

Ferenc Fricsay

The transilluminator

Enthusiastically Ferenc Fricsay conducted music by Béla Bartók.

by **Wolfram Goertz**

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The Hungarian conductor Ferenc Fricsay (1914-1963) in January 1961 © Erich Auerbach/Getty Images

He had arrived in Vienna and was nevertheless unhappy. He directed the state opera and was annoyed. He carried in himself the vision of the ideal evening, but first he was only allowed to conduct what others had prepared. That wore him down. He inherited Tempj, which he regarded as inaccurate, sarcastic antics, which he could not avoid, and had to take over some sloppiness in the orchestra, which he would rather have stopped.

The native Hungarian Ferenc Fricsay (1914 to 1963), now portrayed by a magnificent 3-CD box, had everything a great conductor needed, but no frustration tolerance at all. From his experience of the Viennese days, the sensitive genius drew the only beneficial conclusion: He only wanted to work with people he knew well, and he felt the need to control all productions from A to Z without compromises.

Among these artists were, especially compatriots: the pianists Clara Haskil, Andor Foldes and Lajos Kentner, the violinists Tibor Varga and Joseph Szigeti. He had studied with them at the Budapest Franz Liszt Academy, together they had visited Béla Bartók's composition lessons, and continued to cultivate the connection with the master, even after his emigration to the USA.

Fricsay became a star by the recommendation of Otto Klemperer, whom he replaced 1947 at the Festival of Salzburg. Herbert von Karajan also recommended Fricsay. - Thenceforth Fricsay was internationally known, and Berlin was open to him. In 1949 he became chief of the Berlin State Opera (the later German Opera in Charlottenburg) and of the newly founded Rias Symphonie-Orchestra (later named Radio Symphony Orchestra and still later German Symphony Orchestra). He left the opera some years later to devote himself to the Rias Orchestra and to the reconstruction of the lost repertoire.

Ferenc Fricsay became one of the great, stylistic conductors of the twentieth century, revered by the public, loved and feared by the musicians. He felt to be a transcendent, a trustee of higher precision, committed to the music by the notes. He formed the music bright and clear, instead of painting wet lines. He remained to Bartók particularly close, whose music also occupied an important position of Fricsays recordings in the early fifties with the Rias Orchestra.

From mentioned years in Berlin the Bartók recordings of Fricsays offer Piano and Violin concertos (with the great inspired soloists as Anda, Kentner, Foldes and Varga), the universalistic music for string instruments, drums and celesta, the almost ethnological dance, the triumphantly "Cantata Profana " (with Helmut Krebs, tenor, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, baritone) and the enthralling Divertimento for string orchestras. Fricsay's enthusiasm floats, breathes, and lightens as coronation. The orchestra gives its best, full of devotion. The rattling of the paper sheet is sometimes noisy. The rhythmic energy is unmatched.

Ferenc Fricsay conducts Béla Bartók (audi 21.407 / Noble, 3 CDs)

<http://www.zeit.de/2011/12/M-Friczay>