

Mozart - Sinfonia Concertante in E flat KV 364 (1958)

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1 Allegro maestoso 13:09 2 Andante 11:20 3 Presto 6:51 Joseph Fuchs - violin Lillian Fuchs - viola Zimbler Sinfonietta

American violinist Joseph Fuchs and his sister Lillian, the violist, are the focal point of this release from Forgotten Records. Their Mozart Sinfonia Concertante recording was quite well-known in its day. They often performed it together and put it on record in December 1951 with the Zimbler Sinfonietta. A conductor may have lightened the somewhat militant lower string lines and the brusque accenting in the opening orchestral introduction, and also attended to the question of tempo – there's a slight sense of speeding up from a relatively slow initial tempo. However, the soloists acquit themselves well, Joseph varying the speed of his vibrato – which was naturally fast – to accommodate the somewhat slower viola of his sister. The approach is refined but not especially expressive even in the slow movement and – fine player though he was – Joseph's tonal variety there isn't optimum. Occasionally there's a degree of phrasal pedantry in the finale, mixed with some slightly over-suave pointing, whilst the ending is somewhat creaky. This recording has garnered a good reputation over the years though only amongst those interested in historic recordings, who will know it. It's not really a match for the classic Sammons/Tertis, or any of Primrose's recordings with Spalding, Stern or Heifetz. It's nevertheless good to have it around. Try also to catch their recording of it with the Aeterna Orchestra on Brunswick/Decca, or the live performance they gave in Prades with Casals conducting. Their Mozart Duo is quite spick and span, with tight trills and characteristically fine ensemble work and matching of tonal qualities. The variations of the finale are in safe hands here although ideally greater warmth would have been even more satisfying. ---Jonathan Woolf, musicweb-international.com

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