

Ferenc Fricsay's career lasted barely 20 years,

but during that time, he became one of the most acclaimed conductors of his generation and left behind a body of recordings that are still admired.

(Bruce Eder, born 1955 in New York City: journalist, articles in periodicals and reference books as well online, additionally a writer and reissue producer in music and motion pictures.)

Fricsay studied at the Budapest Academy of Music under both Zoltán Kodály and Béla Bartók, whose music he later championed. His first conducting appointment came in 1936, in Szeged, where he remained until 1944. - His debut conducting the Budapest Opera was in 1939 and in 1945 he was appointed the company's music director, taking the parallel appointment with the Budapest Philharmonic. - At the 1947 Salzburg Festival, when conductor Otto Klemperer was forced to withdraw from conducting the premiere of Gottfried Von Einem's opera Dantons Tod, Fricsay stepped in, receiving international accolades for a sterling performance. The next year he conducted the world premiere of Frank Martin's Zaubertrank, and the year after that Carl Orff's Antigone.

In 1948, Fricsay made his Berlin debut with Verdi's Don Carlos in a production that also featured the debut of baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. Thereafter he served as a guest conductor throughout Europe, based in Berlin, where he served as music director of the Städtische Oper and the American Sector Symphony Orchestra (RIAS), later renamed the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra. Fricsay was best known in Europe as an operatic conductor, acclaimed for his Mozart and Verdi, among other composers, but in America he made his debut with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1953. He was conductor of the Houston Symphony Orchestra in 1954, but resigned after one season due to policy disagreements with the board of directors. In 1956, Fricsay became music director of the Bavarian State Opera and after two seasons, returned to Berlin to resume the music directorship of the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra. In 1961, Fricsay conducted a performance of Mozart's Don Giovanni to commemorate the re-opening of the Deutsche Oper.

Fricsay's approach to conducting was influenced heavily by Toscanini, whose relationship with the NBC Symphony he used as a model for his own work with the Berlin Radio Symphony. He emphasized strict tempos and precise playing, with a close adherence to the score. As an operatic conductor, however, he was not afraid to challenge customs and conventions, both in his conception of a work and his way of realizing performances of striking vitality.

..... Fricsay had signed an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon in 1948 and during the next decade or so, delivered a body of work heavy with award-winning recordings. Fricsay's remarkable textural clarity was captured on record with the help of his close understanding of recording techniques. Perhaps his most-acclaimed record was Mozart's The Magic Flute, made in 1955 with Rita Streich, Maria Stader, Ernst Haefliger, and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (who, though completely unsuited for the role physically, sings up a storm as Pagageno), which remains a highly recommended performance. His recording of Don Giovanni from 1958 is also considered a definitive performance. He was also one of the most-acclaimed interpreters of Bartók, his reputation (and those of his recordings) rivalling that of Fritz Reiner, whose work with the composer is often cited as definitive.