Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Piano Concertos No. 21 & No. 24

aud 95.453

EAN: 4009410954534

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American Record Guide (David Mulbury - 2000.11.01)

These concert performances by two distinguished friends who often collaborated (from the Archives of the Bavarian Radio) are finely polished, poised, and enjoyable. But since there are several superior recordings of these two concertos, this release may primarily be of interest to fans of Curzon.

The tempos in both works tend to be lyrically conceived but slightly sleepy, thus lacking a sense of direction and proportion heard in the versions by Rubinstein and Bilson. Curzon brings a lot of finesse to the music in the slower passages of Concerto 21, but in the fast sections does not match Rubinstein\'s supreme fluency or tonal control. The perfect choice of tempo in Rubinstein\'s and Bilson\'s recordings makes the tempos in Curzon\'s seem staid. Bilson\'s performance of Concerto 21 (Archiv) is one of the most satisfying recordings of anything I know. Of course, the balance between forte-piano and orchestra is quite different than it is with a modern concert grand and symphonic orchestra, and therein lies some of the charm and rightness of this approach to 18th Century sonority. Another superb recording of this work with forte-piano is Immerseel\'s (Channel).

The orchestra remains strangely subservient to the soloist, almost repressed, until it plays alone, when it bursts forth with a kind of brash insistence.

Curzon seems to be in better form in the C-minor Concerto (recorded four years later in 1970). There is little to find fault with here, except the lack of forward motion when compared to Rubinstein, Bilson, and an exceptionally beautiful recording of this tragic work by Justus Frantz (Eurodisc).

Recorded sound is clear and well balanced, if nor quite of present-day standards.

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