO. Recordings of his very earliest performances no longer exist, but from the end of 1949 until the Project ran out of steam in 1952, we have tapes of 29 Cantata performances, now superbly transferred to CD in this boxed set.

The overall quality of performance is truly remarkable, with some first-class vocal soloists, outstanding amongst whom are Helmut Krebs (as good and incisive as any Bach tenor I know) and a young baritone then just making his mark: Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. In 1950, when the majority of these recordings were made, he would have been just 25. In May 2012, of course, we were all saddened to learn of his death at the age of 86. To hear him in the superb opening aria of Cantata 88 (Siehe, ich will viel Fischer aussenden) is an absolute delight, and the orchestral accompaniment is of admirable quality, too. In Cantata 52 (Falsche Welt, dir traue ich nicht), soprano Agnes Giebel is very stylish, the high horns sounding fine in the opening Sinfonia (borrowed from Brandenburg I). But the real hero of the hour is unquestionably Karl Ristenpart himself; he has a happy knack of finding, nine times out of ten, what Bach calls the tempo giusto.

There are some infelicities, of course. Most of the female soloists (Giebel apart) do favour the use of a fairly heavy vibrato – that was the accepted style at that time. The choir is enthusiastic, but not very subtle – it's at its best in high-energy numbers like the opening chorus of *Wachet auf*, which fairly dances along in a most enjoyable way; occasionally, though, it goes well over the top (try Cantata 176: *Es ist ein trotzig und verzagt Ding* – the text does suggest desperation and obstinacy, but the oft-repeated word *tro-o-o-o-o-otzig* still sounds pretty laughable). The four-part Chorales are sung with great gusto, but JSB will [may CB] have expected his congregation to join in, so he probably wouldn't have been too dismayed by that.

The keyboard continuo instrument used is a harpsichord, whose tone-quality does sometimes remind one of Sir Thomas Beecham's unkind description: 'two skeletons copulating on a tin roof'! Fortunately, it's kept well back from the microphones. No 'shortened' continuo accompaniment, of course – the cello is often left sustaining very long notes on its own, as was normal up until the 1960s or thereabouts. But, overall, the instrumentalists are extremely good – for example, some superb violin obligati, a terrific first trumpeter, some lovely flute-playing in *Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele* and delightful recorders in *Brich dem Hungrigen dein Brot*. The oboes do sound a bit under-nourished (as they often did, in those pre-Helmut-Winschermann days) but that's a small price to pay for some revelatory recordings from a vanished era. Strongly recommended



Recording of the month

Johann Sebastian BACH (1685-1750): The RIAS Bach Cantatas Project

These recordings form a remarkable part of the immediate post-war musical legacy in what was then West Germany. The background, which is related more fully in the booklet notes, is worth summarising. At the end of the Second World War, when Berlin was occupied, the Soviet forces annexed all the musical recordings that had belonged to the former Reichsrundfunk. The authorities in the sector of Berlin controlled by the Americans sought to establish a new broadcasting entity, which within a short time became known as RIAS (Rundfunk im amerikanischen Sektor). However, the new radio station had to start from scratch; for one thing, it had no recorded musical material at its disposal. The conductor Karl Ristenpart (1900-1967) was amongst those entrusted with building up the musical resources of the fledgling radio station. Amongst other things, Ristenpart decided to record all the cantatas of J S Bach and to perform some of them publicly. Sadly, the project was never completed, for reasons explained in the booklet, but here we have 28 cantata recordings plus one cantata by Telemann that for many years was attributed to Bach.

The very thorough notes in the booklet relate the whole story behind these recordings in good detail. In all 78 cantatas were recorded between October 1946 and February 1953; in fact, 107 recordings were made but some recordings were subsequently duplicated. The recordings were made for a wider use than the 'merely' musical; they were broadcast during a Sunday morning religious programme on RIAS when the cantata appropriate to the day would be heard after a sermon. Quite a number of the earlier recordings were 'wiped' and I infer from the essay by Rüdiger Albrecht that, regrettably, what we have in this box is all that survives. It will be noted that many of the cantatas here included are not among the cantatas that are better-known, even today. Also, there are frustrating gaps. There is no BWV 147, for example, and I noted that one of the earliest recordings was a performance of BWV 82 by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau; what one would give to hear that!

It must be remembered that at the time of these performances the Bach cantatas were far from being widely known, so this project was hugely enterprising and the driving force behind it was Karl Ristenpart. His career was focused principally on chamber orchestras – he founded his own ensemble as early as 1932. It appears that he was unsympathetic to the Nazis – which would have made him acceptable for RIAS – although he did agree to take his orchestra to play for the troops at the front during the war years. He set up the RIAS Kammerorchester and when policy changes at RIAS brought about the demise of that orchestra – and the Bach cantata project – in 1952 he moved to Saarbrücken to work for the radio station there, setting up another chamber orchestra, including some of his Berlin players. During his fourteen years there, however, the emphasis was on orchestral music so no more Bach cantatas were forthcoming.

In many ways Ristenpart was ahead of his time, especially in using fairly small forces to perform Bach. That's one reason why these performances are of such interest to Bach collectors. We aren't told the approximate size of either the choir or the orchestra but both are clearly smaller than the ensembles used by Karl Richter in his Bach recordings for DG Archiv. Another attraction lies in the roster of soloists. Many of the names will be unfamiliar sixty years or so later but three names stand out. Among the sopranos was Agnes Giebel (b. 1921) then starting out on her career. Though Ristenpart engaged several singers in the other three voices he used just one tenor, at least on these recordings, namely Helmut Krebs (1913-2007). Krebs was a soloist at the Deutsche Oper at this time. A few years later he recorded a good deal of Bach with Fritz Werner but here we find him in younger voice. Incidentally, Agnes Giebel was another luminary of those fine Werner recordings of Bach. It's a joy to hear so much of these two excellent Bach singers but the set is invaluable also because we can hear a good many examples of the young Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. Born in 1925, Fischer-Dieskau would have been in his mid-twenties when these recordings were made. News of the great singer's death was announced while I was evaluating these discs and much has been spoken and written – and very rightly so – about his immense stature as one of the foremost singers of the second half of the twentieth century. Like Krebs, he was at this time a soloist with the Deutsche Oper but Bach's music was a constant thread throughout his career and it's thrilling to have so many examples of his

early work in this box; one can readily understand why his singing caused such a stir from the very start of his career for he is in consistently magnificent voice.

Let me discuss some highlights from this engrossing set and start with one of the finest performances of all, that of *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, BWV 140. This is, quite simply, an outstanding Bach performance. The opening chorus is impelled forward most excitingly. When the choir first enters their call of 'Wachet auf' is a true wake up-call; and what an inspired decision by Ristenpart to have the boys of the RIAS Knabenchor joining the soprano line and lending the cutting edge of their tone to the melody! There's real enthusiasm and urgency here. Ristenpart's tempo seems ideal to me and he takes 6:24 over the movement. Out of curiosity I put on Karl Richter's 1978 DG Archiv recording, to which I hadn't listened in a long time. Oh dear! His tempo is insufferably slow in this movement – he takes 9:38 – and in his hands the music sounds turgid and uninspiring. Fritz Werner too is pretty stately – he takes 8:14 but at least he's not as leaden as Richter. I revelled in Ristenpart's reading which, frankly, would not sound out of place among today's 'period' performances. In the following recitative Krebs sounds like a clarion herald. In the famous tenor chorale movement Ristenpart uses the whole tenor section from the choir – which I prefer. Richter uses his soloist, which is perhaps understandable when you have Peter Schreier on hand to do the honours but again a lethargic speed rules out this version while Ristenpart seems to get it just right. The soprano soloist for Ristenpart is Gunthild Weber who is an effective partner to Fischer-Dieskau in the two duets. Fischer-Dieskau also sings for Richter. There he's partnered by the enchanting Edith Mathis. I prefer her to Weber but I prefer Fischer-Dieskau's singing on the Ristenpart recording. Although there are many satisfying cantata performances in this box this one, I think, takes the palm.

Another conspicuous success is Agnes Giebel's account of the solo Wedding Cantata, *Weichet nur, betrübte Schatten*, BWV 202. She's in wonderful form here, singing the opening aria with fine expression – and partnered by a good oboist. She's delightfully eager-sounding in the second aria, where a perky bassoon obbligato also gives much pleasure. The late Alfred Dürr says that the third aria "strikes a more elegiac note". Far be it from me to dissent from the view of such an expert but I don't hear elegy in this music and certainly not in Giebel's warm, radiant singing of it. The fourth and final aria, decorated by a pert oboe part, sounds smiling and happy here and the concluding gavotte movement is charming.

There's another solo cantata in the set, *Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen*, BWV 56, which features Fischer-Dieskau. Here, in 1950, we find him in wonderful voice, even throughout its compass and with a lovely ease at the top of his register. He recorded it also with Richter, in 1969, and I prefer Richter's slightly more flowing tempo in the opening aria but, on the other hand, I prefer the smaller band employed by Ristenpart. Fischer-Dieskau's tone is superb in 1969 but in that later version he is more emphatic in his enunciation of the words. The cantata includes the joyful aria 'Endlich, endlich wird mein Joch'. Both performances are excellent but I find Fischer-Dieskau sounds just a bit more natural and spontaneous for Ristenpart.

What of Helmut Krebs? He's splendid throughout no matter what tests Bach sets him and no matter what emotions he's required to convey. A stand-out moment for me is the aria 'Ermuntre dich' in BWV 180. This is a very demanding aria but Krebs is quite outstanding – and the flute obbligato is jolly good too. Krebs' voice is light and keen and the rhythms dance irresistibly. His articulation is tremendous and I love his light, ringing tone. This is an outstanding piece of Bach singing by anyone's standards. In BWV 19 there's a very different test for a Bachian tenor in the aria 'Bleibt, ihr Engel, bleibt bei mir'. Krebs sustains the long lines excellently and I admire his control very much. That said, even he doesn't match the wonderful way in which James Gilchrist, a very different singer, floats the line at a daringly expansive tempo in Vol 7 of Sir John Eliot Gardiner's *Bach Cantata Pilgrimage*. For me, Gilchrist and Gardiner capture the essence of this music in a way that's very special. Krebs appears in every one of the cantatas that require a tenor and his singing gives unfailing pleasure. Not only that, he is a stylist and, additionally, a singer who cares about the words and knows how to put them across. His heady, distinctive tone and consistently clear diction are a delight to hear.

