

COMPACT
DIGITAL AUDIO
PASC 346

Paul Paray

Franck - Ibert - Ravel - Chabrier

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This is a very good performance and recording indeed and there is almost nothing one wants to cavil at. Paray is ideally suited to the work, as one would expect, and in his admirable reading I only question one accelerando in the first movement (after letter L in the score), simply because it is too short a passage and the accelerando seems to lead nowhere; and perhaps the slower wind interpolations in the middle movement (after letter D) are rather overdone for a pia lento that need only be poco, as marked.

But these are the smallest things and any criticism of the recording is on the same scale, for the sound is outstandingly good. But as we swing into the main allegro of the first movement a loud hum hangs for a moment over the strings; and at the start of the middle movement one hears only the top note of each harp chord. (Perhaps this is not a matter of recording but as Paray meant it to sound, I still prefer to hear the chords.)

I cannot imagine that this record will disappoint anyone, for it is a finely judged performance, recorded with both clarity and warmth. I would put it at the head of all earlier versions. I must just advise the reader, however, that there is one much cheaper disc among those listed above, the 10-inch Philips ABR4048, and it is by no means to be overlooked. Its main defect is a very "empty hall" acoustic but that apart, its sound is good and Ormandy directs a sympathetic performance. I do far prefer both Paray and Mercury's sound—but it does cost more.

T.H. The Gramophone, June 1957 - *review of Franck's Symphony in D minor*

I like this performance of Ravel's suite much better than Silvestri's, reviewed elsewhere in this issue. As one might expect, Paray brings to it just that rare elegance that Silvestri so conspicuously misses, and the Detroit orchestra seems more at home with the notes than the Vienna Philharmonic. Unfortunately the problem of squeezing the work on to a 7-inch disc has compelled Mercury to keep the volume-level very low; you can turn it up, of course, but that gives you more surface-noise and can highlight other technical troubles. With this reservation it is a good economical way of getting the piece.

J.N. The Gramophone, June 1961 - *excerpt from review of 45rpm 7-inch release of Ravel's Bagatelle Enigmatique*

Transfer notes

The transfers for this release came from the collection of Edward Johnson, to whom I am once more grateful. The Franck dates from Paray's first recording sessions for Mercury with the Detroit Symphony and were made in a busy week which yielded some four LPs of release material - a remarkable and enthusiastic work rate for any orchestra and conductor! Paray of course excelled in French repertoire, and this is evident throughout this collection. Mercury's sound, once XR-remastered, loses the boxiness of the Franck and over-emphasised mid-range of the rest, and remains good throughout, with superb extension both in the very deep bass (listen to the percussion in the Chabrier) and at the top end, though it is perhaps a little more hissy in the 1953 recordings than the 1953. Great care has been taken in the pitching of the recordings and the elimination or reduction of wow and flutter. The 1953 LP was somewhat sharper than the concert pitch of the 1955 and this too has been fixed. **AR**

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Paul Paray

conducts

Franck

Symphony in D minor

Ibert

Essais

Ravel

Ballets Enigmatique

Chabrier

Essais - Ballets

Detroit Symphony Orchestra

Mercury studio recordings, 1953 and 1955

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