



## R. Schumann: Complete Works for Pedal Piano/Organ

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From the very early days of Audite, back when it was a local German label with a small insider following and already a reputation for fine sound, comes this now re-released album of Robert Schumann rarities: His (complete) work for Pedal Piano performed on the Walcker organ (from around Schumann's time, 1846) by Andreas Rothkopf and recorded in 1988.

The idea of performing works written for pedal piano on an organ is, of course, that the whole point of the pedal piano – a contraption of pedals and strings attached to an upright or grand piano, like the pedal harpsichord before it – was to enable the performer to practice organ playing without having to sit on an organ in the first place. Gounod and Alkan, organist-composers, also composed specifically for the instrument, but the argument for performing the music on an organ is an obvious one.

Debussy was so impressed with Schumann's Studies for Pedal Piano: Six Pieces in Canonic Form op.56 that he transcribed it for two pianos, making it far more practical to play after the pedal piano fell hopelessly out of fashion towards the end of the 20th century. Christoph Eschenbach and Tzimon Barto Smith perform them as a brilliant filler on their terrific Schumann album reviewed here. (Scroll below the interview with Helmchen to get there.) It goes to show that there is perhaps an extra quality in hearing these works on a piano (pedals or not), after all.

Still, Marie-Claire Alain-student Andreas Rothkopf makes a very fine case for the organ version. The playing is not just impeccable, as one can expect from a German professor of Organ – it is playful, flexible, jocular even, where the music permits. And that cannot necessarily be expected from a German professor of Organ. The instrument is used in all its colors, the Sketches for Pedal Piano op.58 to the above mentioned Studies to Schumann's only piece originally intended for the organ: Six Fugues on B A C H for Organ or Piano Pedal, op.60. If the Schumann years inspires you to explore the outer fringes of Schumann (not all of which I feel particularly excited about), this might prove to be one of the most enjoyable fringes you'll come across.