

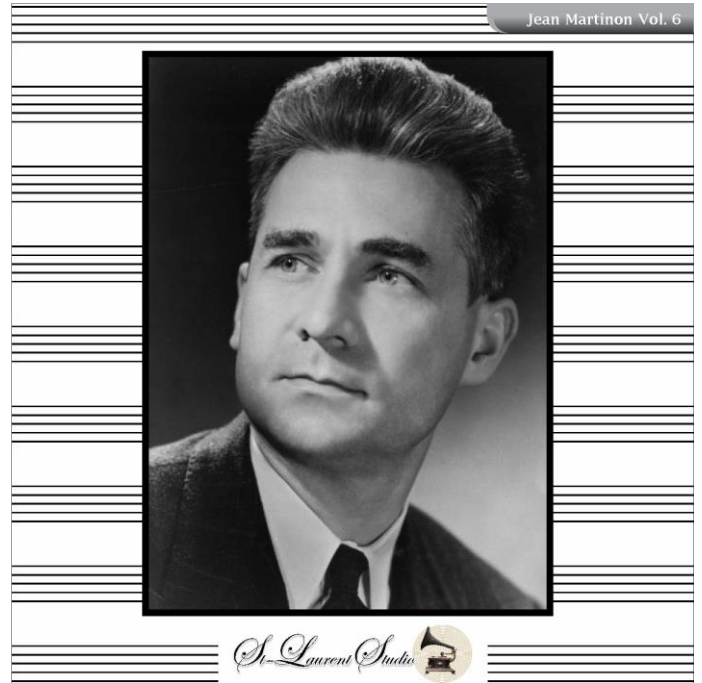


YSL 1116 T

Martinon Vol. 6

David Oistrakh

"There's no need for a lengthy analysis here - this superb set should be snapped up immediately, whether your interest is in Martinon, Oistrakh, or the repertoire pieces performed here. Also a composer himself, Martinon was a champion of 20th-century music, and he had a special affinity for Prokofiev - contemporaneous with his concert he recorded his pioneering set of that composer's seven symphonies (the only preceding complete cycle being that of Rozhdestvensky). His rendition of the 'Classical' Symphony is perfection itself - light as a soufflé, with fleet tempos, crisp rhythms, and transparent textures. Shostakovich's grim, dour Second Violin Concerto has remained far less popular than the First, which has three times as many recordings. It takes Martinon and Oistrakh a few measures in the opening movement to find the right interpretive groove, but after that theirs is a splendid account. In fact, I would now prefer this to others by Oistrakh I have heard (the studio recording with Kondrashin, and live accounts with Kondrashin, Rozhdestvensky, and Svetlanov) due to Martinon's incisive conducting, particularly his propulsive account of the finale, that relieves the damp grayness that so often besets the work and uncovers its true combination of bleakness and irony.



Finally, Martinon made a very fine early stereo recording for Decca in 1958 of Tchaikovsky's 'Pathétique' with the Vienna Philharmonic. Interpretively, this performance is similar to that one, but if the Decca account has the advantages of stereo studio recorded sound and the superior firepower of the Vienna ensemble, I find this version to be more passionate overall. Both accounts avoid sentimentalizing, excessive hand-wringing, and distraught hysteria, while not being short on genuine pathos. Martinon scores major points with me for slowing down and taking the first movement's funeral dirge at something closer to a Largo, rather than rushing through it at the previous Allegro as so many conductors are wont to do. The Allegro con grazia has a few quirky agogic adjustments to the initial 5/4 quasi-waltz melody, more pronounced here than in the studio version, while the martial Scherzo is rendered briskly and without bombast.

The Adagio lamentoso finale has the most notable divergence from the studio version, with slightly greater tempo contrasts between its sections and greater urgency in pressing forward to its two major climaxes.

The recorded sound is high-quality monaural. As usual, St. Laurent provides a back tray card and front-tray insert with basic data and a couple of photos but no notes."

- James A. Altena, FANFARE