



Robert Schumann: Fantasie C-Dur, Waldszenen, 3 Fantasiestücke

aud 92.563

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[Fanfare](#) (Steven E. Ritter - 01.01.1970)

Want List for Steven E. Ritter

I keep hearing all the hoopla about the troubles the classical recording industry is in, but for the life of me, with 1,500 new releases coming out every year, and so many smaller companies picking up where the majors have sadly (and irresponsibly) left off, I wonder if we all just need to readjust our thinking a little. This year was particularly troubling for me in that so many excellent releases made it even more difficult to choose just five, and especially with so many superb Super Audio discs offered. I must make note of three very honorable mentions that just got nudged out: Rachel Barton Pine's exquisitely rendered "American Virtuosa," a Maud Powell tribute; Vladimir Godár's refreshing and heartfelt Mater; and Charles Bruffy's excellent mixed choir (Kansas City and Phoenix) SACD recording "Eternal Rest." Sorry folks, no cigar, but no shame either, as your discs have been wearing my player out.

But pride of place has to go to one of the finest song cycles of the past two centuries, and a wonderful tribute to a great artist, Peter Lieberman's Neruda Songs. This gorgeous music affected me deeply, and I can think of no finer memorial to the composer's wife Lorraine Hunt Lieberman, who sings with unaffected delicacy and a profoundly hopeful spirit.

The discovery of "lost tapes" in Sony's vaults led to the idea of a recreation of Stravinsky's Soldier's Tale, the composer conducting his original 1961 Suite along with the resurfaced 1967 instrumental interludes, freshly overdubbed with Jeremy Iron's best-ever narration newly translated into English by Jeremy Sams. This is a spectacular recording, surely definitive, even if DG ever decides to reissue the Boston Chamber Players/Sir John Gielgud recording. Robert Craft's reading of the Symphonies only adds to the desirability of this disc.

Jac van Steen and his Winterthur Orchestra, long accustomed to music of the Second Viennese School, have gone out and recorded the most beautiful disc of music by the three biggies ever. This is the disc to buy if you, or a friend, don't like these fellows. The Berg songs alone are worth the price of the disc, with the sumptuous sound of three composers who know how to orchestrate beaming through your SACD setup with unparalleled clarity and sweetness. And you have the added pleasure of noting that if this release doesn't convert you to their music, nothing ever will.

We seem to be in the middle of a Schumann fest as of late, and that is a good thing

to me. The folks at Audite have openly stated that they don't release recordings unless they feel the artist has something new to say, and Nicolas Bringuier certainly does. This is some of the most ingratiating Schumann on the market, and the SACD sound is truly spectacular, vibrant, warm, and a balm to the ears. Even if this duplicates repertoire in your collection, you will want to sample this, and Super Audio nuts like me will feel compelled to purchase it.

To wind up, this last record took me completely by surprise. Having long known of the work of Ricardo Morales of the Philadelphia Orchestra, I had no idea he came from such a richly talented family. Brother Jesús has laid down tracks of the Saint-Saëns and Lalo cello concertos that are intelligent, passionate, technically adept, and thrillingly adventurous. Brother Jaime conducts the Bulgarians who are somehow thinking they are the Berlin Philharmonic, and play accordingly. Centaur captures it all in excellent sound, and the result is a disc of music that I thought had probably run its course. Not so. This one's a winner all around.