The other soloists aren't quite so well known, at least not in 2012, but there are few weak links. One or two of the sopranos aren't really to my taste. Edith Berger-Krebs (the wife of the tenor?) sings in BWV 42, where she duets with Helmut Krebs and, quite honestly, isn't in his class; her tone sounds rather pinched

and shrill. Lilo Rolwes is somewhat tremulous of tone in her aria in BWV 31 and in BWV 21 Gerda Lammers sounds to me to be striving a bit too much for expression and, as a result, the line is rather choppy. The altos are all effective. I particularly enjoyed the contributions of Ingrid Lorenzen – she gives a fine account of the extensive alto aria in BWV 42, for instance – while Charlotte Wolf-Matthäus has a good focus to her voice as she shows, for example, in BWV 22. Walter Hauck and Gerhard Niese have to stand retrospective comparison with Fischer-Dieskau, which is a bit unfair, but both acquit themselves well in their various assignments.

The singers of the RIAS-Kammerchor make a strong contribution. Sometimes the sound is a little fuzzy but I wonder if this is as much to do with the recordings as the singing itself. I've already mentioned their excellent contribution to BWV 140. Another place where they feature to particularly good effect is the dramatic opening chorus of BWV 19, which they deliver with plenty of energy and punch. They give a good performance of BWV 4 as well – I liked the lively tempo and good choral response in the first chorus. Richter in 1968 has better sound, of course, but his choir is bigger – some may prefer, as I do, the smaller ensemble – and yet again Richter's speed is steadier than Ristenpart's. Incidentally, in the fourth chorus of this cantata Ristenpart gets all his basses to sing whereas Richter uses a solo voice (Fischer-Dieskau). I think Richter's decision is the correct one but against the pleasure of hearing Fischer-Dieskau sing the piece we must set yet another leaden tempo by Richter, who lingers over the movement for 4:36 against Ristenpart's much more satisfactory 2:45.

The RIAS-Kammerorchester plays well for Ristenpart although those schooled on 'period' performances will need to adjust their ears for the string vibrato and the legato style of playing. There's some good obbligato playing and it's a pity that the players concerned aren't named; I suspect there isn't a full record of who played in the orchestra.

The presiding genius is Karl Ristenpart and these recordings show him as a Bachian of perception, style and good taste. I'm a great admirer of Eliot Gardiner in the Bach cantatas – and of Fritz Werner too. Eliot Gardiner can be brisk in his tempi but I can recall very few instances in this set where I felt Ristenpart was too slow. In any event, tempo is about more than speed; it's about finding the pace that's right for the music and, in vocal music, for the sentiments expressed in the words. Here I think Ristenpart's judgement is pretty well always spot-on. I said at the start of this review that he was ahead of his time and this is especially true of his determination to use slimmed-down forces at a time when this was far from being the norm. This, together with the fact that he articulates rhythms so well brings to his performances a fine clarity of texture and excellent energy.

As to the recorded sound, I think it's astonishingly good, especially when one considers that these recordings were made sixty or more years ago. Clearly the RIAS engineers knew what they were doing. Audite's re-mastering engineers, Ludger Böckenhoff and Karsten Zimmerman, who have worked from the original tapes, deserve plaudits for such fine work. Their skill has been vital in allowing today's listeners to experience so satisfactorily the integrity, dedication and sheer excellence of Karl Ristenpart's performances.

These performances constitute a major addition to the discography of Bach's cantatas. Their reappearance after all these years is a cause for rejoicing. This is one of the most important Bach issues for many years and the set is urgently commended to all who love Bach's cantatas.

WDR 3 Freitag, 17.08.12 um 09:08 Uhr, Klassik Forum (Hans Winking - 2012.08.17)



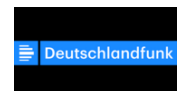
Historische Aufnahmen:

Das RIAS Bach-Kantaten-Projekt 1949-1952

Historische Aufnahmen:

Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.

Deutschlandfunk Dienstag, 28. August 2012, Nachtkonzert, 02.05-3.00 Uhr (Bernd Heyder - 2012.08.28)



Meilenstein der Bach-Interpretation

Das Kantatenprojekt von Karl Ristenpart und dem RIAS Berlin (1947 – 1952)

Die erste Stunde des Nachtkonzerts ist einem außergewöhnlichen Aufnahmeprojekt gewidmet, das vor mehr als sechs Jahrzehnten, in den Wiederaufbau-Jahren nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg, Gestalt annahm: die Einspielung aller Kantaten Johann Sebastian Bachs durch den noch jungen Radiosender RIAS Berlin. Mit diesen Rundfunk-Produktionen unter der künstlerischen Leitung von Karl Ristenpart begründete der RIAS-Kammerchor seinen bis heute gültigen Ruf als eine der weltweit führenden Vokalformationen. Ein Großteil der Aufnahmen ist erhalten geblieben, und kürzlich erschien eine Auswahl-Edition mit 29 Kantaten in Koproduktion mit Deutschlandradio Kultur beim Label Audite auf CD. Einige Höhepunkte daraus möchten wir Ihnen hier vorstellen. Dazu begrüßt Sie Bernd Heyder im Studio.

Musik 1)

Johann Sebastian Bach

aus der Kantate „Es erhub sich ein Streit“, BWV 19:

Eingangsschor (Auszug)

Das waren der RIAS-Kammerchor und das RIAS-Kammerorchester mit einem Ausschnitt aus dem Eingangsschor von Johann Sebastian Bachs Kantate „Es erhub sich ein Streit“, Werk-Verzeichnis 19; die Leitung hatte Karl Ristenpart. Die Aufnahme stammt aus dem Jahr 1950. Sie war Teil eines Einspielungsprojektes, das vier Jahre zuvor in der Musikabteilung des gerade gegründeten RIAS Berlin seinen Anfang genommen hatte. Der „Rundfunk im Amerikanischen Sektor“ war von der amerikanischen Militäradministration als unabhängige Gegenstimme zum sowjetisch kontrollierten Berliner Rundfunk ins Leben gerufen worden. Weit über die Grenzen der Stadt hinaus sendete der RIAS Berlin in die sowjetisch besetzte Zone. Von Anfang an gehörten sonntägliche Sendungen mit geistlicher Musik zum Programmauftrag.

Da das Schallarchiv des Senders erst allmählich aufgebaut wurde und man anfangs kaum auf ältere Tonträger zurückgreifen konnte, war es wichtig, die benötigten Aufnahmen selbst zu produzieren. Und da beschloss die von Elsa Schiller geleitete Musikabteilung, sämtliche etwa 200 Kirchenkantaten Bachs mit den hauseigenen Ensembles einzuspielen; die künstlerische Umsetzung sollte in den Händen von Karl Ristenpart liegen.

Den im Jahr 1900 geborenen Dirigenten hatten die amerikanischen Behörden 1946 mit dem Aufbau der Rundfunk-Klangkörper betraut. Ristenpart hatte in den 20er Jahren am Stern'schen Konservatorium in Berlin und an der Wiener Akademie der Tonkunst studiert und 1932 in Berlin ein eigenes Kammerorchester gegründet. Neben seinen musikalischen Qualitäten empfahl ihn nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg sicher auch die Tatsache, dass er sich 1933 geweigert hatte, der NSDAP beizutreten, obwohl das seiner Dirigentenkarriere damals sicherlich dienlich gewesen wäre. Wie sein Vorbild Hermann Scherchen faszinierte Ristenpart die zeitgenössische wie die ältere Musik gleichermaßen – und in letzterem Bereich

insbesondere Johann Sebastian Bach.

Beim RIAS Berlin baute Ristenpart neben dem Symphonieorchester und dem Tanzorchester auch ein Kammerorchester auf. Es bildete für ihn das ideale Ensemble für seine Interpretationen barocker Musik, und das nicht nur im rein instrumentalen Repertoire: Auch in der Aufführung Bach'scher Vokalwerke ging Ristenpart in deutliche Distanz zu den seinerzeit gängigen Monumentalbesetzungen. Ebenso lehnte er aber jene sachlich-distanzierte Deutung dieser Musik ab, wie sie damals von vielen Vertretern der anti-romantischen Bach-Bewegung favorisiert wurde.

In der folgenden Aufnahme des Eingangssatzes aus der Kantate „Wer sich selbst erhöht, der soll erniedriget werden“ mit seinen ausgedehnten Instrumentalritornellen lässt sich gut verfolgen, wie Ristenpart seinen Ansatz mit dem RIAS-Kammerorchester verwirklichte und wie er ihn auch auf den Vokal-Bereich übertrug.

Musik 2)

Johann Sebastian Bach

aus der Kantate „Wer sich selbst erhöht, der soll erniedriget werden“, BWV 47:

Eingangsschor

In einer Aufnahme von 1952 hörten Sie den Eingangsschor der Kantate „Wer sich selbst erhöht, der soll erniedriget werden“ von Johann Sebastian Bach, interpretiert vom RIAS-Kammerchor und -Kammerorchester unter Karl Ristenpart.

Als Aufnahme-Ort für die Kantatenproduktionen des RIAS Berlin etablierte sich die Jesus-Christus-Kirche im Stadtteil Dahlem, ein 1932 geweihtes Gotteshaus, das sich in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus zu einem Zentrum der Bekennenden Kirche entwickelt hatte. Bis heute dient die Kirche neben ihrer religiösen Funktion auch als Aufnahmestudio, unter anderem für Produktionen des DeutschlandRadios, zu dem sich der RIAS Berlin 1994 gemeinsam mit dem Deutschlandsender Kultur und dem Deutschlandfunk formierte.

