



Pierre Fournier plays Dvořák, Saint-Saëns and Casals

aud 95.628

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[American Record Guide](#) (Donald R Vroon - 01.09.2015)

The two concertos were recorded for DG a few years before these Lucerne Festival appearances. The Saint-Saëns was recorded around 1960 for DG; this recording is from 1962. The Dvorak on DG was from 1962; this one is from 1967. The Saint-Saëns is exactly half the length of the Dvorak, which lasts 37 minutes here.

You would expect a concert recording like this to be less than ideal in sound but perhaps more spontaneous. But there's no predicting. The Saint-Saëns sounds simply wonderful, and Martinon's conducting is simply great. But the Dvorak is clearly inferior in sound to the DG—both cello and orchestra. And Istvan Kertesz was a fine conductor, but I'm afraid he is completely outshone by George Szell on DG, who has incredible fire and precision, who makes every moment and every instrument shine. If you have the DG Dvorak you certainly don't need this. You might think a performance before an audience would be more exciting, but I assure you that Szell conducting this puts everyone else in the shade—and it's the Berlin Philharmonic, too! The sheer quality of the orchestra is unbeatable. After all, this recording is simply the festival orchestra—unlike the Saint-Saëns, which has the superb French Radio Orchestra under a great French conductor.

A four-minute encore is added (introduced by Fournier, whose French is as elegant and refined as his playing): the Pablo Casals 'Song of the Birds'.