



YSL 643 78
KOUSSEVITZKY Vol. 11

“The treasure here is the Schumann. It is great to have a Boston Symphony / Serge Koussevitzky performance of the Sibelius Seventh Symphony, but the truth is that the sound quality of the BBC performance from 1933, as heard on Naxos and EMI transfers, is fuller and more impactful than this Boston broadcast. Koussevitzky gave this work its American premiere, and was admired by the composer for his performance (it was also Koussevitzky, a passionate Sibelian, who was teased by the prospect of premiering the Eighth Symphony, which never appeared).

Sibelius and Koussevitzky collectors may well wish to add this performance from eleven years later and with his extraordinary Boston musicians, but the recessed sonic picture makes it difficult to recommend to general collectors.....Although the broadcast is four years earlier than the Sibelius (1944 vs. 1948), the sound is light years better. In fact this sounds like a state-of-the-art 1948 studio recording, with the rich colors produced by the Boston musicians vividly conveyed. Tempi are on the quick side, but the playing is supple and warm, so the result doesn't sound rushed at all. One notes Koussevitzky's famed ear for color and balance, particularly in the Intermezzo. The strings produce a warm, dark and rich sonority while never covering the woodwinds. The tempo adjustments that the conductor employs never seem arbitrary - everything seems to flow naturally. The ritard at the end of the Intermezzo is fairly severe but very smoothly executed. Throughout, this is a performance offering high drama and a richly romantic view of the music. There is nothing small scaled about this 'Rhenish'. It is a reading of opulence and grandeur, trmounding one of a bygone era.

I am not aware of any prior release of this performance, or any other Schumann Third by Koussevitzky, which makes this release by St. Laurent Studio a disc of extraordinary importance in documenting the work of one of the 20th century's most important conductors. That they have transferred it in such superb monaural sound makes it all that much better.”

- Henry Fogel, FANFARE