Karl Ristenpart stellte den Chor mit etwa drei Dutzend Sängern für die Bach-Projekte zunächst immer wieder neu zusammen; erst im Oktober 1948 erhielt er seine institutionelle Form. Vereinzelt setzte Ristenpart neben den Erwachsenenstimmen des Kammerchores aber auch die jungen Sänger des RIAS-Knabenchores ein. Die Einstudierung der vokalen Ensemblesätze vertraute er den Chorleitern Herbert Froitzheim und Günther Arndt an.

Aus Ristenparts relativ kleinen Chor- und Orchesterbesetzungen spricht der Wunsch, Bachs Musik sehr detailgenau und doch in ihrer ganzen Expressivität hörbar zu machen. Dazu suchte er auch Vokalsolistinnen und –solisten mit klaren und flexiblen Stimmen, und schnell fand er im Ensemble der Deutschen Oper in West-Berlin zwei herausragende Sänger für die Tenor- und Bass-Partien: Helmut Krebs und Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. Der 1913 in Aachen geborene Krebs konnte schon auf Vorkriegs-Erfolge an der Berliner Volksoper zurückblicken. Der 22-jährige Fischer-Dieskau hatte gerade mit der Einspielung von Schuberts „Winterreise“ für den RIAS Berlin sein Rundfunk-Debüt absolviert, als er im Februar 1948 erstmals in Ristenparts Bach-Projekt mitwirkte. Im folgenden Ausschnitt aus dem zweiten Teil der Kantate „Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes“ BWV 76 sind nacheinander Fischer-Dieskau als Rezitativ- und Krebs als Ariensänger zu hören.

Musik 3)

Johann Sebastian Bach

aus der Kantate „Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes“, BWV 76:

Rezitativ „Gott segne noch die treue Schar“

Arie „Hasse nur, hasse mich recht“

Der Bariton Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau und der Tenor Helmut Krebs sangen zwei Sätze aus Bachs Kantate 76, begleitet vom RIAS-Kammerorchester unter Karl Ristenpart. Die Aufnahme entstand im Mai 1950. Unmittelbar darauf spielte Fischer-Dieskau unter Ristenpart auch die Eingangsarie der Kantate 88 ein,

„Siehe, ich will viel Fischer aussenden“. Sie zählt zu den schönsten Soli, die Bach für die tiefe Männerstimme schrieb, auch wenn sie nicht die Berühmtheit seiner Solo-Kantaten oder der Bass-Partien aus den Passionen erlangt hat. Dem alttestamentlichen Text folgend führt sie dem Hörer zunächst eine Szene am Wasser und dann eine Jagdszene musikalisch vor Augen; in Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau und dem RIAS-Kammerorchester fand sie kongeniale Interpreten – wenn auch die Hornpartien in der Aufnahme merkwürdig diffus abgebildet sind.

Musik 4)

Johann Sebastian Bach

aus der Kantate „Siehe, ich will viel Fischer aussenden“, BWV 88:

Eingangsarie

Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau sang die Eingangsarie der Kantate „Siehe, ich will viel Fischer aussenden“ BWV 88; es begleitete das RIAS-Kammerorchester unter Karl Ristenpart.

Während man Fischer-Dieskau und den Tenor Helmut Krebs fast schon als Stammsänger der damaligen Kantaten-Aufnahmen des RIAS Berlin bezeichnen könnte, war eine deutlich größere Zahl von weiblichen Solisten daran beteiligt. Unter ihnen ragte eine junge Sopranistin mit ihrer schlanken, hell timbrierten Stimme und ihrer natürlichen Deklamation hervor: Agnes Giebel. [Schnell erwarb sie sich den Ruf einer der besten Bach-Sängerinnen; der Oper verweigerte sie sich konsequent.] Mit ihr als Solistin gestattete sich Ristenpart im Juni 1951 auch einen Ausflug ins weltliche Vokalrepertoire Bachs, als er die Sopran-Solokantate „Weichet nur, betrübte Schatten“ aufnahm.

Musik 5)

Johann Sebastian Bach

aus der Kantate „Weichet nur, betrübte Schatten“, BWV 202:

Arie „Sich üben im Lieben“

Agnes Giebel sang die Arie „Sich üben im Lieben“ aus Bachs Sopran-Solokantate „Weichet nur, betrübte Schatten“, BWV 202.

Nicht alle der Aufnahmen des Bach-Projektes beim RIAS Berlin sind erhalten geblieben. Viele der Produktionen aus den 40er Jahren wurden schon 1950 wieder gelöscht, vermutlich, um Aufnahmen auf höherwertigem Bandmaterial Platz zu machen. Auch war man wohl rein musikalisch auf einem Interpretationsniveau angelangt, das es nahelegte, das eine oder andere Werk noch einmal neu aufzunehmen – was dann mit 25 Kantaten geschah.

Auch für die Bach-Forschung stellte das Jahr 1950 einen Wendepunkt dar; es war die Geburtsstunde der Neuen Bachausgabe, die auf der Basis einer erneuten Analyse der überlieferten Notenquellen neue Erkenntnisse für die Werkchronologie und die Aufführungspraxis gewann. Davon konnten Ristenparts Produktionen aber noch nicht profitieren, die mit dem Notenmaterial der einhundert Jahre zuvor initiierten „alten“ Bach-Gesamtausgabe arbeiten mussten. Der Dirigent stand aber im engen Kontakt zu Bach-Forschern wie Friedrich Smend und Gotthold Frotscher.

Es fällt auf, dass Ristenpart durchgängig das Cembalo anstelle der Orgel als Generalbassinstrument einsetzt; vielleicht lag das aus rein praktischen Gründen nahe. Bemerkenswerter ist sicherlich seine Entscheidung, die Mehrzahl der Blockflöten-Partien in den Kantaten auch wirklich mit Blockflöten zu besetzen und nicht, wie viele andere Dirigenten damals, von Querflöten spielen zu lassen. Den Eingangsschor der Kantate 39, in dem zwei Blockflöten im Wechsel mit zwei Oboen und den Streichern zu Anfang das Brotbrechen symbolisieren, hatte man zuvor im 20. Jahrhundert wohl kaum in einem entsprechend plastischen Klang gehört:

Musik 6)

Johann Sebastian Bach

aus der Kantate „Brich den Hungrigen dein Brot“, BWV 39:

Eingangsschor

Das war der Eingangssatz der Kantate 39, „Brich den Hungrigen dein Brot“, in der Interpretation Karl Ristenparts von 1950; es handelt sich um eine der frühesten Kantaten-Aufnahmen, in denen die originale Blockflötenbesetzung zu hören ist.

So groß der Elan war, mit dem das Kantaten-Projekt beim RIAS Berlin vor allem im Bach-Jahr 1950 mit allein 47 Einspielungen vorangetrieben wurde, so stark erlahmte das Engagement in der Folgezeit: von 1951 bis zur letzten Produktion am 13. Februar 1953 wurden gerade einmal neun weitere Kantatenaufnahmen produziert. Die amerikanischen Behörden hatten aus finanzpolitischen Gründen die Auflösung der RIAS-Orchester verfügt. So ging Ristenpart im Sommer 1953 zum Saarländischen Rundfunk, und ihm folgten viele Mitglieder seines Kammerorchesters. Dort entstanden dann vor allem Einspielungen des instrumentalen Bach-Repertoires, teilweise in Kooperation mit einer französischen Schallplattenfirma und wohl auch mit Rücksicht auf deren Kundenkreis.

So blieb das Berliner Projekt unvollendet; noch mehr als drei Jahrzehnte sollte es dauern, bis der Dirigent Helmuth Rilling mit seiner Gächinger Kantorei und dem Bach Collegium Stuttgart die Kantaten Bachs in einer Gesamteinspielung auf Schallplatte vorlegte; Ende der 80er Jahre brachten dann auch Nikolaus Harnoncourt und Gustav Leonhardt nach fast zwanzig Jahren ihr gemeinsames Einspielungsprojekt der Kirchenkantaten Bachs zum Abschluss – zum ersten Mal auf historischen Instrumenten.

Jede der erhaltenen Aufnahmen Ristenparts ist in sich künstlerisch geschlossen, und viele von ihnen wirken immer noch überraschend modern in ihrer detailreichen und recht flüssigen Interpretationsweise – mag man heute, da sich die historische Aufführungspraxis weitestgehend etabliert hat, auch schnellere Tempi und stärker von der schwingenden Rhythmik der Takthierarchien geprägte Klangbilder barocker Musik gewöhnt sein.

Am Beispiel der Bach-Kantate zum Trinitatisfest 1725, „Es ist ein trotzig und verzagt Ding“, soll am Ende unserer Sendung deutlich werden, wie es Ristenpart verstanden hat, die Binnendynamik und die innere Dramaturgie einer solchen mehrsätzigen und entsprechend vielgestaltigen Komposition zur Geltung zu bringen. Die Aufnahme stellt Ihnen zugleich noch drei weitere Vokalsolisten des RIAS-Projektes vor: Gerda Lammers (Sopran), Charlotte Wolf-Matthäus (Alt) und Gerhard Niese (Bass).

Musik 7)

Johann Sebastian Bach

Kantate „Es ist ein trotzig und verzagt Ding“, BWV 176:

Mit Johann Sebastian Bachs Kantate 176, „Es ist ein trotzig und verzagt Ding“, gingen die „Historischen Aufnahmen“ zu Ende, in denen wir Ihnen heute das Bach-Kantatenprojekt des RIAS Berlin aus den späten 1940er und frühen 1950er Jahren vorstellten. Sie hörten den RIAS-Kammerchor und das RIAS-Kammerorchester unter der Leitung von Karl Ristenpart; die Solisten in der Kantate 176 waren Gerda Lammers (Sopran), Charlotte Wolf-Matthäus (Alt) und Gerhard Niese (Bass). Im Studio verabschiedet sich Bernd Heyder mit Dank für Ihr Interesse.

www.huffingtonpost.com July 31, 2012 (Laurence Vittes - 2012.07.31)

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The RIAS Bach Cantatas Project

29 Bach cantatas conducted by Karl Ristenpart, Berlin 1949-52

The RIAS Bach Cantatas Project

Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.

