



St Laurent Studio YSL T-802.

MILSTEIN Vol. 3

Transfers by Yves St Laurent.

"Nathan Milstein was one of the few truly important violinists who maintained a lifelong devotion to Karl Goldmark's Violin Concerto. Goldmark (1830–1915) was born in Hungary, and his first name was originally Károly. He spent the bulk of his life in Vienna. If he is remembered at all today, it is for this Concerto, the 'Rustic Wedding' Symphony, and the opera THE QUEEN OF SHEBA (or perhaps one tenor aria from it). The Violin Concerto exhibits a warm, romantic sentiment, a high level of melodic inspiration, and brilliant writing for the violin. Milstein's 1957 EMI recording with Harry Blech has long been considered the gold standard for the work, but it is wonderful to have him here in a live performance almost 20 years later. Even in his seventh decade Milstein retained his technique (he actually played well in his 80s, until a broken hand forced him to retire at 82)! This performance has a bit more spontaneity and rhythmic energy than the EMI recording. The difference is not significant, but those who love this Concerto or this violinist will be thrilled at what I believe is a first release. Presumably St. Laurent Studio's source is a Vienna radio broadcast, and the sound is well balanced and warm. Conductor Julius Rudel's own Viennese background provides significant sympathy to the music, and his long opera experience guarantees very sensitive accompanying.

The Tchaikovsky concerto with Milstein is available in a number of recordings, both studio and live. The first was with Frederick Stock and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1940, but perhaps the two most widely circulated are on RCA with Charles Munch and the Boston Symphony Orchestra and on EMI with William Steinberg and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Unfortunately, a third account on DG with Abbado and the Vienna Philharmonic seems a bit studied and too careful. Although the present live performance, like the Goldmark, demonstrates a bit more spark and spontaneity than the studio recordings, the difference is not as significant here. Milstein and van Beinum take a relatively reined-in approach to the music's soaring lyricism, though they bring real fire to the faster and more energetic moments of the score. The monaural broadcast sound is terrific for its period, as is often the case with Dutch radio material.

In both Concertos the purity of the Milstein sound, the staggering bowing technique, and his deep musicality are evident. In the final pages of the first and third movements of the Tchaikovsky one is amazed at the rhythmic precision and perfect intonation of the playing, no matter how heated the performance gets.

It is also a pleasure to have the incisive conducting of van Beinum in the Tchaikovsky. Together the soloist and conductor give us a performance long on rhythmic drive and energy, perhaps a bit short on sensuality or playfulness.

This disc will be self-recommending to any admirer of Milstein, in part because newly discovered recorded performances of his do not come around very often. But each reminds us that he was truly one of the greats. For those to whom it is important, Milstein employs the standard Auer cuts in the Tchaikovsky (no surprise, since he was an Auer student). St. Laurent Studio provides documentation and good transfer work but no notes. Releases are available from Norbeck, Peters & Ford (norpete.com)."

- Henry Fogel, FANFARE