

## Highly recommended Audite release of Piano Trios by Clara and Robert Schumann from the Swiss Piano Trio

I wonder just how much more music Clara Schumann (1819-1896) would have written had she not married Robert Schumann (1810-1856). As it stands her output numbers twenty three works, including a piano concerto, works for violin and piano, songs, solo piano works and the Piano Trio in G minor Op.17 written in 1846. The piano trio was much praised by the critics of the time, in stark contrast to the reaction to her husband's piano trios.

I enjoyed immensely the Swiss Piano Trio's [www.schweizer-klaviertrio.ch](http://www.schweizer-klaviertrio.ch) recording of Mendelssohn's piano trios Op.49 and Op.66 issued by Audite [www.audite.de](http://www.audite.de) last year <http://theclassicalreviewer.blogspot.co.uk/2012/04/mendelssohn-lightweight-composer.html> and their new release from Audite of Clara Schumann's Piano Trio in G minor Op.17 coupled with Robert Schumann's *Fantasiestücke* Op.88 and Piano Trio No.3 in G minor Op.110 is no less fine.



A lovely lyrical outpouring opens the *allegro moderato* of Clara Schumann's **G minor Piano Trio** with piano phrases that recall Robert Schumann, particularly his Piano Concerto. The Swiss Piano Trio are at turns sensitive, passionate, richly melodic, forcefully compelling. Their playing always has such terrific ensemble and precision, with them alive to every nuance, making this trio sound a wonderful piece.

The *scherzo* opens with, to my ears, a slightly Scottish inflection and is in the style of a minuet whilst in the initially relaxed *andante* the piano opens before the violin enters in a beautifully conceived melody which both violin and cello continue. The strings of the Swiss Piano Trio, Angela Golubeva (violin) and Sébastien Singer (cello) have a lovely timbre and there is some great playing from their pianist, Martin Lucas when the music becomes more animated. In the *allegretto* again the piano plays a quite dominant role in this wonderful theme. The trio raise this fairly straightforward music by bringing out so much passion and drama. The latter stages of the finale are almost Brahmsian in their passion and Clara Schumann shows that she had a considerable compositional talent.

April 1842 marked an outpouring of music from Robert Schumann. By the end of July he had written three String Quartets Op. 41 No's 1 – 3, and in October he had written the Piano Quintet Op.44. Soon after he wrote the *Fantasiestücke* Op.88 (revised in 1850). Of the *Fantasiestücke* Schumann noted that '...they seemed to please players and listeners alike, in particular Mendelssohn.'

The *Fantasiestücke* opens with a short, attractive *Romanze* with the Swiss Piano Trio providing a lovely atmospheric sound, full of warmth. The second movement *humoreske* is played with great precision and panache with a lovely light-hearted feel. Given that the piano provides so much of the dominant theme (it could almost be an arrangement of a piano piece), it is essential that the string players provide texture and interest as they certainly do plentifully here. In the wistful *duet Langsam und mit Ausdruck* there is some exquisite playing as the tune is passed around the three instrumentalists. The *finale Im Marsch – Tempo* is played with striking precision in the rapidly fleeting moments of this movement.

Written in the year 1851, which also brought that autumn his rescored Symphony in D (published as No.4), are two violin sonatas, the A minor Op.105 and the D minor Op.121, the overtures to Schiller's *Braut von Messina* Op.100, Shakespeare's Julius Caesar Op.128 and Goethe's *Hermann and Dorothea*, two secular cantatas, *Der Rose Pilgerfahrt* Op.112 and *Der Königssohn* Op. 116, and the **Piano Trio No.3 in G minor Op.110**.

In the stormy opening, *bewegt, doch nicht zu rasch*, of the **Piano Trio No.3** the Swiss Piano Trio provide great variety where, despite a new theme occurring part way through, the music has the same basic rhythm. There is such passionate playing that brings out Schumann's emotional intentions, something that is often lost in this music. In the restrained slow movement *ziemlich langsam*, this trio draws so much from the music, particularly in the stormy central section where there is some terrific playing, full of fire. The third movement *rasch* is a scherzo, with a beautiful middle section, that is full of vigour and changing rhythms brilliantly played by the Swiss Piano Trio. The final movement, *kraftig, mit humor*, pulls together the preceding movements. There is some lovely playing from Martin Lucas and string playing of superb precision and character from Angela Golubeva and Sébastien Singer. This is a fiendishly difficult movement that finds the Swiss Piano Trio in superb form, pulling together all the changes that occur.

With a first rate recording and excellent notes, this new release is highly recommended.

The Swiss Piano Trio have already recorded Schumann's Piano Trio No.1 in D minor Op.63 and Piano Trio No.2 in F major Op.80.

I haven't yet heard the earlier Schumann disc but on the evidence of this new release they are performances that should not be missed.