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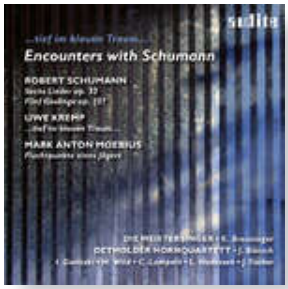


## Encounters with Schumann - ...tief im blauen Traum...

**aud 97.532**

**EAN: 4022143975324**

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Fanfare (Lynn René Bayley - 01.05.2008)

Back in the days when Michael Gielen was music director of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra (how I enjoyed him, and how I miss him!), he gave a concert that frustrated and infuriated the locals weaned on tonal Romantic music but which interested and thrilled me. He alternated short orchestral pieces by Schubert with short orchestral pieces by Webern to illustrate the musical expression of the first and second Viennese schools of music.

This CD simulates that kind of concert, interspersing some nice but not always inspired male choral pieces by Schumann with vocal and instrumental music based on those themes, harmonies or rhythms by Uwe Kremp and Mark Anton Moebius. I cannot praise Kremp or Moebius highly enough for their imagination or inventiveness. In the manner of Stravinsky, or sometimes Britten and sometimes Segerstam, they either develop new melodies in the tonal style or develop new rhythmic and/or harmonic fantasies on Schumann's songs. Nor does it hurt that the chorus, Die Meistersinger, is not only first-rate in blend and precision but wholly enters the spirit of this enticing sort of fantasy. Hubert Wild, who at first sings a baritone solo, shocks the ear with a stunningly female-sounding countertenor on track 20. Very high marks for the Detmolder Horn Quartet as well.

My lone reservation about the performance is that it sounds just a tad too well rehearsed and not quite spontaneous; but this is a minor quibble, believe me. All the performers work hand-in-glove to produce not only a texturally satisfying performance but also a beautiful flow as the music weaves between Schumann and Kremp in the first half, Schumann and Möbius in the second. Kremp's music is more percussive in rhythm, Möbius's more vocal in concept and more harmonically daring, but it is a close call, and both have written highly effective pieces.

I would love to give a detailed analysis of their scores, but in the interest of space—and in the interest of wanting to leave the disc a bit of a surprise for the first-time (or third-time) listener—I shall reserve my praise to one piece each. The first variation by Kremp deconstructs the first Schumann chorus in a way that strongly reminded me of Stravinsky's work in Pulcinella and especially Le baiser de la fee, while Möbius's most stunning piece was undoubtedly his third variation on the second Schumann work, in which I almost expected the harmonies to drop through a trapdoor into a Mahler or Schoenberg-like soundscape.

Did I say how much I enjoyed this CD? Then I'll say it again. Even if you are not particularly a fan of either Schumann or male choral music (I happen to enjoy the former but am not really addicted to the latter), this CD is a must for any music-lover who considers him or herself open to new sounds and new ways of looking at older works through the mirror of a modern composer's mind.



»audite« Ludger Böckenhoff • Tel.: +49 (0)5231-870320 • Fax: +49 (0)5231-870321 • info@audite.de • www.audite.de

Well done, all! Now, can we bring Michael Gielen back to Cincinnati?



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