

## Julius Katchen



### Julius Katchen plays Liszt, Brahms, Beethoven, Schumann and Chopin

Franz Liszt | Johannes Brahms | Ludwig van Beethoven | Robert Schumann | Frédéric Chopin

2CD aud 21.419

[Classical Recordings Quarterly Spring 2014 \(Norbert Hornig - 01.03.2014\)](#)



Last June Audite celebrated its fortieth birthday. Based in Detmold, Germany, this label has built up a remarkable catalogue of carefully remastered historical recordings, especially from German broadcast archives, using radio tapes. The anniversary was an appropriate time for Audite to introduce a new series of historical recordings – The Lucerne Festival Historic Performances, in cooperation with the famous Swiss festival, which was founded in 1938. The series started with three outstanding concert recordings of artists including Clara Haskil, Otto Klemperer, Robert Casadesu, Dimitri Mitropoulos, Isaac Stern, Ernest Ansermet, Lorin Maazel and George Szell. The latest release is dedicated “in memoriam” to Claudio Abbado, who died on 20 January at the age of 80. Abbado was closely connected with the Lucerne Festival for nearly five decades, and he was responsible for the revival of the Lucerne Festival Orchestra, which immediately became one of the best symphony orchestras of the world under his baton. Some live performances on DVD are impressive in showing Abbado’s highly sensitive music making with this orchestra. A new CD from Audite couples Schubert’s Symphony No. 8 “Unfinished”, played by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and Beethoven’s Symphony No. 2 and Wagner’s Siegfried Idyll with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, recorded at the Lucerne Festival of 1978 and 1988. These are impressive live performances that should not be missed by all who admire this great conductor (Φ 95.627).

String Quartet enthusiasts will be interested in Audite’s Volume 2 of RIAS’ recordings of the Amadeus Quartet. The new two-disc set is dedicated to Schubert, the Quartets No. 9, 10 and 13-15, all recorded at the Siemensvilla in Berlin between 1950 and 1964. Schubert was always at the centre of the Amadeus’s repertoire, and its performances of this composer set a standard for others in those days (two discs; Φ 21.428). Piano enthusiasts will seek a two-disc set profiling the American pianist Julius Katchen. Katchen, who died in 1969 at the early age of 42, was especially known as an interpreter of Brahms and Liszt. These recordings were taped in two sessions in Berlin in 1962 and 1964. They are of special interest because some of the works played are new to the pianist’s discography – Beethoven’s 32 Variations in C minor, WoO80, Chopin’s Ballade, Op. 47, the Nocturnes Op. 9 No. 1 and Op. 27 No. 2 and Berceuse, Op. 57 as well as the Liszt Sonata in B minor, works in which Katchen demonstrates his qualities as a sensitive poet and virtuoso par excellence (two discs; Φ 21.419). [...]

**International Record Review April 2014 (Nigel Simeone - 01.04.2014)**



### Julius Katchen

Audite has released a set of recordings; made for RIAS Berlin by Julius Katchen in 1962 and 1964. The great discovery here is a major work Katchen didn't record commercially: Liszt's Piano Sonata in B minor. Katchen's 1962 performance is simply stunning, and fiercely intelligent too: from a technical point of view his accuracy is downright astonishing since it was taped without any interruptions or major edits. But what makes it so engrossing is the way in which Katchen brings together detail, virtuosity and a long-term view of the structure into a conception of tremendous concentration. The drama and poetry of the music is realized to the fullest extent, and all with blazingly assured pianism. It was recorded on the same day (February 19th, 1962) as the Chopin Ballade in A flat, two pieces from Brahms's Op. 118 (Nos. 2 and 5) and two works by Beethoven: the Rondo a capriccio, Op. 129 (otherwise known as 'Rage over a lost penny'), which is new to Katchen's discography, and the Variations in C minor, WoO80, of which a live Katchen performance exists but not, I believe, a studio recording. Finally there's Schumann's Vogel als Prophet. The 1964 session (May 25th) includes all of the Brahms Fantasiën, Op. 116 and the Scherzo, Op. 4 along with three works by Chopin that Katchen didn't record otherwise: the Nocturnes, Op. 9 No. 2 and Op. 27 No. 2 and the Berceuse, Op. 57. The original tapes have been superbly remastered by Ludger Böckenhoff and the sound is extraordinary. Katchen was one of the outstanding pianists of his generation, and this set is an important and inspiring addition to his recorded legacy (Audite 21.419, two discs, 1 hour 49 minutes).

