

PROGRAM  
DIGITAL AUDIO  
PASC 294

## Fritz Reiner Mozart Brahms Debussy Liebermann

**Frederick Marin "Fritz" Reiner** (December 19, 1888 – November 15, 1963) was a prominent conductor of opera and symphonic music in the twentieth century. Reiner was born in Budapest, Hungary, to a secular Jewish family that resided in the Pest area of the city. After preliminary studies in law at his father's urging, Reiner pursued the study of piano, piano pedagogy, and composition at the Franz Liszt Academy. During his last two years there his piano teacher was the young Bela Bartok. After early engagements at opera houses in Budapest and Dresden where he worked closely with Richard Strauss, he moved to the United States of America in 1922 to take the post of Principal Conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. He remained until 1931, having become a naturalized citizen in 1928, then began to teach at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where his pupils included Leonard Bernstein and Lukas Foss. He conducted the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra from 1938 to 1948 and made a few recordings with them for Columbia Records, then spent several years at the Metropolitan Opera, where he conducted a historic production of Strauss's *Salome* in 1949, with the Bulgarian soprano Ljuba Welitsch in the title role, and the American premiere of Igor Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* in 1951. Reiner's music-making had been largely American-focused since his arrival in Cincinnati, but after the second World War he began markedly increasing his European activity. When he became music director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1953 he had a completely international reputation. By common consent, the ten years that he spent in Chicago mark the pinnacle of his career, and are best-remembered today through the many recordings he made in Chicago's Orchestra Hall for RCA Victor from 1954 to 1963. The first of these—of Ein Heldenleben by Richard Strauss—occurred on March 6, 1954 and was among RCA's first to use stereophonic sound. His last concerts in Chicago took place in the spring of 1963. *Notes from Widdowells*

### Producer's Note

Like the earlier release in this series (PASC 235), this volume of Reiner Rarities features works which are rare in more than one sense. First, these are Fritz Reiner's only commercial recordings of the works presented. In addition, none of them have ever received an "official" commercial CD reissue from RCA.

The Mozart was originally coupled with his *Divertimento No. 11*, K. 251. While the latter has been reissued on CD by Testament, filling out a Reiner/Chicago Mozart program, the *Massal Joke* has remained "orphaned" until now. Of Martin Andersen's three recordings of the *Alto Rhapsody*, RCA only released the second (1945) recording with Pierre Monteux on CD, rather than this sonically superior final version from five years later. The Debussy originally shared an LP side with Reiner's NBC studio recording of Ravel's *Tombou de Couperin*. While this was reissued in the Reiner volume of the IMG Artists/EMI series "Great Conductors of the 20th Century", its disparate has remained unavailable for over half a century (although the broadcast performances of both works which preceded the recording session have appeared on CD several times).

Finally, the Liebermann work, though originally recorded in stereo, was not issued in that form on LP until 1981. However, it had previously been released as a two-trick open reel tape in 1955, and it was from this that the present transfer was made. Oddly, this recording has never been commercially reissued on CD by RCA or its successor, Sony. It is easy to imagine Leonard Bernstein, a former Reiner conducting pupil at the Curtis Institute, being inspired by Liebermann's score (a set of dance variations on a twelve-note row) when he sat down to compose *Waltz Valse* shortly after this recording first appeared.

Mark Obert-Thorn

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## Reiner Rarities

Volume Two

Mozart

A Musical Joke

Brahms

Alto Rhapsody

Debussy

Pette Suite

Liebermann

Concerto for Jazz Band and  
Symphony Orchestra

Studio recordings 1950-1954

Obert-Thorn

## Reiner Rarities Volume Two

### MOZART A Musical Joke (*Ein musikalischer Spass*) K522

- 1 1st mvt. - **Allegro** (3:48)
- 2 2nd mvt. - **Menuetto** - **Maestoso** (6:32)
- 3 3rd mvt. - **Adagio cantabile** (6:29) (Daniel Guilet, *solo violin*)
- 4 4th mvt. - **Presto** (4:33)