The 28 cantatas here – plus one by Telemann, thought to be Bach's at the time of the recording – are a selection from a huge project which was intended to record the complete Bach series but achieved only 78 works. The project was devised by the post-war Berlin radio station Rundfunk im amerikanischen Sektor (RIAS) and, through reaching a large radio audience was a very significant milestone in the rebirth of musical awareness in post-war Germany. The extent to which defeated, occupied and soon-to-be-divided Germany was physically smashed and demoralised in 1945 is outlined in some detail by Habakuk Traber in the booklet, while Rüdiger Albrecht gives more specific details about the series itself, its beginnings in 1946 and premature end in 1953 with the departure of Karl Ristenpart to take up the direction of the Saarland Radio Orchestra.

To all this can be added some relevant technical detail. All the recordings here were made in the twentieth-century Jesus-Christus-Kirche, Berlin-Dahlem, on magnetic tape. Tape recording was of good and consistent quality in Germany even by 1945; so much so that the BBC was still using captured German tape machines as late as 1952. In West Germany there was a much earlier move to FM radio than elsewhere in Europe, largely because of the poor allocation of AM channels to the whole country by the Copenhagen agreement of 1950. Many of the early recordings were re-made as the quality of the tapes improved, because the faults in the older ones became more obvious on FM radio. A noticeable improvement in quality can be heard in this selection which, by 1950 – the Bach bicentenary year – became at least comparable with commercial recordings of the period. During that year 21 of these 28 Bach recordings were made.

The first impression – and it is one that will surprise those who have been persuaded by exaggerated claims for "period" performances is of the relative modernity of the instrumental playing and (to a lesser extent) of the choral singing. The scale of these performances is very much as it would now be but, of course, there are no period instruments. Except for odd moments from the solo singers there is an absence of unwelcome overt "expressiveness". From the instrumentalists there is remarkable, adroit and attractive playing. The many obbligato soloists in the arias give great pleasure. There is the very occasional disaster, as with the solo trumpet which descants the final chorus of No. 31 and is painfully out of tune.

Mention of trumpet playing – elsewhere never less than adequate – brings me to the choral singing. In both there is a tendency to "punch out" fast semiquavers note by note with the chorus aspirating every one of them, although there are not many such passages. Another anachronism is the use of a harpsichord in the basso continuo. By the end of the 1950s this had been banished in sacred music by a chamber or positive organ.

Among the soloists there are some outstanding singers who went on to international careers. The focused and very spiritual voice of Agnes Giebel (Nos. 47, 32, 108, 52, 79, 202) is perhaps the finest among the sopranos but Gunthild Weber – less consistent – is also often memorable (Nos. 58, 76, 199, 164, 140). Ingrid Lorenzsen, who takes many of the alto solos sometimes sings with the kind of vibrato that now sounds anachronistic in Bach. All the tenor roles are taken by Helmut Krebs, whose effortless, articulate voice seems ideal for this music. Some of his numbers are extremely challenging, none more so than the aria "Hasse nur, hasse mich recht" in No. 76 where even he resorts to aspirating the swirling melismatic passages. Finally – and for some his presence will be decisive – there is much characterful and meaningful singing from the young Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, whose first commercial recordings coincided with this collection. From April 1950 comes Cantata No. 37 from which the recitative and aria "Ihr Sterblichen ... Der Glaube schafft der Seele Flügel" stands as an arresting exemplar of the quality of Fischer-Dieskau's early style.

One cannot hear these performances without sometimes reflecting on the straitened and austere environment out of which they sprang in ruined post-war Germany. Never more is this so than in No. 21, Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis, recorded in the early summer of 1950. From the opening Sinfonia (Adagio assai)

to the final chorus with its resplendent trumpets and drums we follow the despairing soul down into the abyss. Through the central Christian notion of its union with God the journey then leads through the motet-like chorus "Sei nun wieder zufrieden" to final joy.

Among the other works it is often the betterknown that leave the most lasting impression. No. 140, Wachtet auf, ruft uns die Stimme has the RIAS boys' chorus singing its cantus firmus followed by Helmut Krebs's exultant recitative beginning "Er kommt". No. 79 is also notable for its (splendidly recorded) opening chorus in a style close to Händel and the direct simplicity of Lorri Lail's alto aria with flute obbligato that follows it.

Throughout the series we are aware that we are listening to history as well as to music. The ultimate hero of the project is surely Karl Ristenpart himself, whose later work with the Saarland Chamber Orchestra brought excitement and quality to the label Club Français du Disque and also deserves to be heard again.

Gramofon June 2012 (Rob Cowan - 2012.06.01)

gramofon

Inspiration floating on the airwaves

Bach cantatas from Audite and the Bach Guild; anniversary releases for Walter, Solti and Kreisler

Inspiration floating on the airwaves

Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.

Das Orchester 09/2012 (Arnold Werner-Jensen - 2012.09.01)



Diese umfangreiche CD-Box ist imponierend in editorischer und musikalischer...

Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.

Musik & Theater 07/2012 (Werner Pfister - 2012.07.01)



Lebendige Vergangenheit

Lebendige Vergangenheit

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Classica n° 146 (octobre 2012) (Philippe Venturini - 2012.10.01)



Dans le Berlin en ruines de l'après-guerre, il fallait aussi reconstruire la...

Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.

Scherzo 01.10.2012 (Alfredo Brotons Muñoz - 2012.10.01)



En la resurrección de la música en Alemania tras la II Guerra Mundial...

Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.

Mitteilungsblatt der Neuen bachgesellschaft Winter 2012 (Sabine Näher - 2012.12.01)



Buch- und CD-Tipps

The RIAS BACH CANTATAS Project

Buch- und CD-Tipps

Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.

www.musicweb-international.com 31.12.2012 (John Quinn - 2012.12.31)



Recordings Of The Year 2012

Either this has been a particularly rich year or else I've been extremely fortunate in the quality of the discs that have come my way for review. My shortlist, compiled as the year went along, eventually extended to over a dozen releases. With great difficulty – and even greater regret – I have discarded such excellent releases as Herreweghe's latest account of the B Minor Mass and Sir John Eliot Gardiner's new versions of the Bach Motets and Brahms Requiem. Similarly, Juanjo Mena's impressive Turangalila-Symphonie narrowly missed the cut, as did Stephen Layton's wonderful recording of the serene Requiem by Howells and a very fine set of music by Alec Roth from Ex Cathedra. Andris Nelson's superb DVD of the Shostakovich Eighth Symphony was one of my six choices until the very last minute when his DVD of War Requiem became an even more urgent selection.

All the releases that I've chosen, which I've deliberately listed in alphabetical order – and those mentioned above – have given me particular pleasure and I hope that if you acquire them they'll have the same effect on you.

Johann Sebastian Bach: The RIAS Bach Cantatas Project

This set was a revelation: Bach cantatas recorded between 1946 and 1953 but in a style that puts the performances closer to that of the period performance revolution that lay years ahead. The conductor, Karl Ristenpart, used a chamber choir and orchestra and the results are light and fresh. Outstanding among the soloists are Agnes Giebel, Helmut Krebs and the young Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. Ristenpart conducts with great distinction and with a real feeling for the spirit of Bach. These performances constitute a major

addition to the discography of Bach's cantatas.
[...]

Muzykalnaya zhizn' N° 3 2013 (Ilya Ovchinnikov - 2013.03.01)

Russische Rezension siehe PDF!

<http://operalounge.de> (Dr. Gerd Heinsen - 2012.11.30)



Bei audite eine 9 CD-Box

Bach von Ristenpart

Ristenparts Bach-Kantaten bei audite – ein Wiederhören mit legendären Sängern der Berliner Nachkriegszeit im RIAS Berlin 1949 – 1952. Die audite-9-CD-Box mit Erstveröffentlichungen aus dem RIAS-Archiv präsentiert den historisch ersten Versuch einer Gesamteinspielung der Bach-Kantaten. Für jeden, der sich für die Geschichte der Bach Interpretation und für die Linien des kulturellen Wiederaufbaus in Deutschland nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg interessiert, sind die Aufnahmen in dieser CD-Box eine bedeutende Bereicherung. Karl Ristenpart baute ab 1946 die Chor- und Orchesterarbeit des RIAS Berlin auf und leitete den RIAS Kammerchor und das RIAS- Kammerorchester. Mit diesen Ensembles und aufstrebenden jungen Sängern wie Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Helmut Krebs und Agnes Giebel planten Karl Ristenpart und Elsa Schiller, die damalige Leiterin der RIAS-Musikabteilung, ab 1947 eine Gesamteinspielung aller Bach-Kantaten. Das Projekt konnte allerdings nicht vollständig verwirklicht werden. Die heute noch im RIAS-Archiv vorhandenen 29 Kantaten dokumentieren ein auch aus heutiger Sicht zukunftsweisendes Bach-Ideal: Durch die kleine Besetzung erscheint die Musik transparent und strukturell deutlich, die Sänger kooperieren klar artikulierend mit den Instrumentalisten. Durch diese Interpretation, die sich von aller Monumentalität frei macht, wurde die spätere historische Aufführungspraxis ästhetisch vorbereitet. Zu dieser Produktion gibt es wieder einen „Producer's Comment“ vom Produzenten Ludger Böckenhoff unter <http://audite.de/de/download/fi le/373/pdf.html>: „Die Produktion ist Teil unserer Reihe „Legendary Recordings“ und trägt das Qualitätsmerkmal „1st Master Release“. Dieser Begriff steht für die außerordentliche Qualität der Archivproduktionen bei audite, denn allen historischen audite Veröffentlichungen liegen ausnahmslos die Originalbänder aus den Rundfunkarchiven zugrunde. In der Regel sind dies die ursprünglichen Analogbänder, die mit ihrer Bandgeschwindigkeit von bis zu 76 cm/Sek. auch nach heutigen Maßstäben erstaunlich hohe Qualität erreichen. Das Remastering – fachlich kompetent und sensibel angewandt – legt zudem bislang verborgene Details der Interpretationen frei. So ergibt sich ein Klangbild von überlegener Qualität. CD-Veröffentlichungen, denen private Mitschnitte von Rundfunksendungen oder alte Schellackplatten zugrunde liegen, sind damit nicht zu vergleichen.“

Neben der Dokumentation des Schaffens von Karl Ristenpart, zu Unrecht heute vergessen und gern fälschlich als Mittelklasse-Dirigent abgeschrieben, beschert diese bedeutende audite-Produktion eben ein Wiederhören mit den ebenso wichtigen Sängern der Berliner Nachkriegszeit. Neben so bekannten wie Giebel oder Dieskau finden sich hier Gertrud Birmele oder die stimmige Gunthild Weber, die viel mit dem Berliner Dirigenten Werner auftrat und eingespielt hat, auch Charlotte Wolf-Matthäus – eine bedeutende Altistin jener Jahre – und natürlich Helmut Krebs, der Allround-Tenor der Berliner und Hamburger Opernhäuser und unerreichter Interpret für die Moderne ebenso wie fürs Barocke. Ein Cornucopium also an exzellenten Sängern und eine wichtige Korrektur unserer Wahrnehmung jener Zeit, die wir heute nur noch wegen ihrer Schallplattensänger der DGA oder Electrola in Erinnerung haben, als es noch die Exklusivbindungen gab. Wie in anderen europäischen Ländern auch (namentlich Italien und Frankreich) korrigierte das Radio diesen Exklusiv-Eindruck und bot die weniger glücklichen Sänger, die keinen Fuß in

den Plattenfirmen hatten.