**BBC Music Magazine May 2014 (Tim Parry - 01.05.2014)**



Katchen is well known for his imperious Brahms, but the true revelations in these 1960s German radio recordings are the Chopin and Liszt. A wonderful fusion of technique and imagination.

**[klassik.com](http://klassik.com) 12.05.2014 (Prof. Kurt Witterstätter - 10.11.2012)**

Quelle: <http://magazin.klassik.com/reviews/revie...>



### Warmes Feuer

*Julius Katchen spielt – Werke von Liszt, Brahms, Beethoven u. a.*

Die plastische Klangreproduktion [...] bringt Katchens universelle Kunst auch heute noch in ihrem breiten Anschlagsspektrum, ihrem feurigen Schwung und ihrer mitreißenden Brillanz authentisch zur Geltung.

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**Audiophile Audition May 6, 2014 (Gary Lemco - 06.05.2014)**

**AUDIOPHILE AUDITION**

This Audite anthology provides six "first" releases to Katchen's already impressive recorded legacy. [...] Katchen's pearly play beguiles as much as his stentorian block chords and thrilling runs.

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**Musica numero 257 - giugno 2014 (Riccardo Risaliti - 01.06.2014)**

**MUSICA**  
La rivista di musica classica fondata nel 1977

Questa versione registrata da Katchen alla radio berlinese è una delle esecuzioni tecniche più smaglianti che si possano ascoltare;

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**Gramophone July 2014 (Bryce Morrison - 01.07.2014)**

**GRAMOPHONE**  
THE WORLD'S BEST CLASSICAL MUSIC REVIEWS

Audite's two-CD set of recordings made for RIAS Berlin in 1962 and 1964 adds several first issues to Julius Katchen's discography (including the Liszt Sonata and Chopin's Berceuse), confirming his status as an elemental virtuoso. And if, as he himself put it, a pianist's greatest challenge lies in the fluent communication of emotion to his audience, then virtually all these performances tell you why he was lionised in Europe in general and Paris in particular, where he made his home for the greater part of his life. Katchen could not only communicate but engulf his audience with a voltage and exuberance that could pin you back by the ears.

True, his lavish style, his fulsomeness and coloration will hardly appeal to a puritan taste. He had little time for musical discretion or propriety. Few pianists have given such free rein to their feelings and imagination, and his Liszt Sonata, even in today's crowded marketplace, is among the most glittering and awe-inspiring on record. Hear him in the flourish at 7'03", a flash of lightning down the keyboard, but hear him also in the slow descending scales at the close of the central Andante or in the valedictory coda, and you will be made aware of a pianist who could change with chameleon rapidity from an all-guns-firing brio to a sense of the sonata's still, elusive centre.

He takes Brahms (always a speciality) by storm, too, and if there are moments (in the E flat minor Scherzo) where his volatility overwhelms the music's content, making for listening more exhausting than exhilarating, Katchen's glowing cantabile, backed by a charismatic theatricality, makes his Chopin a glamorous alternative to a more patrician approach, his rubato heady and alluring. There is delicacy and poetry in Schumann's 'Prophet Bird', making these finely recorded discs a thrilling confirmation of Katchen's stature, of a pianist whose tragic death at the age of 42 robbed the world of a unique personality.

