



Paul Tortelier: RIAS Recordings

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[American Record Guide](#) (2020.08.01)

Paul Tortelier (1914-90) was one of the greatest cellists of his time. This program consists of first releases of recordings he made in 1949, 1962, and 1964 at RIAS in Berlin. Some biography and some details of these recordings are given in Rüdiger Albrecht's excellent liner notes. Nothing is said of the pianists who worked with him here, but they are also excellent. The 1949 recordings include the great Bach Solo Cello Suite 6. That is the one originally intended for a five-stringed cello with an E string above the A string and therefore takes us up into the stratosphere sometimes. Though Tortelier's vibrato seems somewhat fast and unvaried, his phrasing is convincing and his technique excellent. Earlier that year he did the just as demanding Solo Cello Sonata by Kodaly. That is a little messy technically, but emotionally expressive. Tortelier made a later recording of it, along with his own Solo Suite in D minor (EMI 63292). With pianist Billing we have Schumann's three Fantasy Pieces, Op. 73 in a somewhat scratchy recording and Brahms's Sonata 1, without the exposition repeat but warmly emotional. We hear Tortelier as a composer with 'Trois p'tits tours'—amusing dances for cello and piano. Only the third of these was previously recorded, to my knowledge. From 1962 we have Fauré's Sonata 2 and Casella's Sonata 2. From 1964 we get Beethoven's Sonata 5, Mendelssohn's No. 2, Fauré's 'Papillon', and Paganini's Variations on Dal tuo Stellite Soglio (from Rossini's Moses in Egypt, transcribed for cello and piano by Luigi Silva). All of these are with Broddack on piano. They are played with technical prowess and are musically imaginative, though they don't make exposition repeats. This is well worth considering, since Tortelier is an important cellist. The sound is generally good.