Edition Géza Anda (II) – Beethoven | Brahms | Liszt

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American Record Guide (Becker - 2008.12.01)

This is the second volume of the Geza Anda Edition (a review of Volume 1 will appear in a forthcoming issue). In all, Audite will issue four volumes, and those familiar with the Hungarian pianist will need little encouragement to investigate.

Anda left a fairly large recorded legacy. Recorded from 1955 to 1969, the sound is reasonably good to excellent. None is identified as stereo, though the Beethoven concerto from 1969 certainly is. There is no indication of an audience, though it is the only work labeled "live". The analog recording is clear, clean, and well balanced. Anda, conductor and pianist, gives a strong performance and, while the Cologne forces are not those of Berlin, I like the reedy quality of the winds.

Energy and even temperament are the hallmarks of his Beethoven sonata interpretations. He keeps things moving along without sacrificing little niceties along the way. The 1957 recording of his Brahms sonata is pushed to its limit to cope with his forward sound. The Intermezzos, recorded in 1960, present no such problem – the microphone is no longer looking down the throat of the piano. These are enjoyable, but coming on the heels of Marcus Groh's fabulous Op. 117 in this issue, made them less impressive.

Liszt's magnificent sonata, here in just one track, is perhaps the high point of this set. Dating from 1955, just a year after his commercial recording for Columbia, it is an even stronger performance. The sound is distortion free and with plenty of depth. It certainly would have to rank among the best recorded performances of all time.

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