

This 10th volume of recordings of Jascha Spivakovsky, the Ukrainian-born pianist who died without having released any commercial solo discs, continues with two 1950s appearances with orchestra and a fascinating bonus of the earliest known recordings of the pianist.

Spivakovsky enjoyed a warm relationship with the French conductor Pierre Monteux, whose autographed photo still resides on the pianist's Steinway in the family home, so it is unfortunate that only one recording with this duo has been found. This April 6, 1952 *Standard Hour* broadcast with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra features the final two movements of Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 23 in A Major K. 488*, all that were programmed for this appearance (soloists frequently played only a movement or two on these programs). An earlier concert recording of the entire work was released in Volume 5 of this *Bach to Bloch* series, but the excellent sound quality of this particular reading - as well as the exquisite beauty of Spivakovsky's interpretation - warrants its release. The pianist's crystalline tone and supple phrasing are a marvel to behold, his playing as lyrically sumptuous in the second movement as it is vibrant in the third. While Monteux introduces some unexpected tempo shifts in orchestral tutti in the final movement, these do not detract from the wonderful rapport between the soloist and orchestra, the textures and balance being particularly accomplished.

Beethoven was among Spivakovsky's greatest loves and his readings of the concertos won him praise around the globe. The January 28, 1956 BBC broadcast of the *Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major* is a different but equally compelling performance to the 1961 Melbourne account issued in Volume 7. While the previously released traversal finds the pianist, who had suffered a major medical emergency, giving a rather robust reading, the interpretation presented here is more consistently spiritual and reverential in approach. Despite less-than-ideal microphone placement, we can easily admire the pianist's golden sonority, burnished phrasing, impeccable timing, and refined nuancing in this truly inspired performance - as ideal an account of this work as one could hope to hear.

The closing of this volume will come as a surprise to those familiar with the fact that Spivakovsky never released a solo recording. The pianist went to the Parlophone studios in Berlin several times to accompany his violinist brother Tossy on some of his records, and on November 19, 1927 he made one test disc as a soloist. However, Jascha was unsatisfied with the limited tonal range of the record, and as a result his only solo studio effort was never issued. We present here for the first time the artist's performances of Chopin's *Nocturne in F-Sharp Major Op. 15 No. 2* and Liszt's *Liebestraum No. 3* from that studio session. In both works, Spivakovsky's tonal colours, peaked phrasing, and incredibly broad dynamic range are appreciable despite the frequency range limitations of this 90-plus-year-old recording. Especially noteworthy is the pianist's spacious timing at transition points (his rubato is beautifully coordinated with adjustments in dynamic levels) and his burnished lines soar above his measured accompaniment. Fans of historical recordings will be able to appreciate more here than the pianist himself could and will surely be grateful that this incredibly rare test disc (only one copy is known to exist) is now available.

Mark Ainley

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JASCHA SPIVAKOVSKY

Bach to Bloch
Volume X



Pasttime
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Bach to Bloch - Volume X

JASCHA SPIVAKOVSKY

Jascha Spivakovsky

1 RADIO Introduction to Mozart (1:00)

MOZART Piano Concerto No. 23 in A major, K.488

2 2nd mvt. - Adagio (6:46)

3 3rd mvt. - Allegro assai (8:18)

Live broadcast recording, "Standard Hour", NBC Radio, 6 April, 1952

San Francisco Symphony Orchestra *conducted by Pierre Monteux*

4 RADIO Introduction to Beethoven (0:20)

BEETHOVEN Piano Concerto No. 4 in G major, Op. 58

5 1st mvt. - Allegro moderato (18:43)

6 2nd mvt. - Andante con moto (4:47)

7 3rd mvt. - Rondo. Vivace (10:07)

Live broadcast recording, BBC radio, 28 January 1956

BBC Northern Orchestra *conducted by Stanford Robinson*

8 **CHOPIN** Nocturne in F-Sharp major, Op.15 No.2 (3:49)

9 **LISZT** Liebestraum No.3 (4:10)

Parlophon studio recordings, unreleased, Berlin, November 19, 1927

Matrix numbers: 2-20464, 2-20465

Jascha Spivakovsky *piano*

Total running time: 57:59

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