

Faure – Violin Sonatas (Fournier) [1952]

Written by bluesever

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Violin Sonata No.1 in A major, Op.13 (1875-76) 1. *Allegro molto* 2. *Andante* 3. *Allegro vivo*
4. *Allegro quasi presto* Violin Sonata No.2 in
E minor, Op.108 (1916)
5. *Allegro non troppo* 6. *Andante* 7. *Finale. Allegro ma non troppo*
Jean Fournier, violin Ginette Doyen, piano

Jean Fournier (1911-2003) and his wife Ginette Doyen (1921-2002) were mainstays of the catalogues in the 1950s and 1960s. They were both especially attuned to the Gallic sensitivity necessary to convey native chamber music, and both were fine Fauré players. Doubtless Jean, whose association with Jacques Thibaud was a pivotal experience, learned much from the older man.

They recorded both sonatas between April and May 1952 on a mono Westminster (and Vega) LP. The Thibaud-Cortot 78 recording of the First Sonata was, I suspect, still just about gettable, but for those with up-to-date equipment competition loomed by way of the Bobesco-Gentry team and that of Soriano and Tagliaferro. More suave, international names featured Heifetz and Bay, and Elman and Millman. The year after the Fournier-Doyen disc, Francescatti and Casadesus made their celebrated recording of both sonatas and this has recently been reissued and reviewed by me.

The husband-and-wife team take conventional tempi in the A major. Fournier - younger brother of Pierre, by the way - has a sweet, focused tone, and is a lyrical interpreter perfectly suited to the chamber repertoire. For once a Parisian studio did not impart a razory, brittle quality to a string player's tone. In every way, except perhaps in terms of the ideal in projection, this is an engaging reading. The scherzo, for example, is just a touch underdone. There's a conspicuous edit at 3:15 into the finale, but that's a fault of the original engineers, and neither Fournier and

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Doyen nor Forgotten Records can do much about that.

It was courageous of the duo to tackle the Second Sonata at the time, then as now very much in the shadow of its effusive older sibling. Fournier and Doyen are significantly more cautious than I think we'd hear today. Their approach honours the work's seriousness, and catches its frequent harmonic drifts. One feels also that Fournier, who was a fine technician, wants to obey the tempo instructions appropriately. Thus the non troppo of the opening and closing movements are taken in just that way. However a faster basic pulse throughout tends to manoeuvre the music with greater intensity and stops momentum sagging in the slow movement, as it rather does here from time to time. Both Francescatti and Casadesus, and rather later Grumiaux and Sebök, adopt the faster route with rather more plausible results. --- Jonathan Woolf, musicweb-international.com

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