**Saarländischer Rundfunk SR 2 KulturRadio: Samstag, 21. Dezember 2013
(Josef Weiland - 2013.12.21)**



Die originalen Rundfunk-Tonbänder wurden einem professionellen Remastering unterzogen, um die bestmögliche Klangqualität zu erreichen. Und da kommt man – auch bei diesen CDs – tatsächlich ins Staunen, was die Techniker heutzutage alles möglich machen.

Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.

BBC Radio 3 05.05.2012, 10.15 Uhr (Andrew Mc Gregor - 2012.05.05)



BROADCAST CD review

Nicholas Anderson joins Andrew to discuss recent Bach box sets

Sendebeleg siehe PDF!

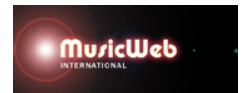


Johann Sebastian Bach: Christmas Oratorio

Johann Sebastian Bach

3CD aud 21.421

www.musicweb-international.com Tuesday November 22nd (John Quinn - 1999.11.30)



Back in 2012 I warmly welcomed a large Audite box containing the surviving recordings of Bach cantatas made between 1946 and 1953 by Karl Ristenpart. What I didn't know at the time was that a recording of the Christmas Oratorio had been made during the same period. Happily, the original tapes have survived and Audite, whose policy it is always to work from original tapes and no other sources, have now issued it on CD.

As I remarked when reviewing his cantata recordings, Karl Ristenpart (1900-1967) was somewhat ahead of his time in that he performed Bach's choral music with quite small forces, using a chamber orchestra and also a chamber choir comprised of professional singers. Furthermore, his tempi were often closer to those we're accustomed to hearing from today's Bach interpreters rather than those usually selected by conductors of Bach in the post-war years such as Karl Richter. The result of all this is that there's usually a most persuasive feeling of textural lightness to Ristenpart's Bach and though he can be judiciously measured in the speeds he adopts, the music rarely if ever drags. Whilst I'm wary of over-reliance on timings it's interesting to note that Ristenpart's overall timing for this work is not significantly longer than the timing achieved by Sir John Eliot Gardiner on his recording (150:04) or that of Stephen Layton on his brand new Hyperion set (151:49). However, it's not just a question of timings: one feels that Ristenpart is conveying the spirit of the music.

Ristenpart was discriminating in his choice of soloists and the quartet who sing for him here all featured prominently in his cantata series. It's worth saying at the outset that none of them ornament the da capo sections of the arias in accordance, I suspect, with the practice of the time. The credentials of Helmut Krebs (1913-2007) as a Bach singer do not need rehearsing here. He was a noted Evangelist and he was the only tenor used by Ristenpart in the cantata recordings that survive. He adds lustre to this performance. He sings the narration very well, the timbre of his voice ideally suited to Bach's recitative. The narration is often paced quite deliberately – though it never drags – and Krebs makes every word come alive, investing the text with meaning. The clarity of his diction is matched by the clarity of his vocal production so he makes a fine Evangelist. He also does the tenor arias very well indeed; in these numbers his light, athletic voice and an excellent technique are priceless assets. I particularly enjoyed his rendition of 'Ich will nur dir zu Ehren leben' where he's partnered by two equally incisive violinists.

Agnes Giebel (b. 1921) had at least as big a career as Krebs. Like him, she excelled in Bach - and in much else - and she makes a distinguished contribution here. The echo aria, 'Flößt, mein Heiland, flößt dein Namen' is charmingly done. The music is really suited to Giebel's voice and she sings it beautifully. She's aided by the conductor's astute pacing and by the involvement of a fine oboist. Everything else Giebel does gives comparable pleasure. The name of Charlotte Wolf-Matthäus (1908-1979) is not quite as well known but I enjoyed her singing in the cantata set and she's on very good form here also. 'Bereite dich, Zion', taken at a pace which is quite steady, reveals not only her pleasing tone but also the conviction of her singing. Her voice is very evenly produced and I admire her sense of line. Equally enjoyable is her unaffected singing in the wonderful aria, 'Schlafe, mein Liebster'. I was fascinated to note here that Ristenpart, who adopts a very fluent speed, takes 9:55 for this aria; that's not appreciably slower than Gardiner, who takes

9:20. Layton, in his new recording, takes 10:47 and makes it sound more like a lullaby than either of them.

The baritone is Walter Hauck (1910-1991). He's another singer who I enjoyed in the cantata set though there he faced competition from the young Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. He's a good singer, though not in the same class as Fischer-Dieskau, even early in the latter's career. His tone is firm and his voice is consistently well and clearly produced. He's heard to good advantage in 'Großer Herr, O starker König', which is taken quite steadily. I've heard more imaginative accounts of this fine aria but Hauck gives a strong, un-histrionic reading of it. Later on he gives a good performance of 'Erleucht auch meine finstre Sinnen' though, once again, it's not the most nuanced rendition of Bach's music that I've heard. But Hauck is reliable at all times.

The orchestral playing is pretty good – there are some excellent wind players in the band – though the trumpets can be a bit fallible at times. There's one particularly sour piece of pitching from the first trumpeter on the last chord of the opening chorus of Cantata III. That's the chorus which is repeated at the end of the cantata and when the exact same flaw is apparent the second time round one doesn't need to be a super sleuth to deduce that the same take has been recycled. The singing of the RIAS-Kammerchor is decent but not outstanding. I suspect that Habakuk Traber is right to point out in his notes that the choir had not been in existence for all that long and had not been welded into an homogenous ensemble by 1950 – Ristenpart was not their chorus master, by the way. The blend is often not very good and the singing is not always ideally tidy. That said, the choir never lets the side down and they certainly sing with commitment – that's evident right at the start in a vigorous rendition of the opening chorus of Cantata I, though here one has the sense that the accent is more on demanding our attention rather than on rejoicing. I think the standard of singing improves as the performance unfolds and the choir makes a good job of the opening chorus of Cantata V and an even better fist of the corresponding movement in Cantata VI.

I found Ristenpart's direction stylish and convincing. Listeners familiar with 'modern' performances of the work may think at first that the opening chorus, 'Jauchzet, frohlocket' is somewhat steady. True, the music does sound sturdier than it does in the hands of, say, Gardiner. However, my firm advice would be that you should persevere. I don't think you'll be far into the work before the conviction of Ristenpart's view of the piece takes over. And, as I said earlier, I don't believe that he could never be accused of allowing the music to drag but he certainly conveys its spirit. One thing that slightly surprised me was the assertion in the notes that Ristenpart "chose swift tempi for the chorales." I don't really feel the chorales are taken all that swiftly, though they're certainly not turgid. To my ears they sound comfortably paced and I applaud the conductor's avoidance of pauses at the fermatas. Instead the chorales have a forward momentum and the phrasing makes sense of the words. I rather think the author of the notes had in mind that in Ristenpart's hands the chorales were taken more swiftly than was the prevailing practice at the time. There's one slight disappointment: I'm pretty sure that in Cantata IV Ristenpart has the horn parts played on trumpets, probably for economic reasons.

Given that this performance was recorded sixty-three years ago, albeit under studio conditions, the quality of the recorded sound is bound to be an issue for collectors. All I can say is that Audite have done a splendid job with these transfers. The performers sound to be quite close to the microphones and in that sense the balance is rather up-front. Once or twice the closeness of the balance bothered me a little, one such instance being the soprano/bass duet, 'Herr, dein Mitleid, dein Erbarmen' (Cantata III) where both of the singers and the pair of oboes d'amore are all a bit too close for comfort – and occasionally Agnes Giebel is slightly disadvantaged in the balance. However, during most of the work the balance is satisfactory and never once did I feel the sound was an obstacle to enjoyment of the performance. That's a credit both to the original RIAS engineering team and to Ludger Böckenhoff, who has re-mastered these tapes and who was also one of the two re-mastering engineers behind the Ristenpart cantatas box.

Karl Ristenpart was a remarkable Bach conductor, truly years ahead of his time. This recording of the Christmas Oratorio, set down over a mere two days, is not flawless – not least because performing standards have risen so much during the last sixty years. However, it's stylish, wise and very well worthwhile hearing. I'm absolutely delighted that Audite have not just rescued this fine recording from the vaults but that they have done such an excellent presentational job in issuing it. Unfortunately, though, unlike the set of cantata recordings, no texts are provided. I suppose it's too much to hope for that there are

any more Ristenpart Bach performances in the archives but this present issue is a most welcome addition to the discography of Bach's Christmas masterpiece.

