



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

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Although conductor Ferenc Fricsay is most highly regarded in posterity as an interpreter of Bartók, Beethoven, and Mozart, he recorded a lot of music by the Strausses and was obviously an expert interpreter of their music. A complete *Die Fledermaus* recorded in 1949 is known from him and Fricsay also recorded music of the Strauss family -- particularly Johann II, but not exclusively him -- in his later, stereo period; Deutsche Grammophon combined some of those recordings onto a Musikfest budget compact disc and they were available that way for years. Audite's Edition Ferenc Fricsay Vol. XII: Johann Strauss II - Walzer, Polkas consists of earlier, monophonic recordings of Strauss bonbons made for Deutschlandradio between 1950 and 1952. These may also have been initially issued on DG, but being in mono these recordings would not have been considered prime re-release material in the digital era. The sound recording quality on the Audite release is, as one would expect, antiquated; the harsh, echoey, and sometimes slightly blasting quality common to early DG mono tapes is in full force here. However, Fricsay's interpretations are certainly worth preserving and enjoying. He approaches Strauss' music with a great deal of variability and an eye toward storytelling. Special percussion effects, such as the glockenspiel and woodblock in "Tik Tak" from *Die Fledermaus*, are brought to the fore. The introductory sections to such waltzes as *The Emperor* and *Artist's Life* are superbly well worked out to set the stage for the dance in the most evocative and dramatic way possible; his take on *Artist's Life* has remained justly famous and remains one of Fricsay's most frequently anthologized selections. While Audite's Edition Ferenc Fricsay Vol. XII: Johann Strauss II - Walzer, Polkas might not replace one's preferred choice for the Strausses -- whether it be Fiedler, Boskovsky, Kunzel, or whatnot -- it makes for a nice alternate view of that literature. For those strongly devoted to Fricsay as an artist, then the Audite issue may be viewed as essential, though with the caveat that in some respects the old Musikfest CD might be preferable.