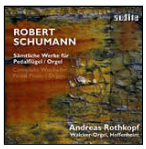
Andreas Rothkopf



Robert Schumann: Complete Works for Pedal Piano/Organ

Robert Schumann

CD aud 97.411

Wochen-Kurier Mittwoch, 21. Juli 2010 - Nr. 29 (Michael Karrass - 2010.07.21)

Zum Schumann-Jahr legt audite mit dieser Wiederveröffentlichung sämtliche...

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WETA fm Wednesday, 7.28.10, 6:00 am (Jens F. Laurson - 2010.07.28)

From the very early days of Audite, back when it was a local German label with a...

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Early Music Review Number 137 August 2010 (Andrew Benson-Wilson - 2010.08.01)

Schumann is perhaps pushing the boundaries of EMR's normal remit, but his 200th anniversary gives a chance for a peek into the world of romantic organ music. Both these CDs are recorded on appropriate historic instruments, dating from 1846, a year after Schumann's works for pedal piano were written, and 1859. Although a lover of Bach from his youth, a period of intense crisis in his life in 1844/5 focused Schumann's attention again on the works of the Master, resulting in three major collections of pieces. Although the pedal piano had long since replaced the pedal clavichord as a practice instrument for organists in, for example, Leipzig Conservatory, it wasn't until Schumann took delivery of a pedal attachment in April 1845 that any composer took the instrument seriously. The 'Six Fugues on the name of Bach' were written for organ as well as the pedal piano, and are far more suitable for the organ than the other pedal piano works. Along with Mendelssohn's Organ Sonatas, they are one of the foundation of the Romantic organ movement. Although the Studies and Sketches are closer to the piano idiom, they work well on the organ. With two recordings to make a direct comparison with, I come down in favour of the Rothkopf recording on a number of counts, including the quality of the organ, the clarity and attractivness of the performance, and the inclusion the Studies and Sketches alongside the BACH pieces. The 1859 organ in Buxtehude gives a noticeably boomy and indistinct sound, at least in this recording.

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La Tribune de l'Orgue 62/3 2010 (fc - 2010.09.01)

Œuvres complètes de Schumann à Hoffenheim

2010 marque le deuxième...

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Organ 3/10 (Wolfram Adolph - 2010.10.01)

„Versäume keine Gelegenheit, dich auf der Orgel zu üben" – diese...

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kirchmusik.de 31. August 2010 um 17:09 Uhr (Rainer Goede - 2010.08.31)

Die Neuauflage dieser älteren Einspielung ist dem Schumann-Jahr 2010 zu...

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Diapason N° 586 décembre 2010 (Paul de Louit - 2010.12.01)

Point de spectaculaire nouveauté discographique à l'orgue, en cette fin de bicentenaire Schumann. Audite ressort de ses cartons Andreas Rothkopf, qui impose un ton dramatique, vigoureux, contrasté ; une palette qui utilise toutes les richesses (jusqu'au rare Physharmonica) du Walcker de Hoffenheim ; un jeu qui ne cherche pas à singer le piano-pédalier mais traite l'ensemble, même les Opus 56 et 58, comme des pièces d'orgue. Le risque est bien assumé pour les Esquisses, toniques et comme ravivées. En revanche, quelques tics d'organiste, dont le plus voyant est la confusion entre respiration de phrasé et coupure suspensive, nuisent au raffinement des études et à la tension formelle des fugues.

Nous n'oserions même parler de phrasé ni de forme à propos du disque de Georges Bessonnet. Cette lecture hésitante (Etude n° 2, Fugue n° 6), aux articulations indécises (Esquisse n° 1), ne s'embarrasse pas de détails : une grosse anche est tirée en plein milieu d'un motif à la fin de l'Esquisse n° 3, dont les octaves de main gauche sont par ailleurs à peine effleurées. Elle ne s'embarrasse pas non plus d'analyse : le rubato, comment dire...expérimental, dans l'Opus 56, semble avoir oublié qu'un canon n'est pas une simple mélodie accompagnée ; l'effet cumulatif de la fin de la Fugue n° 4 est joué comme si Schumann, à court d'inspiration, en était réduit à se répéter sottement ; quant à la rythmique complexe des contre-sujets de la Fugue n° 6, elle est victime d'une apparente inaptitude à juxtaposer deux noires et un triolet. Surprise : la seule pièce à peu près impeccable est la redoutable Fugue n° 5 – Bessonnet aurait-il commis l'erreur de sous-estimer les embûches, moins évidentes, des autres pièces ?

Discographie par conséquent inchangée : mis à part Olivier Latry (BMG) devenu introuvable, restent Bruno Morin (Triton) et depuis peu, pour l'Opus 60, Pierre Farago (Calliope).

