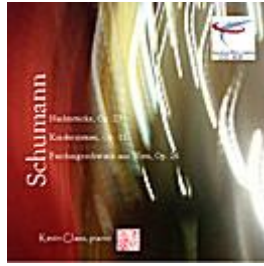


Mp3 Kevin Class - Schumann



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Engaging and poetic readings of three masterworks by Robert Schumann. 22 MP3 Songs in this album (61:07) ! Related styles: CLASSICAL: Piano solo, CLASSICAL: Romantic Era Details: Well, here it is! A handful of very devoted people have been waiting for this recording to be issued in some manner, but I'm not sure this is ever what they quite envisioned. The now infamous "Schumann Album" has been sitting on the shelf and only circulating in bits and pieces for the past 7 years as I have constantly thought and rethought what, if anything, should be done with it. I recorded these pieces during two days of recording at the newly renovated Helen Hosmer Hall at the Crane School of Music (SUNY-Potsdam) in December 2000, just a few weeks before taking up the baton as Resident Conductor of the Opera Program at the University of Illinois. In October of 2000 I had played what I personally referred to as my 'farewell tour' (that's right, it is my flare for the dramatic that actually makes me quite effective conducting opera! And..of course, it wasn't much of a farewell tour since no one noticed I was gone! HA!!), in a series of concerts that included Schumann's *Nachtstucke* and the first volume of Liszt's *Annees de Pelerinage*. In early December, I recorded the *Nachtstucke*, along with *Faschingsschwank aus Wien* and *Kinderszenen*, with the intention of marking my 'departure' from solo playing with some recordings of works that had some meaning, or at least history, to me. Since my young childhood, I have always been attracted to literature that was, perhaps, not the most standard or widely embraced. I was a teenager when I first discovered *Nachtstucke* myself, and I've always thought the work, if handled appropriately, can be quite effective. It requires a certain knowledge of style of Schumann, and a bravery to realize that tempo-unity is pedantic and amateurish and simply does not work in many of his compositions. *Nachtstucke* is senseless if one has not figured this out. But, more important, there was a poetic imagery that I connected with in the writings of Schumann about this work in particular. *Faschingsschwank* is far from obscure, of course, but

it is hardly on the 'hits list' that includes Carneval and Kreisleriana. I think Perahia's "Aldeburgh" recording helped to bring this work into a lot of student's repertoire in the '90s. I simply found it to be a powerful contrast to the Nachtstucke, and a work that provides an enticing foil to the aims of Nacht and Kinderszenen. Kinderszenen simply is what it is: a poignant reflection on childhood from the perspective of an old poet. What could that mean to me? When you're a kid who has confronted mortality on an extensive and even brutal level...well, you grow up quickly with at least some sort of perspective. That's all the story I need to tell, Kinderszenen simply gave me a vehicle. I was fairly pleased with the performance (although, as is always the case, I wouldn't have minded another take or two in a couple passages). I knew I was in trouble when I arrived for the first editing session and sat for more than half an hour while the 'engineer' struggled with, what I knew from experience to be, a very simple and basic edit. Come to realize that he and his 'company' had completely misrepresented their capabilities. I simply asked for the rough takes with the intention of taking them elsewhere for final assembly and post-production. What I found was a complete mess of material: digital glitches, inconsistent balance from take to take, fader throttle during takes (got to love that near fade-out, during what was actually a crescendo, at the end of the third movement of Nachtstucke!), ends of takes clipped off too early, etc. etc.. Once I did run the takes past a professional recording engineer, he just turned to me and said "Sue them!" Ah, not the words I wanted to hear since my 'abandonment' of concert giving was largely precipitated by several years of aggravating lawsuits with record companies. I was just too tired to care at that point. So, for the sake of having something to give my mother for Christmas that year, we managed to at least edit the thing together into a coherent package, even if the sound quality was a mess and it was pieced together only from a portion of the material that was salvageable from incompetent engineering. This Frankenstein-like assemblage is what became "the Schumann album." ("It's alive, ALIVE!!!) The question has repeatedly been posed: "Why not just re-record the album?" I suppose it has never been ruled out. But when I left Postdam that December, I also left a consistent and thorough contact with the piano. In January 2001 I began life anew as a conductor, immersed in opera and contending with a whole new package of opportunities and frustrations. Now, I NEVER abandoned the piano, nor had any intention of it, but for the past several years I have not had opportunities to maintain a consistent enough contact with the piano, or to work pianistically under conditions that would allow me to prepare to record up to my standard. So, the very idea of re-recording this album has never been

anything but a thorn in my side. Again, I'm not going to say 'never', but at this point it just feels easier to put this engineering nightmare of a record out here and let it be what it is. I would like to think there is something enjoyable in it as I believe the works themselves transcend the recording complications. That's my hope anyway!

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