



Robert Schumann: Complete Symphonic Works

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There is a special price for the Audite recording but, at \$12.02 – just over £7 at current rates – it won't break the bank and it's well worth considering if you're in the market for just these two symphonies. Tempi are a shade faster throughout than on Linn, especially in the third movement of No. 2 (8:26 against 10:13) and the opening movement of the Rhenish (8:58 against 9:37). The former is marked *adagio espressivo* and most take that to indicate a timing of a little over 10 minutes – Sawallisch takes 10:18 – but Heinz Holliger makes his faster tempo seem perfectly natural and unhurried. The opening movement of the Rhenish, marked *lebhaft*, certainly benefits from the faster treatment: Sawallisch is even a shade faster at 8:55, though, surprisingly, the speed-merchant Szell takes longer at 9:13. It seems that Szell was not such a speedy Gonzalez in this work as I recall – in fact, TH's review in 1963 comments on the comparatively spacious speed in the second movement: at 6:15 he's slower than Holliger (5:40) or Ticciati (6:02). I like the way that Holliger keeps the music moving here without seeming hurried; listening to Szell again, in lossless sound via Qobuz, I now think he's inclined to make the movement sound a little arthritic and Sawallisch at 6:42 seems impossibly slow after hearing Holliger. So much for cherished benchmarks: of those that I mentioned at the outset, only Kubelík, at an ideal compromise of 6:08, holds up here.

The Audite recording is good throughout, though I miss those powerful drum thwacks, so apparent on the Linn recording. If you bought the first volume (Audite 97.677, Symphony No. 1 and No. 4, original version, and Overture, Scherzo and Finale) I'm sure you'll want the second. The third volume, containing the Cello Concerto and final version of the Fourth Symphony, is due for release in October 2014.

I should add that I haven't yet heard the new, highly-regarded BPO/Simon Rattle set – review – except for the 1-minute segments from Qobuz, but I see that he attributes his appreciation of Schumann to a meeting long ago with Heinz Holliger, whom he describes as a Schumann 'nut' – endorsement of a kind for his mentor's new recording.