

**Faure** Violin Sonatas – No. 1 in A, Op. 13; No. 2 in E minor, Op. 108. **Jean Fournier** (vn); **Ginette Doyen** (pf).  
Pristine Audio mono (M) (D) PACM057 (48mins; ADD); rec. Paris, c1951.

These discs resuscitate two of the forgotten generation of French violinists, those who flourished in the 1950s but never became household names as their cellist colleagues did. The only successors to Jacques Thibaud who shone were Christian Ferras and, briefly, Ginette Neveu; but several others were marvellous artists. Jean Fournier (1911-2003) was overshadowed by his elder brother Pierre, although record collectors recall him fondly for his trio with Janigro and Badura-Skoda. Partnered by his equally sympathetic wife Ginette Doyen, he eases his way beautifully through Faure's two sonatas, hitting their slightly differing characters precisely. They have been rather neglected on record and the only substantial competitor in the 1950s was the version by Pierre Doukan, another unjustly forgotten fiddler, with Therèse Cochet; it has been on CD in Japan (Erato (D) WPCC3355). Grumiaux gave us quite a decent Op. 13 with Istvan Hajdu but I have never got on with his later coupling of both sonatas with Paul Crossley.

For the A major Sonata, the Fourniers find freshness and a delicately lively pulse in (i), beautifully shaped phrases and lovely soft tones in (ii), deftness for the Scherzo, with a lyrical trio, and an easy *tempo primo* for the finale, which works up a good deal of power. They are at once more serious in the E minor Sonata, although they still sing beautifully in (i) and the phrases soar nicely, with a good pulse; (ii) is given an easeful, flowing character, with sensitive dynamic variations and a lovely quiet ending. Again the duo takes a deceptively easy approach to the finale. The sound is excellent: Peter Harrison did the LP transfer, Andrew Rose the final mastering. Sometimes I wonder if Doyen is slightly backwardly placed in the First Sonata but all doubts about balance are resolved in the second. The disc tracks better on my old Arcam player than on my new Naim.

The 12-inch edition of the three French-German Bach performances (Ducretet-Thomson (D) DTL93067) has acquired a mystical rarity

value. Various ten-inch editions of all four works, including Telefunken, are more easily come by. Two of the concertos renew our acquaintance with Devy Erlih, who turned 80 last year; born in Paris of Romanian parents and roughly contemporary with Blanche Tarjus and Michèle Auclair but younger than Fournier, Janine Andrade and Denise Soriano, he began in his father's dance band and ended up as a contemporary music specialist. He plays very well in the A minor Concerto despite some rather plodding conducting from former flautist Redel. His partner in the Double Concerto is the legendary Henri Merckel (1897-1967), for three decades leader at the Paris Opera and a contemporary of Jeanne Gautier. It is a good Double, with excellent tempi and well-matched soloists. Merckel's vibrato has loosened ever so slightly by this time, as is even more apparent in the E major Concerto, where he gives a performance of genuine stature despite Redel's occasionally sedate conducting. In the latter part of the first movement, Merckel and Redel develop a real understanding and the performance becomes quite inspired, an impression continued in the Adagio, where Merckel is very moving. The Violin and Oboe Concerto, which shared a ten-inch disc with the Double, finds Redel thoroughly in tune with that archetypal German violinist Reinhold Barchet. Since Kurt Kalmus avoids the bloated tone that was Karajan's baleful influence on German oboe playing, this is a very pleasing performance. The sound is pretty good apart from a slight hint of wow in the three violin concertos. **Tully Potter**

**Bartok** String Quartet No. 5, Sz102.

**Hungarian Quartet** (Zoltan Szekely & Alexandre Moskowsky (vn); Denes Koromzay (va); Vilmos Palotai (vc).  
Pristine Audio mono (M) (D) PACM052 (30mins; ADD); rec. EMI Studios, Abbey Road, London, 3/10/46.

The (New) Hungarian Quartet studied Bartok's Fifth Quartet with the composer and gave the Budapest premiere – the nefarious tale can be read in Claude Kenneson's *Szekely and Bartok: The Story of a Friendship* (Amadeus Press, New