

Saint-Saëns Havanaise in E, Op. 83.

Introduction and Rondo capriccioso in A minor, Op. 28.

Sarasate Concert Fantasy on Carmen, Op. 25. *Zigeunerweisen*, Op. 20. **Ruggiero Ricci** (vn); **London Symphony Orchestra / Piero Gamba**.

Speakers Corner/Decca © SXL2197 (AAA). From SXL2197 (12/60).

Major companies produced some of their finest recordings in the early 1960s, with main contract artists and great orchestras and conductors re-recording the standard favourites in stereo in the finest acoustic locations. Kingsway Hall, London, was shared by EMI and Decca over a

lengthy period and the dazzling virtuoso Ruggiero Ricci, the LSO and the young Piero Gamba made their record of violin display pieces there during 1960. It was a new-sounding slant on Jascha Heifetz's favourite repertoire, with the added attraction of stereo separation to enhance the full seductive subtleties and fleeting fantasies of this ever-popular instrument. Ricci's playing is at its most beguiling, taking us on an operatic journey that progresses through most of the main material in Bizet's most-loved

opera in Sarasate's arrangement; then follows the most stunning *Zigeunerweisen* I have heard, with some shimmering, fast passagework in the violin, and orchestra and soloist competing to find out who can perform the quietest. Both the Saint-Saëns pieces also have that mixture of sultry finesse and marvellous interplay – musical qualities that might be found in other recorded interpretations, but not in the kind of demonstration sound for which Kingsway Hall was celebrated.

Bill Newman