Piano News 4/2014 (Juli/August) (Carsten Dürer - 01.07.2014)

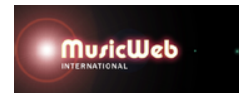


### Berechtigte Würdigungen

Ohne jegliche Verklärung vermag er [Julius Katchen] die wechselhaften Charaktere so brillant herauszuarbeiten, versteht das Sentiment des Tanzrhythmus innerhalb der Dramatik ohne Übertreibung aufzubauen, dass man bestürzt zuhört.

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www.musicweb-international.com July 2014 (Brian Wilson - 01.07.2014)



There are six first-ever releases of works new to Katchen's recorded repertoire in this Audite twofer. It documents recitals for RIAS Berlin in February 1962 and May 1964, the latter given only five years before his untimely death from leukaemia at the age of forty-two. The Liszt Sonata is the major work that he didn't live to record commercially, and it receives a reading of visceral intensity. From an almost sullen start it gathers in power and superb technical address to generate a reading of leonine authority and considerable poetic refinement, the two held in near-perfect equipoise. Lyrical imperatives and digital accuracy combine with a flexible but never over-elastic pulse to create an experience engrossing and at times overwhelming. What remains most impressive about this performance, even beyond this, however, is Katchen's narrative sense. This is one of those rare performances of the sonata where one feels, however naively, that we have been on a real journey that has carried us through successive emotive states and reached the only true and musically logical destination. In that respect alone it is a remarkable performance.

The rest of the first disc is given over to a composer whose music Katchen played with such insight, Brahms. The Seven Fantasies, Op.116 are played with real insight into their very particular sound world, sympathetically drawing out their expressive nuance and sense of melancholy and withdrawal. For all his virtuoso standing Katchen was a profoundly lyric performer and this set underscores the point. So do the two pieces from the Op.118 set, the Intermezzo and Romanze. Given that these are largely unedited performances one would expect a few finger slips, but they are – as in the Liszt sonata – of negligible significance. I freely admit I played these two pieces from the Op.118 set repeatedly and held up my reviewing responsibilities, so affecting were Katchen's performances of them.

There is more Brahms on disc two, a stormy performance of the Scherzo in E flat minor, boldly argued and living dangerously. Both Beethoven performances are new to his discography. The Rondo, Op.129 (Rage over a Lost Penny) scintillates and the Variations in C minor finds Katchen in discerning form, marrying structural imperatives with digital drive. His Chopin is fluent and charismatic and there is the great advantage of pieces once more appearing for the first time in his discography, namely the two Nocturnes - Op.9 No.2 and Op.27 No.2. They receive properly rich readings, and there is no need to cite, say, Lortat, Cortot or Moiseiwitsch here, as Katchen stands at a remove from that lineage.

The 1962-64 tapes sound splendid and with a fine booklet note this production is an exceptionally fine addition to Audite's already admirable sequence of RIAS releases.

**Diapason N° 628 - Octobre 2014 (Jérôme Bastianelli - 01.10.2014)**

Ces enregistrements inédits réalisés en 1962 et 1964 pour la Radio de Berlin-Ouest apportent six précieux compléments à la discographie de Julius Katchen, dont une phénoménale sonate de Liszt. Dans cette partition démoniaque, le pianiste américain peut se permettre, grâce à sa virtuosité légendaire, de prendre tous les risques, de se livrer à toutes les fantaisies; son interprétation combative et impatiente ménage quelques coups de théâtre. Vigoureuse, tout en tension, cette sonate ne manque pas d'éloquence ni de caractère: Katchen a, par exemple, une manière bien personnelle (et convaincante) de jouer la montée «mains croisées» des mesures 45 à 50.

