



Edition Géza Anda (I) – Mozart

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Audiophile Audition (Gary Lemco - 2008.07.15)

The first volume of the Geza Anda (1921-1976) Edition features his work in Mozart, with whose name Anda became indelibly associated with the screening of the motion picture *Elvira Madigan* (1967, dir. Bo Widerberg), whose second movement opening bars with Anda and the Salzburg Camerata on DGG became synonymous with tragic love. Between 1961 and 1970 Anda inscribed the entire bulk of Mozart piano concertos with the Salzburg Camerata, his mentor having been--as he had been for Karajan--Bernhard Paumgartner. Leading two concertos from the keyboard, Anda takes up the mantle of Edwin Fischer and Rudolf Ganz, achieving some exemplary ensemble in the D Minor Concerto (28 November 1969) from Cologne, an alternately lusty and delicately nuanced performance and a slick cadenza by Anda. The middle section of the Romanze comes off a mite breathless, though Anda's non-legato runs sparkle over and under the woodwind punctuations until the serene da capo entry of the solo piano. One might object that Anda never could decide if he wanted his Mozart sensual or precious, so he opted for a hybrid which often works on its own terms. A startling chiaroscuro marks the transition from D Minor to D Major in the last movement: brilliant, brisk, all bravura. Wonderful landings in the brief cadenza prior to the bassoon's return for the coda: a scintillating, resonant conclusion to a performance of smooth, often gossamer effect.

Rumanian colorist Constantin Silvestri (1913-1969) leads the heraldic Concerto No. 22 in E-flat Major (4 April 1960), an account that features excellent work in the woodwinds, the ritornello pomposo, the piano all silk. When accompanied by a veteran conductor, Anda's playing becomes freer, less careful. The evenness of Anda's scales and trills, his pearly play, all quite mesmerize the Mozart lover, here treated to a style we have come to cherish via Dinu Lipatti, Annie Fischer, and Clara Haskil. Whiplash tremolos and pointed, martial flair from Silvestri begin the development section and a whole new period in this massive concerto. The glittery piano runs and orchestral Mannheim rockets combine to produce an effect we have in the best collaborations with Casadesus and Szell, only here the tone is warmer. Anda's cadenza is a model of delicacy, not quite Michelangeli, but close. He preserves the bass line melody and top trills in the manner of the martial rhythm. Silvestri's return is on the money, and together piano and orchestra stride to a confident conclusion. Silvestri virtually converts the opening of the Andante into a minor tonepoem of haunted beauty. Anda and he then take an expansive approach to the rest of the variation-movement, serene on the wind-serenade surface but whose harmonies suggest tragic depths. The bumptious Rondo conveys frolicking spirits and various color nuances, along with another deft cadenza from Anda: playful, frisky, scampish. A quick segue to the orchestra and the false coda, and we have a performance of enduring, virtuosic charm.

The A Major Concerto and C Major Symphony derive from the same session (28

January 1962) with the Camerata Salzburg, when Paumgartner's mentorship in Mozart had already affected Anda's perceptions about structure and dynamics. When Anda decided to tour in 1960 without Paumgartner as conductor, the two fell out. The performance here, however, indicates nothing of a world of dissension in its effortless flow and seamless presentation of motifs. A salon intimacy graces this interpretation, the dialogues between piano and winds often merely an extension of the chamber music ethos of the Piano Quintet, K. 452. The much-esteemed Adagio (siciliano) in F-sharp Minor hovers in space, a moment of tragic resignation that wends its way into Eternity as surely as any Schubert melody. After Good Friday, resurrected spirits: the Allegro assai scampers and bubbles, the bassoon working overtime to provide the buffa chortles and rocket figures. Light-handed filigree from Anda, who plays any number of diaphanous runs in the course of a splendidly brilliant realization of the movement's pyrotechnical demands. The 1774 Symphony in C reveals many of the traits of delicacy and *emfindsamkeit* "sensitivity" that Anda hoped to develop as a conductor, having expressed a desire to lead Puccini operas. The last movement adds a touch from Gluck. Not knowing who led this idiomatically Austrian K. 200, I might venture Bohm or Vegh, even Paumgartner himself.

Finally, the C Major Concerto (16 January 1956) with veteran Joseph Keilberth (1908-1968), who often booked Anda for Mozart collaborations. The requisite mix of pomp and expressive melody mark this streamlined version of the concerto, always intimating at operatic arias being wrought by principals in some *dramma giocoso*. The gentle humanity of the open-work textures ebbs and flows out of some bottomless river Alph of creative inspiration. Without quite knowing how we so graciously arrived there, Anda's first movement cadenza, a rather meditative potpourri of motifs, with the main theme having been transposed to the minor and then converted into a feverish stretto that explodes with Keilberth's spirited reentry into the joyful fray. A rarified sonic patina covers the Andante, with its leap of the seventh and emotionally vocal poignancy, a luminosity we expect for the Bach F Minor Concerto second movement. A burlesque militancy marks the final Allegro, the WDR strings and woodwinds particularly agile over the fleet piano and tympani. A quicksilver rush to Anda's cadenza--brief but lush in shifting registers-- and the last trump, three healthy chords from Keilberth's accomplished orchestra.