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Columns - Sound and Music - Novità discografiche Novembre 2010 (- - 2010.11.01)

In occasione del secondo centenario della nascita di Robert Schumann la Audite presenta l'edizione integrale delle opere scritte dal grande compositore di Zwickau per il pianoforte e pedali. Nel diariodi Clara si legge: «Il 24 aprile [1845] abbiamo ricevuto un pianoforte a pedali che ci ha dato grandi soddisfazioni. La decisione di prenderlo ci era stata dettata più che altro dal desiderio di familiarizzarci con la tecnica organistica, tuttavia nel giro di poco tempo Robert ha maturato un crescente interesse per questo strumento e ha scritto una serie di schizzi e di studi per pianoforte a pedali che saranno sicuramente salutati con grande entusiasmo per il loro spirito innovativo». Nel maggio del 1845, subito dopo aver portato a termine il primo gruppo di opere per pianoforte a pedali, Robert scrisse: «A voler essere sinceri, nutro una grande fiducia nelle possibilità di questo strumento e sono convinto che – a tempo debito – potrà dare nuovi impulsi al repertorio pianistico. Mi attendo risultati meravigliosi». Sebbene per un certo periodo sia stato adottato dal Conservatorio di Lipsia per consentire agli studenti di organo di fare pratica, questo interessante ibrido non riuscì mai a trovare una collocazione stabile in ambito concertistico. Schumann compose tutte le opere per pianoforte a pedali nel 1845, nel corso di quello che lui stesso definì "periodo contrappuntistico". Queste opere sono accomunate da uno stile ieratico e molto austero, che rivela la profonda venerazione che Schumann provava per Johann Sebastian Bach. Queste opere vengono eseguite in questo disco da Andreas Rothkopf sull'organo storico Walcker di Hoffenheim.

Organists' Review August 2010 (Michael Bell - 2010.08.01)

Andreas Rothkopf plays the historic Walcker organ of the Evangelische Kirche in Hoffenheim, Germany

Twenty three years on, this CD suitably marks Schumann's 200th anniversary. Apart from occasional disconcerting instances of final chords being chopped short (in the original or the re-mastering?), this is a highly enjoyable and authoritative 'souvenir'.

Cumbersome titles too, but many readers will know that Schumann envisaged the fascinating Studies and Sketches as being performed upon a piano (grand or otherwise) with pedalboard. Little is lost by performing them, as here, on organ instead! And the Hoffenheim Walcker certainly gives added value! This particular organ (2m/27st) was built in 1846 – only two years after Schumann produced his music – with cone-valve chests and mechanical action, and was restored by Steinmeyer in 1974. Romantic delights abound. The intriguing specification includes a Physharmonika stop (indubitably fizzy), and a Holzharmonika, which has tapering pipes despite being made of, well ... wood; but such a short list can give no hint of such rich sounds.

Is the star of the show the organ or the composer? Or perhaps the inestimably sensitive and persuasive performer, recorded the year after he became organ professor at Saar Hochschule. Certainly Schumann's complete organ works provide a highly entertaining hour – or happily dip in ad lib. Despite the formal discipline involved, there is much poetry here too. The composer himself felt the BACH fugues might outlive all his other works. The sixth is a mighty tour de force. The Sketches are far from 'sketchy', showing Schumann at his obsessive/neurotic but always compulsive best. A veritable celebratory feast.

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Choir & Organ September/October 2010 (Iain Quinn - 2010.08.16)

This disc includes the op.56 and 58 collections for Pedalflügel alongside the six BACH fugues. The first two collections present any number of challenges with regard to performance practice, not least concerning registration and tempi, plus technical hurdles. However, this CD offers intelligent solutions coupled with invigorating playing on an organ within an acoustic that allows the music to leave the page and delight the listener. The often sumptuous choices of registration deserve special mention. Andreas Rothkopf demonstrates a clear understanding of Schumann's larger musical language, and the listener is the rich beneficiary.