<http://operalounge.de> 01.12.2013 (Rüdiger Winter - 2013.12.01)



Ein etwas strenges "Weihnachtsoratorium" mit Karl Ristenpart bei audite

Am Anfang war die Pauke

Dieses Weihnachtsoratorium ist nichts für Nebenbei. Sollte es ja eigentlich auch niemals sein. Aber mal ehrlich, wer hat nicht schon mal beim Plätzchenbacken oder beim Putzen in der Adventszeit den unverwüstlichen Bach im Hintergrund laufen lassen? Bei dieser Aufnahme geht das nicht. Sie verlangt volle Konzentration und Sammlung. Und man sollte es sich nicht zu gemütlich machen. Am besten, man nimmt gleich auf einem Stuhl vor den Lautsprechern Platz und fühlt sich in eine große Kirche versetzt. Der Klang ist ganz danach, wuchtig und groß. Wie Stereo hebt es an, in Wahrheit ist es weit davon entferntes Mono. Die Pauken tonangebend, kräftig und bestimmend. Als sei am Anfang die Pauke gewesen und nicht das Wort! "Jauchzet, frohlocket, auf preiset die Tage!"

Auf dem Programm steht eine Ausgrabung, die bei audite rechtzeitig zum Fest erschienen ist: Johann Sebastian Bach, Weihnachtsoratorium, aufgenommen 1950 in Berlin mit Kammerchor, Knabenchor und Kammerorchester des RIAS unter der Leitung von Karl Ristenpart (21.421). Er hatte das Kammerorchester 1946 gegründet. Ristenpart (1900 – 1967), der auch während des Nationalsozialismus künstlerisch tätig gewesen ist, gehörte zu den Pionieren des musikalischen Neubeginns nach dem verlorenen Krieg in Westdeutschland. Seine Aufnahmen sind Legende, einer umfänglichen Kantatenausgabe beim selben Label folgt nun das überfällige Oratorium. Es ist eine historische Aufnahme, nicht nur in Bezug auf ihr Alter von mehr als sechzig Jahren. Der Ansatz ist streng, protestantisch streng. "Soli deo gloria!" Dem alleinigen Gott die Ehre, wie Bach unter seine Werke schrieb. Unbändige Freude will bei so viel Ernst nicht aufkommen. Die ist genauso wie Sinnlichkeit und gar ein Hauch Erotik erst späteren Aufnahmen vorbehalten. Auf dem Weg dahin ist Ristenpart mit seiner Deutung eine wichtige Station. Bei allen kritischen Einwänden, die zu einem Gutteil unseren heutigen Hörgewohnheiten entspringen, gebührt dieser Produktion in der umfangreichen Diskographie des Werkes ein vorderer Platz. Ristenpart nimmt die Chorpässagen ziemlich zügig, lässt sich aber bei der Gestaltung des inhaltlichen Geschehens viel Zeit, als wolle er, dass jedes Detail gebührend zur Geltung gelangt, nichts soll verloren gehen.

Das Solistenquartett fügt sich in dieses Konzept exakt ein – Agnes Giebel (Sopran), Charlotte Wolf-Matthäus (Alt), Helmut Krebs (Tenor), Walter Hauck (Bass). Alle singen alles, Krebs ist auch der Evangelist. Alle haben große Bach-Erfahrungen. Stilistisch bieten sie eine vollkommene Leistung an allen sechs Kantaten. Gern erinnere ich mich an weit zurückliegende Aufführungen des Weihnachtsoratoriums in meiner Jugendzeit in kleinen oder großen Kirchen. Die Sänger hatten stets die Noten in Händen, die wie zum Pult gegen das Publikum erhoben waren. Damals fand ich das etwas albern, später habe ich diese Haltung richtig verstanden. Niemand hätte sich gewagt, seine Partie aus dem Gedächtnis vorzutragen, obwohl das die meisten locker gekonnt hätten. Respekt vor dem Werk zeigte sich auch als Respekt vor dem Notenblatt. Genau so konzentriert und würdevoll wirken die Solisten dieser Aufnahme auf mich.

Wer noch kein Weihnachtsoratorium besitzen sollte und sich endlich eins zulegen will, ist mit dieser Aufnahme nicht gut bedient. Für den Einstieg gibt es unzählige Alternativen neueren Datums. Sie ist ein Sammlerstück, ein sehr wichtiges allemal. Ich möchte nicht mehr darauf verzichten.

International Record Review December 2013 (Carl Rosman - 2013.12.01)



Three Christmas Oratorios

'Tis the season to jauchzen and frohlocken. Right on cue, here is a stimulatingly diverse crop of Christmas Oratorios: two on rather different scales employing period instruments (one on CD from Cambridge, one on DVD and Blu-ray from Brussels) and one employing twentieth-century hardware (nowadays sounding 'period' in its own right) from post-war Berlin. The Christmas Oratorio has not managed to attain quite the prominence in the repertoire that the Mass in B minor or the Passions have established for themselves – a little odd on the face of it, given that it has the narrative potential of the former and the sumptuous scoring of the latter. Even Bach himself gave it just a single outing, over Christmas-New Year 1733-34. Perhaps it is not too blasphemous to feel that Bach's parody practice might have had something to do with it: a great part of the music was originally intended for different words, and words that fit it somewhat better. The strangely gravelly tessitura of the chorus's opening utterance (taking the sopranos down to low A) is explained by the original text: not 'Jauchzet, frohlocket' ('Rejoice, exult!') but 'Tönet, ihr Pauken' 'Sound out, ye drums'. The lullaby to Baby Jesus from Part 2 ('Schlafe, mein Liebster') was originally sung by none other than a personification of Lust to tempt Hercules in a secular cantata. Hercules's aria of rejection (Ich will dich nicht hören') became the call to Zion to welcome Jesus as bridegroom ('Bereite dich Zion'); 'Großer Herr, o starker König' was originally addressed to a Königin. This is certainly all very inventive and economical (although surely bordering on the potentially scandalous at the time) but does not guarantee the ideal symbiosis between text and music – certainly the chorus which opens Part 5, one of the few large-scale choruses to be newly composed, does seem to have a particular freshness. [...]

Ristenpart's 1950 account would not be an obvious choice as one's only Christmas Oratorio. It is nonetheless an intriguing document of post-war Bach performance practice, incorporating several ideas one would generally, associate with later decades. Even though it does run onto three CDs, the overall duration of 156 minutes is just four minutes longer than Layton's and ten more than Herreweghe's and some of his tempos are swifter than either.

Habakuk Traber's booklet note puts Ristenpart in historical context as helping to reclaim Bach from Nazi-era monumentality. The chorales show a quite modern understanding of Bach's fermatas (as phrase marks rather than held chords), making Layton's approach seem strangely old-fashioned by comparison. The shepherds' Sinfonia at the beginning of Part 2 is most attractively phrased and zips by in a mere 4'20" – Traber makes the comparison with René Jacobs's 1997 period-instrument recording featuring the successors of the same choir, in which the same Sinfonia takes a leisurely 7'48" (Harmonia Mundi HMC2901630.31). On the debit side, the large-scale choruses are generally (inevitably?) somewhat slower to modern ears, with the runs choppily articulated; the 3/8 choruses, of which there are many, do not always manage to phrase in one to the bar, instead emerging with three relatively even accents.

The solo arias often show an enviable degree of chamber-music rapport between voices and instruments – something which eludes the vast majority of performances, historical or otherwise. (Indeed the combination so often met with today of rigorously historical instruments and not particularly historical voices is all but guaranteed to miss this rapport which Bach's scores above all seem to demand.) In 'Frohe Hirten' Helmut Krebs's tenor and the unnamed flautist trade their demisemiquavers as equals; in 'Ich will nur dir zu Ehren leben' Krebs is neatly embedded in the violin obbligatos. In 'Flößt, mein Heiland' soprano Agnes Giebel and her oboist are not only on compatible dynamic planes but share a compatible musical concept, which could not be said for the version on the Layton recording, as lovely as it is in other respects. The instrumental contribution is in general uneven: the high trumpets are overstretched in many passages compared with what their valveless colleagues manage so serenely on the other two recordings, the woodwinds generally fine, the strings a little inarticulate by today's standards, the harpsichord rather out of place in the general instrumental concept.

In all, though, Ristenpart's recording is an important testament to the complexity of interpretative currents in Bach performance in the second half of the twentieth century – not least in suggesting that some recent

developments might not have led to more historically or musically appropriate results.

Not, then, the only recording to have on the shelf, but certainly one to be recommended for any listeners seriously interested in the recent history of performance practice. It is hard to avoid noticing that the vocal soloists on recent period-instrument recordings employ significantly more vibrato than some of their mid-twentieth century counterparts: not only Krebs for Ristenpart here but also, for example, Anton Dermota in Furtwängler's classic St Matthew Passion (EMI Références 5 65509-2) are comprehensively outdone in that department by Gilchrist and Hobbs, as well as Anthony Rolfe Johnson and Hans-Peter Blochwitz for Gardiner, Paul Agnew for Philip Pickett (Decca 458 838-2) and dozens of others. (Choirs, to be fair, have gone decisively in the opposite direction, and a good thing too – the RIAS choir's vibrato for Ristenpart is an unequivocal debit point.) Perhaps one day a recording might come along where the singers shape their notes as today's historical instrumentalists do in the service of a genuine chamber-music approach – I can only dimly imagine the possible results but I am sure they would be wonderful. I can't, alas, imagine how well-behaved I would have to be for Santa to organize that in the foreseeable future (Audite 21.421, three discs, 2 hours 36 minutes).

www.opusklassiek.nl februari 2014 (Aart van der Wal - 2014.02.01)



Het lijkt niet ver bezijden de waarheid dat in deze uitvoering de eerste drie cantates sterker aansluiten bij de traditionele 'Bachpflege' dan de overige drie, die meer in het licht van de 'nieuwe' tijd staan. Het is ronduit fascinerend die verschillen te horen en ze hun eigen plaats binnen het geheel te geven. Het oude en het nieuwe, verenigd in dit historische toondocument, levert absoluut nieuwe inzichten op.

