



Edition Wilhelm Furtwängler – The complete RIAS recordings

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The German label "audite - Musikproduktion", perhaps best known to ionarts readers as the issuers of Rafael Kubelik's live Mahler recordings, is one of the keenest exploiters of well preserved tapes from various German radio stations. Knappertsbusch, Fricstay, Boehm, Kempf, and Fischer-Dieskau are just some of most notable artists whose (early) recordings they have brought to light (usually for the first time on sound recording), often in astonishing quality. Sometimes the results are great (Kubelik's BRSO broadcasts, for example), sometimes my thus-heighthened expectations have not been met (I was disappointed with Fricstay's Haydn, for example, which I hoped to be as good or even surpass the stupendous DG recording). I've recently written about releases with Backhaus and Solomon on Classical WETA.

I've not heard much of the 13-CD Furtwängler box with all his Berlin Philharmonic RIAS recordings, but what I've heard so far was rather impressive. I have also enjoyed the twenty-some minute podcast on the subject "Historic Recordings and Remastering" that audite has made available on their website. It shows, with several examples, how the work of their sound engineer can improve, even 'enable', the sound of the extant radio tapes with which audite works. The reason for bringing this up is an enticing offer from Audite that makes the Furtwängler box available along with Kubelik's Bruckner Third (SACD) (aud. 92.543), and four of Fricstay's RIAS opera recordings (albeit all in German), which includes Rigoletto (aud. 23.406), his Fledermaus (incl. Rita Streich, (aud. 23.411), his Lucia di Lammermoor (incl. Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Ernst Haefliger, Maria Stader and Sieglinde Wagner, aud. 23.412), and highlights from Carmen (aud. 95.497). All for €45. Even if the package doesn't ultimately appeal to you, the podcast (in English) and various excerpts of Furtwängler speaking on conducting (most of it in German) are well worth hearing.