



Robert Schumann: Complete Symphonic Works

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Gramophone (David Threasher - 2016.08.01)

GRAMOPHONE

With this sixth and final volume in his series of the 'Complete Symphonic Works', Heinz Holliger mops up the remaining segment of Schumann's orchestral output. That's all six of his overtures: operatic (*Genoveva*), quasi-operatic (*Faust Scenes*), Shakespearean (*Julius Caesar*), Byronesque (*Manfred*) and German Romantic (Schiller's *The Bride of Messina* and a delightfully loopy response to Goethe's *Hermann and Dorothea*, complete with a plethora of piped renditions of the *Marseillaise*). To fill up the disc there's Schumann's first attempt at a symphony, the two movements of a work in G minor that's now most commonly known as the 'Zwickau' Symphony.

That makes Holliger's the most complete cycle of the orchestral works to have arrived in ages. Dausgaard's three single discs (BIS) took in all the symphonic works (including both versions of the Fourth Symphony) along with the six overtures, while Gardiner's triple-set, on period instruments, dispensed with the overtures but included the wonderful *Konzertstück* for four horns and orchestra. If and when Holliger's six full-price discs come out in a budget-price box, that'll make this easily one of the most attractive collections of this music.

For those less bothered about such notions of completeness, other attractions include Holliger's clear-sighted interpretations, revealed in sound that is focused without being over-analytical. Perhaps the youthful 'Zwickau' piece and the much later concert overtures can't boast the winning melodies that make the greatest of Schumann's works stand out but they display all the composer's motivic skills and his development of the Beethovenian model in his own Romantic language, and offer valuable alternative lights on his orchestral career.