



Géza Anda: The Telefunken Recordings

aud 95.720

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[Fanfare](#) (Raymond Tuttle - 2015.12.01)

These recordings were made in Berlin between 1950 and 1951, around the time that the Hungarian pianist turned 30. Throughout his career, Anda was associated primarily with Deutsche Grammophon, and he had recorded for that label for several years before taking a brief hiatus to make the Telefunken recordings collected here. All of them were released initially on shellac, and all but the Bach were released on LPs a few years later. Audite used LPs of the works by Schumann, Haydn, and Mozart to prepare this disc, and it must be said that the sound is nothing to get excited about: The piano is oppressively close, often a little distorted, and sometimes glassy in tone, particularly in the Mozart. Also, one sometimes can hear Anda singing along in Carnival, which could be either charming or a little annoying, depending on your tolerance.

Anda's reputation rests, in part, on the Mozart piano concerto discs that he made for Deutsche Grammophon, and so it is interesting to reflect on the statement made in Audite's booklet note, which I have no reason to contradict, that he made no solo recordings of Mozart's piano music, apart from the one included on this disc. It's an excellent performance, if more flashy than what we expect from this pianist.

Anda made more modern studio recordings of the two works by Schumann. Anda fanatics will want to hear these early recordings which, again, are more overtly virtuosic than those that came later. His control over articulation and color was fabulous, and that control is front and center here, occasionally upstaging the music itself. I think most listeners will be satisfied with the later versions, though. The Bach is played grandly and most persuasively, but there is a live recording from 1972 of the same work on the Orfeo label (Carnaval is included there too) which probably sounds better. (I haven't heard it.) That leaves the Haydn Sonata, which, like the Mozart Sonata, is flashy—a showpiece for the pianist's fleet fingerwork.

Rudolf Buchbinder, no less technically impressive, gets more wit and shading out of this sonata, however, and he is better recorded. That's also a Telefunken recording, coincidentally, although now it has been reissued in a Warner Classics box set with Haydn's complete sonatas.

I'm impressed that 87 minutes of music have been squeezed onto a single CD. My PC handled it without complaint, but one of my older CD players was so befuddled by it that it started to play the last track backwards!

This disc does Anda's reputation no harm, and ardent fans of this pianist will want it, but it's not the best way for newcomers to sample Anda's talent. For that, I'd recommend an inexpensive four-CD set released by Brilliant Classics—out of print, but still widely available.