



Broadcasts of Kulturradio / rbb
04.08. - 09.08.2014 18:05

**In his six series of broadcasts
Kai Luehrs -Kaiser
portrays detailed
the Hungarian conductor.**

Who was Ferenc Fricsay? From 1946 a steep success bestowed him in Salzburg, Berlin and Munich. Composers as Dvorák, Bartók and Kodály, hardly anyone ever conducted better than he did. With his aim of audio emphasis and transparency he has influenced probably the aesthetics of all radio symphony orchestras of Germany. What is the merit of Fricsay in our days?

Commemorating the 100th birthday of Ferenc Fricsay

Broadcast no. 5 (August 8th 2014):

His masterpiece: the promotion of the RIAS Symphony Orchestra

*Musikbeispiel: DG LC 00173 00289 479 3143 CD 44 Giuseppe Verdi / „Aida“
“Danza di piccoli schiavi mori” (“Tanz der Sklaven”)
RIAS-Symphonie-Orchester Berlin / Ltg. Ferenc Fricsay 1960*

Today's topic is exclusively Fricsay's work with the RIAS Symphony Orchestra, today called DSO. - Interim it was called Radio-Symphony-Orchestra Berlin / RSO. – These modifications (of the name) weren't his responsibility.

In Germany the confusion about names of orchestras is infinite since Ulrich Wickert (TV-personality of "tagesthemen") announced in 2002 that Simon Rattle became Principal conductor of the Berlin Symphony Orchestra. We can comfort ourselves: this fundamental, probably typical German name-hash did not really become worse due to the many names of the DSO.

A presentable CD - box set was released four weeks ago with no less than 45 CDs; incidentally opened in gorgeous robes of old LP - Cover illustrations. It contains only the part of orchestral recordings by Fricsay till 1961 for the Deutsche Gramophone; the vocal recordings will appear soon in a second box.

- This present box constitutes a multiple of whatever was previously available on CDs. In the majority of these recordings, the RIAS Symphony Orchestra is heard. This orchestra was Fricsay's "masterpiece". Today we will plunge into these glories.

*Musikbeispiel: DG LC 00173 00289 479 3125 CD 26 Zoltán Kodály / „Tänze aus Galanta“
RIAS-Symphonie-Orchester Berlin / Ltg. Ferenc Fricsay 1953*

Due to the fact that Fricstay with an orchestra, being its founding conductor, had the opportunity to record such abundance of music as known, above all on such a high level, it seems to be a miracle.

For an orchestra the age of continuance has crucial importance. Let's call a spade a spade: decades- or even centuries-old ensembles, such as the Staatskapelle Dresden or the Staatskapelle Berlin, both of particular high level which they have earned over the centuries will never fall below it, even if a conductor is poor as leader.

This mysterious lawfulness, which ironically still largely takes place, is contradicted by all excellent recordings of Fricstay with the RIAS Symphony Orchestra. - Fricstay at the time - going from zero to one hundred - handed over to the orchestra a foundation having a secure position till today, the successors are aware of it. Any Principal Conductor of the DSO, I have asked about his predecessors told me that Fricstay of all antecedents was to him the very closest.

How he managed, we will answer with one of those records by which today's DSO is still at the top of disk - Olympus. And this experience was for the orchestra at that time in fact: a "New World".

*Musikbeispiel: DG LC 00173 00289 479 3117 Antonin Dvorak / Symphonie Nr. 9 e-Moll op. 95
"Aus der Neuen Welt" III. Scherzo. Molto vivace
RIAS-Symphonie-Orchester Berlin / Ltg. Ferenc Fricstay 1953*

At the recording of "Aus der Neuen Welt" 1953 Fricstay is conducting the RIAS-Symphony-Orchestra Berlin, existing just seven years at that time. - We will not conceal that seven years later he made another recording of this masterpiece with the Berlin Philharmonic - both produced at the same place, namely in the Jesus-Christus-Kirche in Berlin - Dahlem.

Progress may not be to deny; but the miracle of bringing out such a high level recording played by the very young orchestra as the RIAS, appears even more impressive.

How did Fricstay, as a comparatively inexperienced conductor without international career, ever managed to mold an orchestra and give a valid shape till today - and who's profile can even be recognized in our days.

Now, this benefit is not only due to the merit of that special moment – of the fact to request such an orchestra, because it was needed, neither by fabulous technical virtues of a conductor.

The fact was that Fricstay had the possibility as the first one to represent an innovative orchestral sound, totally modern at the time, - boosted by the record industry.
- Because: The RIAS Orchestra was not only very young; it sounded that way.

And this is not a trivial remark.

For the first time Fricstay implemented a model of sound which became compulsory to all new Radio Orchestras.

- As favorite: transparency, clarity and edge. –
- As despise: the mourning boarder of romance; the heaviness, the depressing, the mysterious.

Thereby the RIAS-Symphony-Orchestra symbolized an aesthetic start corresponding to the clear shapes of modern architecture - and not the stucco of the 19th Century.