Tot slot nog iets over de cd-verdoeking. Er werd wederom met liefde en vakmanschap gerestaureerd, waardoor het RIAS-archief zomaar nieuwe dimensies krijgt toegeworpen. Als we al van het bestaan ervan wisten, of deels wisten, hadden we toch niet kunnen bevroeden dat al dit materiaal nu op zijn best aan ons wordt voorgesteld.

Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.

[Fanfare](#) 06.02.2014 (George Chien - 2014.02.06)



My first Karl Ristenpart review appeared way back in Fanfare 2:5, actually before the magazine adopted its current method of identifying back issues. It was of a Nonesuch recording of Haydn's Morning, Noon, and Evening symphonies (Nos. 6, 7, and 8), for which I paid the late Sam Goody, rest his soul, the munificent sum of \$1.49 not necessarily the best buck and a half I've ever spent, but close. For you nostalgia trippers who have been with us long enough to remember, it was also my very first Classical Hall of Fame nomination. A decade or so later I welcomed Ristenpart's Brandenburg Concertos to CD. Ristenpart's Brandenburgs, on two Nonesuch LPs, had been my first stereo version – my third overall – some years before. I'm sure that price was a factor in that transaction, too, but I have no documentation of it. The Nonesuch LPs served me well, but by the time they were transformed into two Accord CDs the period-instruments movement was in full sway, and the Ristenpart versions had lost a little of their luster.

Ristenpart was a player in the transition from the traditional reverential and monumental Bach that held sway during the late 19th and early 20th centuries to the tighter, lighter, and brighter idiom that prevails today. Case in point: He sang through the fermatas that mark the ends of phrases in Bach's chorales. Rather than interpreting chorales as if they were miniature tone poems, he treated them more in the manner of congregational singing. His choruses, too, shed some of their massiveness. This Christmas Oratorio is, in a sense, an historical document. One can sense a change from the opening chorus of the

first cantata to the later ones. Audite's notes cast a revealing light on the situation. The recording was made in 1950, just five years after the end of the War. The RIAS (Radio in the American Sector) Chamber Chorus of Berlin was a relatively new organization, so Ristenpart started the sessions cautiously, gradually picking up his tempos as his singers became more comfortable with them. Another hint of things to come is Ristenpart's reading of the famous pastoral Sinfonia in Cantata 2. It would be a surprise to me if Reinhard Goebel were to adopt Ristenpart's breathless tempo. The soloists were among the best of their time; I was especially impressed by alto Charlotte Wolf-Matthäus, but all were excellent. I can't recommend this set as a first Christmas Oratorio, but it's a valuable document, worth preserving, and rewarding on its own terms.

Ristenpart did benefit from the innovative marketing efforts of the then new and active minor labels. Caught between the older traditions and changes yet to come, he isn't well remembered today. He deserves better.

Das Orchester 03/2014 (Rüdiger Krohn - 2014.03.01)



Viele Entscheidungen dieser Einspielung erklären sich aus den Umständen ihrer Entstehung und ihrem Konzept. Einerseits ist sie (namentlich in den ersten drei Kantaten) in Teilen noch der zeittypischen Bach-Tradition verpflichtet, andererseits aber öffnet sie sich (vor allem in den weniger häufig aufgeführten und verfestigten Kantaten) einer moderneren Praxis. Das macht die Aufnahme [...] zu einem aufschlussreichen Tondokument des Übergangs.

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Record Geijutsu April 2014 (- 2014.04.01)



japanische Rezension siehe PDF

ensuite Kulturmagazin Nr. 133 | Januar 2014 (Francois Lilienfeld - 2014.01.01)



Bach, wie man ihn sich öfters wünschte...

Die von Bach so herrlich zusammengestellten Klangkombinationen (Flöten, Oboen, Oboe d'amore...) kommen dank der hohen Qualität des Orchesters wunderbar zur Geltung. Und die Solisten gehören wohl zum Besten, was Deutschland 1950 zu bieten hatte.

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klassik.com 06.03.2016 (Gustavo Martin Sanchez - 2016.03.06)
source: <http://magazin.klassik.com/reviews/revie...>



Neubeginn mit Altbekanntem

Bach, Johann Sebastian – Weihnachtsoratorium

Neubeginn mit Altbekanntem

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BBC Radio 3 02.11.2013, 10.20 Uhr (Andrew Mc Gregor - 2013.11.02)



BROADCAST CD review

Richard Wigmore joins Andrew live in the studio to discuss recent recordings of music of Johann Sebastian Bach.

Sendebeleg siehe PDF!



Edition Ferenc Fricssay (XI) – G. Rossini: Stabat Mater

Gioacchino Rossini

CD aud 95.587

Audiophile Audition June 07, 2009
(Gary Lemco - 2009.06.07)



Audite restores the live recording of 22 September 1954 from the University of...

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Financial Times July 2009 (- 2009.07.01)



The Hungarian conductor Ferenc Fricssay, who died in 1963 aged 48, was one of the...

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Pizzicato N° 195, 9/2009 (Alain Steffen - 2009.09.01)



Aus den Archiven

Vier weitere Veröffentlichungen aus dem historischen Archiv, wobei aber nur zwei wirkliches Interesse verdienen. Kaum erwähnenswert bleibt Karl Böhms Auseinandersetzung mit der 7. Symphonie von Ludwig van Beethoven, zumal uns Böhm andere und wesentlich bessere Beethoven-Aufnahmen geschenkt hat. Behäbig in den Tempi, flau im Klangbild und ohne rechte Dynamik und Spannung entspricht diese Siebte hundertprozentig dem Klischee von 'Väterchen Böhm'. Strauss' Burleske mag ebenfalls nicht so recht überzeugen, vielleicht weil der damals nach einem eigenen Stil suchende Friedrich Gulda nicht viel mit Böhms traditioneller Orchesterarbeit anfangen konnte und die Interpretation somit unterm Strich recht unschlüssig daherkommt.

Auch Fricssays Einspielung von Rossinis Stabat Mater gehört nicht zu den Meilensteinen dieses genialen Dirigenten. Und das liegt nicht einmal am Dirigenten selbst, der allen Klischees zum Trotz einen spannenden und reliefreichen Rossini dirigiert und sich demnach nicht mit reinem Schönklang zufrieden gibt. Allerdings passen die vier Solisten, insbesondere Maria Stader und Ernst Haefliger stimmlich ganz und gar nicht zu Rossinis geistlichem Werk. Da ist einfach zu viel Mozart und zu wenig Rossini. Zudem gehen beide Sänger bis an Grenzen, die uns dann einige unschöne Momente bescheren. Etwas besser sind Marianna Radev und Kim Borg in den tiefen Registern. Doch der Mangel an Homogenität im Solistenquartett wirkt sich durchgehend negativ auf die Gesamtkonzeption aus.

Herausragend dagegen ist die Einspielung der Klavierkonzerte Nr. 19 & 20 von W.A. Mozart. Man kennt Haskils Stil, aber in jeder ihrer Aufnahmen betört diese Pianistin den Zuhörer mit ihrer ungeheuren

Sensibilität und ihrem Sinn für Schönheit und Stil. Fric say, selbst einer der großen Mozart-Interpreten der Fünfzigerjahre, ist ein idealer Partner für Clara Haskil und so präsentieren beide einen hochrangigen Mozart, der nichts von dem zuckersüßen Wolfgang wissen wollte und demnach durch seine Modernität seiner Zeit weit voraus war. Und dennoch: Die schönste Aufnahme dieses Doppelalbums ist Beethovens 4. Klavierkonzert das unter Haskils Fingern eine schier göttliche Dimension erreicht. Obwohl der heute vergessene Dean Dixon sich Beethoven eher mit einer sehr dynamischen und sportlichen Leseart nähert und so einem Konzept nachgeht, das sich grundlegend von dem einer Clara Haskil unterscheidet, so bildet gerade diese unterschiedliche Basis ein solides Terrain für eine der sicherlich spannendsten Beethoven-Auseinandersetzungen der Discographie. Dean Dixon war übrigens der erste afroamerikanische Dirigent, der an der Spitze von renommierten Symphonieorchestern stand. Wegen seiner Hautfarbe hatte er es allerdings in Amerika recht schwer und so konzentrierte er sich hauptsächlich auf Australien und Europa. 1970 kehrte er allerdings nach Amerika zurück und wurde triumphal gefeiert. Der 1915 in New York geborene Dirigent starb 1976 in der Schweiz.

Gramophone October 2009 (Richard Osborne - 2009.10.01)

GRAMOPHONE
THE WORLD'S BEST CLASSICAL MUSIC REVIEWS

Fricsay in concert, and a dramatic reading of Rossini's sacred masterpiece

This is not a reissue of Fric say's memorable 1954 DG recording of Rossini's Stabat Mater but a live performance given with identical forces in Berlin's Hochschule für Musik three days later. The recording, transferred directly from Deutschlandradio studio tapes, is first-rate, dear and immediate, an occasional touch of sibilance notwithstanding.

Anyone familiar with Fric say's celebrated 1953 DG Verdi Requiem will know how fiery and expressive his direction is. And how scrupulous. No Italian conductor on record has dared to take Rossini's tempo markings in the work's opening and closing movements as literally as Fric say. The Introduzione in particular benefits enormously from his swift and involving reading. Text matters as much to Fric say (a devout Roman Catholic) as it did to Rossini, whose reading of the Latin poem was more comprehending than the "What's he doing writing religious music?" brigade could begin to imagine.

Even the assiduous Fric say has trouble keeping tabs on Kim Borg in the "Pro peccatis" (which lacks its opening drumroll) but elsewhere his deeply felt moulding of the text draws memorable responses from his singers, not least Maria Stader in a thrilling and mercifully unoperatic "Inflammatum". Ernst Haefliger's account of the "Cuius animam" is one of the finest on record, the final top D flat perfectly sounded.

Though this ensemble of Berlin choirs was probably as fine as any in Europe at the time, the perils of live performance take their toll in the unaccompanied "Eja mater" which ends up a semitone sharp (the choir is better in tune in "Quando corpus morietur"). This, however, is a small price to pay in an otherwise accomplished live performance that has about it the true blaze of faith.

www.classicstodayfrance.com Mai 2009 (Christophe Huss - 2009.05.01)



Ferenc Fricsay est toujours à l'aise pour "faire parler" les oeuvres sacrées....

Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.

Ópera Actual Julio 2009 (Albert Torrens - 2009.07.01)



El binomio Gioachino Rossini y música sacra siempre plantea a los intérpretes...

Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.

Scherzo Julio 2009 (Enrique Pérez Adrián - 2009.07.01)



Audite Edición Fricsay

Una Joya

Audite Edición Fricsay

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Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung 30. März 2009 (Lars von der Gönna - 2009.03.30)



Passion ohne hohles Pathos

Passion ohne hohles Pathos

Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.

[American Record Guide](#) September/October 2009 (Greenfield - 2009.09.01)



Rossini: Stabat Mater

A remarkable offering on several counts. First, there's the sound, which is unbelievably good for a 1954 concert performance. Yes, the brasses can be brittle in fortissimo passages, but there's plenty of orchestral detail and even some surges of warmth now and again. Even more impressive are the four solo voices, which come across with startling immediacy. So should this wind up being of interest, don't let the sonics deter you in the least.

What will affect you the most, I suspect, is Fricsay's conception of the piece and the artistry he brought to it. A devout Catholic, he loved this Stabat Mater, programming it numerous times in an era when no other conductor active in Germany would go near it. He approached Rossini's handiwork with reverence, refusing

to simply ladle on the marinara and let the operatic games begin. His soloists do not have big, juicy voices, though the bass is plenty dark and deep when the occasion calls for it. Indeed, there's an intimacy to the singing that seems more suited to an oratorio than to opera. The voices are beautiful as well – bel canto. So while Haefliger may not leap tall phrases at a single bound, his 'Cujus animam' is warm, humane, and more prayerful than most. (With a pretty convincing high D-flat tacked on for good measure, I might add.) Maria Stader's 'Inflammatum' is less a fiery anticipation of Judgement Day than an inner cry for the soul to be cleansed. And never has the 'Qui est homo' duet sounded more compassionate, with the alto and soprano knowingly contemplating the mother's anguish as her son undergoes the agony of the cross.

In some of the most powerful conducting I've heard in a long time, Fricsay builds it all up interlude by interlude, aspiration by aspiration, and prayer by prayer into a true journey of faith. It's a revelatory performance that hangs together tautly, yet every word of text is savored and no rose is left unsmelled. Our perceptions of Rossini, I suspect, have been colored by the familiar idea that his Stabat Mater is a superficial affair where hot tunes trump any and all yearnings of the spirit. Think again. Under the baton of a great conductor, yet another bit of "conventional wisdom" bites the dust.

Fanfare Issue 33:3 (Jan/Feb 2010) (Jerry Dubins - 2010.01.01)

fanfare

This is Volume 11 in Audite's "Edition Ferenc Fricsay," a superb, ongoing series dedicated to remastering and restoring to the catalog many of the coveted live and studio mono recordings made by this near legendary conductor, mainly in the early to mid 1950s. His overlapping stereo recordings for Deutsche Grammophon continued up to the time of his death in 1963 at the age of 48.

It's been said, facetiously, that the Requiem is Verdi's greatest opera, the implication being that the composer couldn't tell the difference between a "Libiamo, libiamo ne' calici" and a "Libera me." I choose not to believe that of Verdi, but of Rossini, I'm not so sure. For if there is a musical setting of a sacred text that surpasses the incongruity of his Petite Messe solennelle, it would have to be this Stabat mater. And while the score, taken on its own, is not entirely frivolous, it is operatic through and through, and not really in keeping with this most deeply moving hymn to the suffering of the Virgin Mary.

For this performance, Fricsay assembled an all-star, world-class quartet of vocal soloists known for their outstanding work in many of the sacred choral masterpieces by Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Cherubini, Bruckner, and Dvořák, as well as for their appearances on the operatic stage. One would expect this broad range of experience and diversity of singing styles to find a happy medium in a reading of Rossini's Stabat mater, and to convey a modicum of balance between the stile antico, which the seriousness of the text calls for, and the music—"A drinking song under the cross," the title of the booklet essay calls it (a reference to the Cujus animam gementem)—which is largely at odds with it. And on balance, this is what we get, though without text in hand, one could be excused for mistaking a passage or two for an excerpt from William Tell. Fault lies not with the soloists, choirs, orchestra, or Fricsay who, as was his wont, moves things along at a quickened pace; the liability is entirely Rossini's.

Peter Uehling's essay, the crucial points of which seem to jibe with other accounts I've read, tells us that the composer began work on the Stabat mater in 1831, but then lost interest after having written six of its 10 movements—1 and 5 through 9. A Spanish cleric and friend, Giuseppe Tadolini, completed the score, which eventually wound up in the hands of a French publisher. Rossini was not pleased to discover this unauthorized publication and decided to offer his own newly completed version to another publisher. By this time Tadolini was dead, but his publisher sued. Eventually, Rossini won the case, and it's in the composer's final 1842 version that the work is heard today.

As archival material that documents the accomplishment of one of the great conductors of the 20th century, not to mention the artistry of some of its finest singers, this release will be indispensable to Fricsay collectors. The sound on this disc, however, does not match the excellence of that achieved on Volume 10

of this series, a 1951 studio recording Fricsay made of the Brahms Violin Concerto with Gioconda de Vito, reviewed in 33:2. The current recording sounds a bit constricted, recessed, and muffled in the loudest passages.

It's hard for me to imagine anyone being truly desperate for a recording of Rossini's Stabat mater, but if it's the piece itself you're interested in, there are quite a few later ones available in far better sound and in performances at least equal to if not superior to this one—Kertész with Lorengar, Minton, Pavarotti, Sotin, and the LSO comes to mind—but again, this is for Fricsay fans and for those collecting the Audite series.

Journal de la Confédération musicale de France Mai/Juin 2009 (Jean Malraye - 2009.05.01)



Les CD de Jean Malraye

Musique Sacrée

Les CD de Jean Malraye

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Die Tonkunst Juli 2013 (Tobias Pfleger - 2013.07.01)



Edition Ferenc Fricsay – Werke von Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Rossini, Bizet, Brahms, Strauß, Verdi, Bartók u. a.

Edition Ferenc Fricsay – Werke von Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Rossini, Bizet, Brahms, Strauß, Verdi, Bartók u. a.

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Classic Collection THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2010 (- 2010.12.09)



In the 1950s Ferenc Fricsay was almost the only conductor to perform Rossini's...

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Inhaltsverzeichnis

The RIAS Bach Cantatas Project	1
DeutschlandRadio Kultur - Radiofeuilleton 27.02.2012.....	1
Paulinus - Wochenzeitung für das Bistum Trier 10/2012.....	1
Rondo Nr. 722 / 10. - 16.03.2012.....	2
Der neue Merker 01.03.2012.....	2
Mannheimer Morgen 22.03.2012.....	2
Das Opernglas April 2012.....	2
RBB Kulturradio 04.04.2012.....	2
www.europalibera.org 05.04.2012.....	3
Pizzicato N° 222 - 4/2012.....	3
Suplimentul de Cultură Anul VIII, Nr. 351 (7–13 aprilie 2012).....	4
International Record Review April 2012.....	4
Financial Times - Deutschland Montag, 23. April 2012.....	5
www.klavier.de 14.05.2012.....	6
klassik.com 14.05.2012.....	6
Il Venerdì di Repubblica 11.05.2012.....	6
orpheus Heft 5+6 (Mai/Juni 2012).....	6
Neue Zürcher Zeitung am Sonntag 03.06.2012.....	7
BBC Music Magazine July 2012.....	7
www.opusklassiek.nl juni 2012.....	8
Junge Freiheit Nr. 19/12 4. Mai 2012.....	8
Early Music Review No. 148, June 2012.....	8
www.musicweb-international.com Friday July 6th.....	9
WDR 3 Freitag, 17.08.12 um 09:08 Uhr, Klassik Forum.....	12
Deutschlandfunk Dienstag, 28. August 2012, Nachtkonzert, 02.05-3.00 Uhr.....	13
www.huffingtonpost.com July 31, 2012.....	16
Classical Recordings Quarterly Summer 2012.....	16
Gramofon June 2012.....	18
Das Orchester 09/2012.....	18
Musik & Theater 07/2012.....	18
Classica n° 146 (octobre 2012).....	18
Scherzo 01.10.2012.....	19
Mitteilungsblatt der Neuen bachgesellschaft Winter 2012.....	19
www.musicweb-international.com 31.12.2012.....	19
Muzykal'naya zhizn' N° 3 2013.....	20
http://operalounge.de.....	20
Saarländischer Rundfunk SR 2 KulturRadio: Samstag, 21. Dezember 2013.....	21
BBC Radio 3 05.05.2012, 10.15 Uhr.....	21
Johann Sebastian Bach: Christmas Oratorio	22
www.musicweb-international.com Tuesday November 22nd.....	22
http://operalounge.de 01.12.2013.....	24
International Record Review December 2013.....	24
www.opusklassiek.nl februari 2014.....	26
Fanfare 06.02.2014.....	26
Das Orchester 03/2014.....	27
Record Geijutsu April 2014.....	27
ensuite Kulturmagazin Nr. 133 Januar 2014.....	27
klassik.com 06.03.2016.....	27
BBC Radio 3 02.11.2013, 10.20 Uhr.....	28
Edition Ferenc Fricsay (XI) – G. Rossini: Stabat Mater	29
Audiophile Audition June 07, 2009.....	29
Financial Times July 2009.....	29
Pizzicato N° 195, 9/2009.....	29
Gramophone October 2009.....	30

www.classicstodayfrance.com Mai 2009.....	30
Ópera Actual Julio 2009.....	31
Scherzo Julio 2009.....	31
Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung 30. März 2009.....	31
American Record Guide September/October 2009.....	31
Fanfare Issue 33:3 (Jan/Feb 2010)	32
Journal de la Confédération musicale de France Mai/Juin 2009.....	33
Die Tonkunst Juli 2013.....	33
Classic Collection THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2010.....	33

