



R. Schumann: Complete Works for Pedal Piano/Organ

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Schumann is perhaps pushing the boundaries of EMR's normal remit, but his 200th anniversary gives a chance for a peek into the world of romantic organ music. Both these CDs are recorded on appropriate historic instruments, dating from 1846, a year after Schumann's works for pedal piano were written, and 1859. Although a lover of Bach from his youth, a period of intense crisis in his life in 1844/5 focused Schumann's attention again on the works of the Master, resulting in three major collections of pieces. Although the pedal piano had long since replaced the pedal clavichord as a practice instrument for organists in, for example, Leipzig Conservatory, it wasn't until Schumann took delivery of a pedal attachment in April 1845 that any composer took the instrument seriously. The 'Six Fugues on the name of Bach' were written for organ as well as the pedal piano, and are far more suitable for the organ than the other pedal piano works. Along with Mendelssohn's Organ Sonatas, they are one of the foundation of the Romantic organ movement. Although the Studies and Sketches are closer to the piano idiom, they work well on the organ. With two recordings to make a direct comparison with, I come down in favour of the Rothkopf recording on a number of counts, including the quality of the organ, the clarity and attractiveness of the performance, and the inclusion the Studies and Sketches alongside the BACH pieces. The 1859 organ in Buxtehude gives a noticeably boomy and indistinct sound, at least in this recording.