



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

aud 21.419

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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 Fantasien, 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).