



Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky & Camille Saint-Saëns: Symphony No. 4 & Piano Concerto No. 4

aud 95.589

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[Fanfare](#) (James Miller - 2009.03.01)

Here are two superior performances, each, in its own way, redundant. Robert Casadesus made two fine studio recordings of the Saint-Saëns Concerto, one, with Artur Rodzinski, the other, with Leonard Bernstein. Neither of them is currently available here, so it would seem that this good-sounding mono broadcast might find its niche. The Fourth Concerto requires little in the way of "interpretation" – one could say that the surface is the music. It requires a technician who has good marksmanship and who can rattle off scintillating scales and arpeggios. Although, it being a live performance, one may detect a missed note here and there; Robert Casadesus certainly met the requirements, but so have many others, some of whose stereo recordings have more appropriate discmates.

Ormandy's rhythmically supple, dynamic performance of the Symphony runs into a different problem: the availability of a better-sounding stereo recording by the same conductor. There appears to have been good chemistry between Ormandy and the RIAS orchestra, and once again, the mono broadcast is clear and not lacking in dynamic range. Among my favorite mono Fourths, it competes with Furtwängler's, but there's no lack of strong stereo competition, including that provided by this same conductor with his own Philadelphia Orchestra (the third of his four recordings of the piece).

The enthusiastic annotations are in German and English.