



**Clara Haskil plays Mozart: Piano
Concerto K. 466 - Robert Casadesus
plays Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 5**

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This is of the first in what looks like being an important new series from Audite in association with the Lucerne Festival. Working, as they always do, from original tapes from broadcast archives, Audite plan a series of issues of concert performances from the festival, many of which, I suspect, will be appearing on disc officially for the first time. This series is launched auspiciously with two concerto performances by leading pianists of the last century.

In the booklet we learn that in a letter written in October 1959 Clara Haskil described her Lucerne collaboration with Klemperer as "unforgettable". I'm not surprised for this disc preserves a very fine performance. After a strong, sinewy introduction by Klemperer and the Philharmonia Haskil's first entry exudes graceful calm. Thereafter we are treated to much stylish, wonderfully subtle and tasteful playing. The pianism is carefully calibrated yet always a sense of spontaneity is evident. The balance of the recording favours the piano yet one can still hear that Haskil receives distinguished support from Klemperer and his orchestra: this is a real partnership. There's often great delicacy from Haskil yet the music making has strength when required. Haskil uses her own cadenza, which is effective.

Poise and elegance are the hallmarks of the Romance and these characteristics are maintained even in the more strongly etched central section. After that central passage the music dissolves back into the movement's main material in a completely disarming way. There's energy and drive at the start of the rondo finale and thereafter the music is presented nimbly and with good humour. This is a marvellous performance of the concerto; a performance to savour and treasure.

We learn from the notes that Casadesus made five commercial recordings of the 'Emperor' Concerto. Reviews of one of these – with Hans Rosbaud – and of two off-air recordings are listed in our Masterworks index He was no stranger to playing the concerto with Dmitri Mitropoulos: they'd made a commercial recording of the work together in New York in 1955 and in his biography of Mitropoulos, *Priest of Music*, William R. Trotter mentions that they gave the concerto together in concert in January 1950. This Lucerne concert apparently was the debut of the Vienna Philharmonic at the city's Festival; it was also the sole appearance there by Dmitri Mitropoulos.

After the nobly rhetorical opening flourishes there's excellent spirit and energy in the long orchestral introduction. Casadesus offers a good deal of heroic and commanding playing yet he's equally capable of sensitivity. With Mitropoulos clearly on the same wavelength as his soloist this is a gripping account of the huge first movement. There's Olympian calm in the slow movement where Casadesus is aristocratic. The finale is launched with surging athleticism – and a few tiny slips by

the pianist, though these are inconsequential blemishes. The performance radiates great confidence and no little electricity. There are several occasions where the music is slowed fractionally to make expressive points but impetus is soon regained. Though this fine performance of the 'Emperor' is a very different experience to the one offered by Clara Haskil in Mozart each performance is completely compelling in its own right.

Applause follows both performances – it's separately tracked after the Mozart. Audite have done an excellent job in making the transfers from the original broadcast tapes. There's a well-produced booklet containing several photographs but the English translation of the extensive essay in German isn't entirely free of errors.

These are two very fine performances indeed. If this new Lucerne/Audite series proceeds in similar fashion it will be most attractive to collectors.

