



R. Schumann: Fantasie op. 17,
Kreisleriana op. 16 & Arabeske op. 18

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Audiophile Audition (Gary Lemco - 2010.07.14)

Japanese pianist Hideyo Harada is a pupil of Hans Kann and Viktor Merzhanov, and she enters this fine disc as part of the ongoing Schumann bi-centennial celebration of his birth. Recorded 16-18 June 2008 at the Jesus-Christus-Kirche, Berlin-Dahlem, Ms. Harada plays a resonant Steinway D, which enjoys a solid middle and lovely upper registers. Harada approaches the great 1836 C Major Fantasie as a pastiche in moods and colors, albeit derived from certain references to Beethoven's Op. 98 song-cycle, "An die ferne Geliebte," which Schumann employs anagrammatically to refer to his own beloved Clara Schumann. The music's first movement, fluctuating between huge arpeggiated sequences and hymnal chord progressions, breaks off into a literary mode he calls a "legend," that becomes fragmented, even uttering Perpetuum mobile elements and figures from his own Papillons. Several motifs seem derived from Beethoven's famous "Moonlight" Sonata, which return in the last movement.

Harada has her hands full, certainly, to balance the eclectic and mercurial pastiche this music can become, and she seems intent to project as much of an arch-form as possible, always sensitive to her tone and color palette. Schumann himself held the second movement dearest to his own heart, a kind of triumphal march in the spirit of Beethoven that offsets the feverish melancholy of the first movement. The syncopations and agogics can fluster some pianists, but Harada relishes the both the tempests and the poetic oases the movement proffers, saving the bravura for the last pages, which quite demand it. What Harada projects in the last movement, a grand adagio, is a luminous serenity, an emotional resolution not necessarily heroic but radiant in its aesthetic pose.

The 1838 suite Kreisleriana marks a willful departure into the virtuoso repertory, an attempt to convert E.T.A. Hoffmann's mythical, Faust-like Johannes Kreisler into a pattern of alter-egos in music similar to Schumann's own dichotomy of Florestan and Eusebius. The eight-movement suite gravitates between D Minor and G Minor, with frequent excursions into B-flat Major. The exception comes in the seventh episode, marked *Sehr rasch* and cast in C Minor and E-flat Major, the outer sections much in the spirit of Beethoven. Passionate, dreamy, impulsive, occasionally splenetic, the pieces move through storms and stresses to find cantabile moments of devout serenity. Songlike simplicity alternates with "learned" procedures, especially fugal writing in the manner of Schumann's revered J.S. Bach, again in piece No. 7. The G Minor finale, "Fast and Playful," contains tripping seeds for Schumann's Spring Symphony finale. Again, Harada exploits her capacity to make tone, as in the third movement, *Sehr aufgereggt* (quite agitated), a G Minor nocturne in the elastic spirit of Chopin but marked by Schumann's own melancholy idiom. (Movement six offers another Nocturne in B-flat Major, but its style of upward scales seems archaic and emotionally intricate, yet close to the Chopin Op. 37.) The galloping figure that

occupies the outer sections projects a teasing yet frenzied passion, a series of broken chords that threaten to sweep us away. Innigkeit – Schumann's call for inwardness – manifests itself in sections three and four, the harmonies gravitating to places well beyond classical constraints. The arabesques of number five, Scherzando in G Minor, project a mercurial, manic side of Schumann's personality, exploding into cascades of sound Debussy would find attractive. Harada's sensitivity to Schumann's ritardandi and agogic accents – he employs twelve hemiolas or metric shifts in No. 5 – makes her performance a keeper, especially given the lucidity of her piano tone, courtesy of engineer Ludger Boeckenhoff, and the SACD's clarity.

The famous 1838 Arabeske in C drips with nostalgia, set as an ostinato and melody in continuous dialogue in five sections and an epilogue. Harada plays the piece as a song without words, mercurial, evasive, occasionally melancholy and reflective, as the Minore sections converse and interact, confident in their poetic and physical reconciliation, as Schumann must have dreamt his longing for his beloved Clara Wieck.