



Edition Ferenc Fricsay (XII) – J. Strauss: Walzer • Polkas

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GRAMOPHONE Musical mainstays of the 1950s

Solomon, Casadesus and Fricsay

Audite have released a well-produced double-pack of "The 1956 RIAS recordings of Solomon". Most of the items have already appeared on APR (4/95), the contents – Bach's Italian Concerto, Beethoven's Sonatas Nos 3 and 14, Brahms's Intermezzos Op 116 No 4 and Op 118 No 6, the Rhapsody Op 79 No 1, and a Chopin group (the F minor Fantaisie, the First Nocturne and the Second Scherzo). But I'd never heard the recording of Schumann's Carnival from the same period and was interested to compare it with Solomon's quietly characterful 1952 EMI studio recording (now on Testament, 7/97). As it happens, there's very little to choose between them, save for the brighter, slightly shallower sound on the broadcast. So if you already have the APR and Testament discs, I'm not sure I'd bother.

However, if you've never acquired the 1959 (Philips) coupling of Beethoven's First and Fourth Piano Concertos with Robert Casadesus and the Concertgebouw Orchestra under Eduard van Beinum, Pristine Audio now affords you the opportunity. These are coolly considered, clear-headed performances, fluent, profoundly classical in style and sonically well balanced. In a word, satisfying – and you have the added interest of Casadesus's own cadenzas. Pristine have also released an earlier (mono) Casadesus recording of Falla's Nights in the Gardens of Spain with the New York Philharmonic under Dimitri Mitropoulos, translucent often exciting playing, vividly accompanied. The same all-Falla CD also includes Mitropoulos's highly individual versions of Three Dances from The Three-Cornered Hat and the "Interlude and Dance" from La vida breve. If you want big, "butch" Falla, then Mitropoulos is your man.

And for a vivacious, affectionately phrased Johann Strauss II miscellany you could hardly do better than an Audite disc of early 1950s radio recordings by the RIAS Symphony Orchestra under Ferenc Fricsay. This is Strauss in the tradition of Reiner, Dorati and Szell, disciplined but loving. Shame about a couple of nasty edits in the Kaiser-Walzer – otherwise the sound more or less matches any good commercial recording of the period.