



Franz Liszt: Organ Works

aud 97.477

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Impassable technique, coherence, and sweep, propelled by crisp rhythm and tempos, bring excitement to these Liszt organ works played by Helmut Deutsch. Despite the romantic character of the organ and the resonance of the room, he is able to keep the fast passages clearer and better focussed than most organists do.

His registration for the great B-A-C-H is not especially pleasing. There is an over-reliance on the crescendo pedal and the swell pedal--devices not available to Liszt--for tonal variety. This might seem to be quibbling but it is not, for it means that the type of organ sound known to Liszt has not been achieved. Deutsch plays through this piece without much attention to distinctive colors, as many organists do, preferring a generic kind of sound. All of this produces an overbearing effect in the B-A-C-H, but less so in the Weinen, Klagen Variations, where there are more quiet passages, and in the Ad Nos, where he is more imaginative, even orchestral, in his registrational scheme. Thus the Ad Nos is the most captivating performance here, and it is further enhanced by its very fast pace (29:56). But Deutsch has a pronounced taste for ensembles based on 16\' manual tone, so he keeps us immersed in glutinous sound much of the time.

The organ, a 1930 Walcker of three manuals and 54 stops in Volklingen, is a felicitous choice for this music, and it has been skillfully recorded, with just the right amount of reverberation. Enthusiasts of hi-fi organ sound will be happy with this recording for its range of sonority and realistic quality. Such amplitude in the basses of an organ recording, powerful enough to rattle the speakers, is seldom encountered.

Of the many recordings of Liszt\'s organ music recently heard, none has seemed to me entirely satisfying. Two notable exceptions, and these are from years back, are the old LP recordings of the B-A-C-H by E. Power Biggs and the Ad Nos by John Weaver, neither reissued on CD. Among newer releases, Edgar Krapp in the Tonhalle, Bamberg (Calig) is the finest all around.