Géza Anda: The Telefunken Recordings

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Wow! Speak of getting your money's worth, Can this be the longest CD to date? Here are Anda's Telefunken recordings from Berlin, remastered in splendid monaural sound. While the Hungarian master recorded several of these pieces later, these—except Bach's Partita 2 (taken directly from shellac)—derive from 1954 vinyl transfers.

Schumann's Carnaval and Symphonic Etudes were always favorites of this pianist. Carnaval appears often on today's programs and has become a staple for every budding pianist. If we have become satiated with dull, mechanical, unimaginative performances, Anda in 1951 knew what this music was all about and gives us an interpretation that sets the imagination on fire. His use of rubato and attention to phrasing keep the music moving forward and hold one's interest even more than his 1955 remake. It's fascinating to hear, for example, how 'Pierrot' is played detache in his earlier recording—that is abandoned in the later one. Could he have done this to comply with how every other pianist interprets it? 'Sphinxes' is not played. If I prefer this earlier recording it's because of the greater expressive freedom shown and the wonderful remastering Audite has managed from the originals.

The Symphonic Etudes (incorporating two of the posthumous ones) is another treat for the Hungarian pianist's many admirers. While he was a more impetuous player earlier in his career, the sound in this transfer does tend to splatter somewhat in loud passages. The real gems of this compilation must be the Bach Partita 2, Haydn's Sonata 38, and Mozart's Sonata 18—he played them seldom. Even with the remastering it is not always easy to cover all of the technological limitations. Warts and all, these close an important gap in Anda's discography and will be gobbled up by collectors and all who value fine playing. Notes are serviceable and include a history of the Telefunken label plus several photographs of the pianist. Purchase with confidence.

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