



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

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Audite's super audio CD release Schumann: Fantasia; Kreisleriana; Arabeske made its bow as the classical music world observed the 200th anniversary of Robert Schumann's birth amidst a veritable flood of Schumann solo piano recordings in the market. This, of course, adds to the already established surfeit of acknowledged classics by long ago keyboard masters such as Artur Rubinstein and Vladimir Horowitz and newer, less idiosyncratic – and highly recommendable – offerings by Murray Perahia, Alfred Brendel, Mikhail Pletnev, Evgeny Kissin, and so on. Japanese pianist Hideyo Harada concentrates her concert career mainly in Germany and her native Japan; however, her previous Audite recording of Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov has gained high marks among critics in the English-speaking world, so perhaps her entry in the Schumann sweepstakes stands a chance.

Whether Harada hits the jackpot or not in such a crowded field, this recording of Schumann's Fantasie in C, Op. 17, and Kreisleriana, Op. 16, is not one to miss. The sound is quite good; there's some noticeable compression to the recording, but not so much that it's distracting, and the piano's sound tends toward the dark hues, though it does not fail to provide a sense of warmth. One of the aspects that made Rubinstein's old RCA Victor recordings of these works so enduring was the closeness of the recording itself; it was so right up on Rubinstein that you could almost hear the sound of a depressed key hitting the felt below, and the feeling of immediacy and intimacy that resulted was palpable. Here, Harada manages to convey much the same impression, but with the piano sound being placed not quite so close; bass sonorities ring out, and higher passagework sparkles with a certain kind of special, gracious lilt. This is especially apparent in the Kreisleriana, which is given a great, carefully modulated and memorable performance here; reflective passages are given a patient, hushed reading, whereas stormier ones are dazzlingly virtuosic, though Harada never loses control. Harada also manages to worm in the Arabeske, Op. 18, in addition to the usual pairing of the Fantasie in C and Kreisleriana, usually enough to fill a disc on their own. Overall, Audite's Schumann: Fantasia; Kreisleriana; Arabeske is an excellent choice for these standard works whether one is coming to them for the first time or has sipped at this particular fount for many a season.