



Balancing act

The triennial Concours Géza Anda – one of the most prestigious and demanding competitions – was created in memory of Géza Anda by his widow Hortense Anda-Bührle. The year 2021 marks the centenary of Géza Anda's birth and the 15th Concours Géza Anda. This centenary year 36 candidates from all over the world competed in four rounds and after an exciting final round the jury, chaired by Gerhard Oppitz, awarded Anton Gerzenberg with the first prize, Julian Trevelyan with the second and Marek Kozák with the third.

We spoke with Anton Gerzenberg.

Why did you choose the Géza Anda competition?

I am from Hamburg and I remember it was a major event in my city when Varvara Nepomnyashchaya won the competition. At the time, she was studying with Evgeni Koroliov at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater. That always stayed with me, the idea of this demanding competition, and that was surely one of the factors that made me go there. Also, as a youngster, I often listened to recordings by Clara Haskil and she recorded the Mozart double concerto together with Géza Anda. That was the first time I heard Anda and I immediately loved his playing, his Schumann, the Bartók Concerti and of course Mozart. Although we tend to play a little differently nowadays, his playing is so beautiful and appropriate. And now I have had the privilege to practice on his own piano! A piano always reflects the artistic ideals of the musicians, and I felt his piano was leading me to his approach, his sound. That was fascinating.

When did you decide to participate?

During corona and it was actually my mother's idea, because I have a wide repertoire. I like to have different things at my fingertips, so it seemed right for me. And it's a hard competition: for the second round alone you need to prepare three different programs, and you are told only a day or two hours in advance what to play. But I very much liked the program with the Bartók Sonata, Ravel Valses nobles et sentimentales, Brahms Paganini-Variations and a transcription by Rachmaninoff.

The last five years you didn't participate in competitions.

No, I am studying now with Pierre-Laurant Aimard, who doesn't like competitions, and he wanted me to focus on my pianism, on refining musically and technically, so I put the competitions on the backburner

a little bit. But as a way to have a career, I think they are necessary. It is not the only way, but I didn't want to cut out this possibility. Playing for a teacher and in concert, you always present yourself, but in a competition this feeling is even heightened. On the other hand, now there are more and more competitions, it seems to make less sense to go to competitions.

The Géza Anda Competition helps you with management.

Yes, that is fantastic! I will have concerts with an orchestra, I will play at the 100th birthday gala for Géza Anda in Budapest, and next year I will have more recitals. I am very happy about all those chances.

As we speak now, we are all watching the Chopin Competition.

Everyone has his own connection to Chopin and for me he is also very special, so it was always a dream for me to participate; perhaps I will do it next time.

You have a piano duo with your brother.

Yes, we had a five-year break from concerts and we started again not so long ago. In fact, it began with a competition. He was doing Jugend musiziert but for a prize-winners concert his partner was ill, so I stepped in. I learn fast and it really worked very well, so we continued; we won a prize at the same competition together. We played many concerts and we had a great time. I never had a rivalry with my brother: we were in different age categories and we have different paths anyway. My brother is also a writer and a poet, and song accompaniment is very important to him as a pianist, with the marriage of poetry and music. I also adore vocal music, but I am more into opera. I learned the Norma paraphrase by Liszt recently and as a big Wagnerian, I was delighted to play the Scene of the Norns from

Götterdämmerung for a singer. My brother doesn't like Wagner, so we never played the Reger transcriptions. I am happy balancing my schedule with recitals, chamber music and concerts with orchestra.

You also enjoy playing contemporary music and you are one of the founders of the New Music ensemble ÉRMA in Cologne.

Yes, we started in 2019 and played a few concerts in close collaboration with Unsuk Chin. And now, hopefully after corona, we can try to move forward. We are 11 musicians and a conductor. I also do a lot of new music in my lessons with Aimard, which I think is necessary for an artist. I hope to bring some premières in the future, for we must never forget in that in past centuries musicians mostly played contemporary music.

You don't compose yourself?

I wouldn't dare, I don't have the patience, it takes too long for me. But I like to play other people's music very much.

And how was it to play without public in the competition.

Well, we were at least in the same room with the jury and for the rounds with Musikkollegium Winterthur and the Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich we could have 100 people in the hall. It was very nice to play in front of a live audience after quite some time. I was playing with-



ANDREI GRILC

out my glasses, so I didn't really see the audience, but I could feel the electricity in the air. With a public present you go to different heights, which is not possible when you play alone.

ERIC SCHOONES

www.geza-anda.ch/anton-gerzenberg



GEZA ANDA-STIFTUNG/DMITRY KHAMZIN