Les quatre pièces de Chopin sont également des nouveautés. Tout en respectant une ligne directrice rigoureuse et ferme, le pianiste s'y abandonne à des envolées lyriques d'une grande beauté. La perpétuelle tension entre perfection apollinienne et liberté dionysiaque fait tout le charme de la Ballade op. 47, tandis que des clairs-obscurs emplis de distinction habitent la Berceuse ou le Nocturne op. 27 n° 2 (ainsi que L'Oiseau prophète de Schumann). Le Rondo a capriccio de Beethoven constitue le dernier inédit: un tempo trépidant permet à l'interprète de s'amuser un peu avec les moyens techniques dont il dispose. Les Variations en do mineur sont plus subtiles, même si les pages agitées sonnent avec quelques duretés. Dans le Scherzo op. 4 de Brahms, l'élan et la puissance rythmique du jeu transforment la partition en quelque préfiguration de l'oeuvre de Prokofiev: l'impression d'un «passage en force» est assez désagréable. On sait pourtant que Katchen nourrissait une véritable passion pour le compositeur hanséatique, qui lui inspire dans deux Klavierstücke un mélange d'abandon et de vitalité, de passion et de maîtrise digne de sa célèbre intégrale.

**American Record Guide September 2014 (Sang Woo Kang - 01.09.2014)**

Acclaimed for his legendary interpretations of Brahms, Katchen does not disappoint us with this program. Remastered from 1960s radio sessions, it makes many performances available for the first time, such as the works by Beethoven, Liszt, and Chopin.

True to form, the Brahms is excellent, especially the fiercely rhythmic Scherzo. He captures every nuance in one of the most convincing interpretations of Ballade 3 I have heard in a long time. His rubatos are sensitive and tasteful; he performs the coda with a fine balance of passion and control. Berceuse is exquisite. While clearer passagework and more polished playing may be heard from countless recordings of the Liszt Sonata, they cannot compete with his magnificent and original rendering. Katchen's command of the architecture and dramatic range of the work nullifies any misfired notes. He delivers the 32 Variations with razor-sharp clarity.

The sound quality is excellent. Audite has assembled a fine tribute to an astounding pianist whose career ended too soon.

Scherzo Enero 2015 (Emili Blasco - 01.01.2015)



Una joya de alto voltaje

Al igual que su Sonata de Liszt, abrumadora, poderosísima, apabullante podría decirse, que destila perfección estética, con un sonido siempre depurado hasta la última pincelada. El pianista, transmisor de lo indecible, construye alrededor de la partituras un halo de permanencia, diríase infinitud o perennidad al que difícilmente los de hoy día pueden acercarse. Una joya claramente ineludible.

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Gramofon 2014. június 28., szombat (Zay Balázs - 28.06.2014)



Berlin hatvan körül

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Correspondenz Robert Schumann Gesellschaft Nr. 37 / Januar 2015  
(Irmgard Knechtges-Obrecht - 01.01.2015)

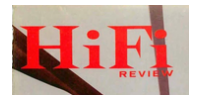


Neue Schumanniana in Auswahl – CDs, DVDs, Notenausgaben und Literatur  
ausgewählt von Irmgard Knechtges-Obrecht

Im Mittelpunkt steht Liszts berühmte Klaviersonate in h-moll, mit der Katchen CD 1 eröffnet. Voller Energie und hoch virtuos interpretiert er dieses Ausnahmewerk, zeigt sich dann in den folgenden Sieben Fantasien op. 116 sowie zweien der Sechs Klavierstücke op. 118 von Johannes Brahms auch dessen ausdrucksvoller Musiksprache bestens gewachsen [...]

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Hi Fi Review 1/2014 ( - 01.01.2014)



chinesische Rezension siehe PDF!

[www.artalinna.com](http://www.artalinna.com) 21 janvier 2015 (Jean-Charles Hoffelé - 21.01.2015)



### **Pas que Brahms mais tout de meme**

Et montre dans l'Intermezzo adagio à quelle délicatesse il pouvait parvenir, s'irisant de couleurs toutes en sfumato. Dans la profusion de l'écriture harmonique, le piano de Katchen s'incarne soudain, unifié, intense, sobre et fulgurant à la fois. Et lorsque le cantabile paraît (premier Intermezzo), il parle – vrai liedersänger qui donne de la chair aux notes comme avec des mots.

Les radios européennes conservent quantités de témoignages engrangés par Julius Katchen, il faut espérer que ce double album n'est que le prélude à bien des découvertes.

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