Badische Zeitung Samstag, 16. Juli 2011 (Johannes Adam - 2011.07.16)

Musik von Robert Schumann

Romantik aus Baden

Die Werke stammen von 1845, die Orgel, auf der sie eingespielt wurden, von 1846. Dass man die vergriffene Aufnahme von 1987 zum Schumann-Jahr erneut vorgelegt hat, ist erfreulich. Zu hören ist hier die Kegelladenorgel des renommierten Ludwigsburgers Eberhard Friedrich Walcker in der evangelischen Kirche im badischen Hoffenheim. Es spielt Andreas Rothkopf, der ganz exzellente, an Orgel und Klavier qualifizierte Saarbrücker Hochschulprofessor, den indes übers Saarland hinaus kaum einer kennt – sein bislang einziges Freiburger Münsterkonzert liegt fast 30 Jahre zurück. Der Interpret weiß mit deutscher Romantik authentisch umzugehen – beim Registrieren zeigt sich das in der Auswahl der warmen Pastelltöne. Sehr nachdrücklich und werkdienlich gestaltet er die B-A-C-H-Fugen, auch wo sie in der Steigerung bereits Max Reger zu antizipieren scheinen. Oder beim Scherzo-Exemplar (Nr. 5). Die sechs wunderbaren Kanons sind eine Musik, die geradezu süchtig macht – ohne Risiken und Nebenwirkungen.

ouverture Das Klassik-Blog Freitag, 16. Juli 2010 (- 2010.07.16)

Schumann: Sämtliche Werke für Pedalflügel / Orgel (Audite)

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www.musicweb-international.com June 2010 (Gavin Dixon - 2010.06.01)

Schumann's 'organ' works are well represented on record. The three almost consecutive opuses make an attractive collection and fit neatly onto a CD. Their paucity must be a frustration for organists, elegant as the works are, and representing a potentially impressive talent for idiomatic organ writing. All the works have been arranged for multiple pianos or for chamber ensembles, in some cases many times, demonstrating their popularity beyond the organ loft.

In the case of opp. 56 and 58, even organ performance is a re-appropriation, as the music was originally composed for pedal piano, a fact rarely acknowledged in CD titles and so all the more creditable for being so described here. That could lead to a potential disappointment for listeners hoping for a taste of this exotic instrument, although the early 19th century Walcker organ on which the music is played is interesting enough in its own right, especially as it is almost contemporaneous with the music.

A recording is available of the two works performed on a pedal piano, the adventurous pianist being Martin Schmeding (ARS 38 011). The comparison is interesting, in that one work, the Op.56 Studies, transfers very well to the organ, while the other, the Op.58 Sketches, relies much more heavily on pianistic textures. The opening of the Op.58 is all staccato chords, never an ideal texture for the organ. Later textures use tremolo effects in the right hand over a melody in the left hand and pedals, again a specifically pianistic texture. On the other hand, Schumann's dynamics are simple and stepped, allowing the organist to switch between manuals to distinguish answering phrases, for example.

Rothkopf never tries to make the organ sound like a piano. Much of the music is written in long legato lines, for which he can rely on the smoothness of the organ sound and the church resonance, which is always evident on the recording but not to the detriment of the clarity of articulation.

Both the Op.58 Studies and the Six Fugues on the Name BACH, are products of a brief but intense period of Schumann's life when he became obsessed with the study of strict counterpoint. This makes the instrumentation less relevant, because, as with much of Bach's keyboard music, the counterpoint plays out in long melodic lines that transfer well between instruments.

Bach is an abiding presence in both works, and not just on account of his name running through the themes of Op.60. The Op.56 studies bear strong stylistic resemblances to much of Bach's organ music. Many of the themes imitate the ways in which Bach made music playable on the pedal board, such as alternating between a stationary note on one foot and a scale passage on the other.

The idea of fugues based on the BACH cipher seems old hat these days, not least because of the similar works by Liszt and Reger, but in their day they were revolutionary. However, I would have to say that 30 minutes of contrapuntal music based on a single four-note theme can tend towards monotony. True enough, Bach succeeded spectacularly in both The Musical Offering and The Art of Fugue to maintain the interest purely through contrapuntal ingenuity in long monothematic works. It is no discredit to Schumann to say that his skills in this respect don't quite match up to those of his hero.

The performance of these three works is very fine. As befits what are essentially studies in counterpoint, Andreas Rothkopf never attempts to spice up the textures with unusual or rapidly changing registrations. The recording was made in 1987, some 13 years after the restoration of the 1846 instrument. It sounds in fine condition, excellently tuned and balanced and with no audible tracker noise. In general, it is quite a soft-sounding instrument, all warm, woody tones, which I personally find very attractive.

Good recorded audio too, especially given that it dates from the mid-1980s. The microphones are set quite close, I think, or I assume from the subdued resonance of the church. This is not an SACD by the way, despite what you may read elsewhere on the net, but the recording date alone should make that obvious.

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This music isn't the sexiest that Schumann ever wrote, but it is a valuable contribution to the organ repertoire, not to mention the pedal piano repertoire. This reissue coincides with Schumann's anniversary year. The record labels have so far done a great job of demonstrating the incredible diversity of his art. He is not really known as an organ composer, and what a shame he did not write more music for the instrument, given the quality of what is on offer here.

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