Why was that desired? - Well, because the manifested repertoire was modern.

*Musikbeispiel: DG LC 00173 00289 479 3118 Hans Werner Henze / Ballett-Variationen (1949)
V. Poco allegretto IV. Allegro marciale
RIAS-Symphonie-Orchester Berlin / Ltg. Ferenc Fricsay 1949 (Jahr der Uraufführung)*

Not only as order by the foundation of Berlin Symphony Orchestra, but all German Radio Orchestras was the performance of new compositions. – A mission for the orchestras during the last years to have emancipated themselves increasingly, a process that isn't considered necessarily as positiv.

No doubt, almost all radio orchestras given the aesthetics for the musical modernism, it can be noticed up till today. - One exception only - the eldest radio orchestra of Germany - the RSB, the Rundfunk - Sinfonieorchester Berlin (direction by Marek Janowski).

However the RIAS Orchestra applied - as a novelty - a pronounced bright sound, by which analytically one could detect much easier the structures of the compositions. A sound which meant that normally those conductors gave the largest impression with today's DSO, being themselves modern and young: Sonically sober as Kent Nagano and the still modern Metz-macher, as well as at the time "young hoppers" Lorin Maazel and Riccardo Chailly.

It seems to me unquestionable clear, that Tugan Sokhiev, the current head of the DSO, belongs to the latter category,

Of course the local composer scene of Berlin associated them immediately with this modern expression of sound, which at least was co-invented by Fricsay.

*Musikbeispiel: DG LC 00173 00289 479 3111 Boris Blacher / Klavierkonzert Nr. 1 op. 28
(Finale) Rondo. Allegro Gerty Herzog als Klaviersolistin (Ehefrau von Boris Blacher)
RIAS-Symphonie-Orchester Berlin / Ltg. Ferenc Fricsay 1949*

Impetus for the desire to be released on the great classic repertoire the orchestra mainly obtained by the record-orders of the German Gramophone.

The reason for such an early expansion of the repertoire in favor of tradition was not only an artistic one but financially. The Radio Orchestra, newly established, could produce less expensive than the Berlin or the Vienna Philharmonics. –

Although not founded for this purpose the RIAS Orchestra gained its international reputation as the first orchestra in recording history especially by the new medium.

There are, if I am not mistaken, basically only two orchestras in Europe, which became famous by recordings. - One was the RIAS, the other one the Philharmonic Orchestra of London (founded in 1945 by producer Walter Legge) notably for the purpose of recorded music.

The start-ups followed the example of two American orchestras, which had been established for recordings just for two specific conductors: the NBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Arturo Toscanini (since 1937) and the Columbia Orchestra by Bruno Walter.

The RIAS as well as the Philharmonic Orchestra represented the remarkable fact when European startups clearly overtrumped the success of their American predecessors and just precisely of the traditional Vienna Classics. - Fricseys conducting the RIAS Symphony Orchestra gave a new expression to the conventional, traditional music of Beethoven and Brahms, partly by the desire of purifying. You can be aware of it at the Johannes Brahms' Double Concerto with Wolfgang Schneiderhan and János Starker.

*Musikbeispiel: DG LC 00173 00289 479 3112 Johannes Brahms
Doppelkonzert für Violine und Violoncello a-Moll op. 102
III. Vivace non troppo – Poco meno allegro - Tempo I
Wolfgang Schneiderhan, Violine / János Starker, Violoncello
RIAS-Symphonie-Orchester Berlin / Ltg. Ferenc Fricsey 1961*

Almost in the style of New Objectivity, by taking of the romanticism, with gaunt contours and sobered by all academic daze of the 19th century Ferenc Fricsey presents the 3rd movement:

In this recording of 1961, a late inclusion of Fricsey, one can realize the fact what a controversial and basically radical conductor he was.

- Of course an incendiary of temperament
- But a constructivist and as well a clearer of trash

His basic principal was not to avoid challenges ...

- neither Viennese waltzes, nor Rossini not even Carmen

*Musikbeispiel: DG LC 00173 00289 479 3110 Georges Bizet / Marsch aus "Carmen" , 4. Akt
RIAS-Symphonie-Orchester Berlin / Ltg. Ferenc Fricsey 1956*

The last unusually languishing example of today's program shows us the practise of spacious repertoire and unique value to be experienced

How repertoire moderately long striding was working - and whatever treasure the orchestra obtained - shows the last unusually languishing example of today's program. -

Even the sound on the verge of tears by the soloist, not being compounded directly with Fricsey nestled pleasantly the crepe-like sound of the excellent orchestra.

*Musikbeispiel: DG LC 00173 00289 479 3126 Jenő Hubay
Hejre Kati (Csardas) op. 32
Helmut Zacharias, Violine / RIAS-Symphonie-Orchester Berlin / Ltg. Ferenc Fricsey 1954*

The soloist of Jenő Hubay's "Czárdás op. 32, no. 4" is no one else than Helmut Zacharias - the "TV- honey cake" violinist in the 60s and 70s. - The recording was taken during his reputable early years in 1954.