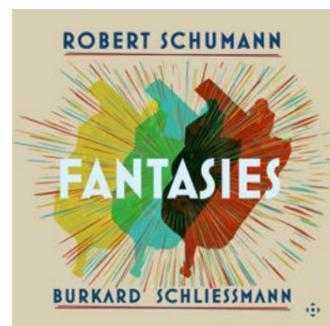


The art of listening: Burkard Schliessmann on Schumann, sound and the return to vinyl



With the release of Schumann Fantasies as a special edition vinyl set, pianist **Burkard Schliessmann** reflects on the enduring allure of analogue sound, the psychological richness of Schumann's music, and the delicate balance between structure and poetry that defines his interpretative world.

Q: This album has already been released on SACD and in immersive digital formats. What made this the right moment to return to Schumann Fantasies as a special-edition vinyl release?

A: Vinyl represents something fundamentally different. It is not simply a sound carrier, but a physical, sensory experience – music you can quite literally touch. In an age dominated by images, streaming and compressed audio, the LP stands for sensuality, presence and authenticity.

Listening to vinyl is a ritual. The act of placing the stylus, of engaging with the object itself, changes the relationship between listener and music. One does not merely hear the performance – one experiences it. The sound breathes in a different way: warm, organic, alive. Rather than striving for sterile perfection, vinyl invites a living dialogue between nuance, colour and space.

For me, this edition is about restoring that sense of encounter. Music becomes something to cherish rather than simply consume.

Q: Were there aspects of Schumann's soundworld you felt vinyl could reveal differently?

A: Very much so. This edition is not merely a reissue, but a reimagining. The analogue format introduces a particular intimacy – a sense of closeness that feels especially suited to Schumann.

In these works, I am always searching for what I would call the "inner voices" of the music. Vinyl intensifies this perception. Certain colours, transitions and emotional subtleties seem to emerge with greater naturalness. Digital formats offer extraordinary clarity, of course, but analogue playback often reveals a different kind of depth – one that feels more tactile, more human.

Burkard Schliessmann with Daniel Brech (left) and Julian Schwenkner (right)



Schumann's music lives through nuance, and vinyl offers a uniquely sympathetic environment for that.

Q: You've spoken elsewhere about Schumann's emotional extremes and inner contradictions. What continues to draw you back to him at this stage of your life?

A: Schumann is deeply personal for me. He is a composer of extraordinary imagination, but also of profound psychological complexity.

What fascinates me is his constant tension between structure and freedom, clarity and turbulence, lyricism and fragmentation. His music is never static; it is alive with shifting emotional states. This demands a particular kind of honesty from the performer.

Over time, one's relationship with Schumann inevitably evolves. With experience, one becomes more sensitive to the fragility, the poetry, and the daring modernity of his musical language. He remains endlessly contemporary.

Q: Has your interpretative approach to Schumann changed as your career has developed?

A: Absolutely. My musical thinking is rooted very strongly in Bach. Each day, I begin with several hours practising Bach – this has been my discipline for many years.

Bach teaches one how to listen internally. The independence of voices, the architecture of structure, the inevitability of musical logic – these principles shape everything. Schumann himself was profoundly influenced by Bach, and this connection is essential to my understanding of his works.

In Schumann, I try to reconcile two worlds: the polyphonic clarity inherited from Bach, and the deeply romantic expressiveness that defines Schumann's voice. The balance between these elements is extraordinarily delicate. It is both an intellectual and emotional challenge.

Q: This album was recorded at Teldex Studios using two differently voiced Steinway keyboards. How did this shape the recording?

A: The instrument itself was central to the artistic concept. I was fortunate to work with an outstanding Steinway provided by Daniel Brech. We used two keyboards with distinct voicing and intonation characteristics.

One keyboard offered a brighter, more brilliant sound; the other a darker, warmer tonal palette. This allowed us to explore different colouristic dimensions within the repertoire. Certain works naturally gravitated towards one soundworld or the other.

Together with producer Julian Schwenkner and engineer Jupp Wegner, we approached the recording process with great precision. The 14-microphone setup – originally designed for the Dolby Atmos version – enabled us to capture extraordinary detail while preserving a sense of natural space.

Recording at Teldex was an intensely immersive experience. I felt almost in a trance-like state, merging the acoustics, the instrument and Schumann's expressive universe.

Q: After revisiting Schumann Fantasies in this special physical form, what lies ahead for you?

A: I am very pleased to begin a new chapter with the boutique label Evil Penguin in Belgium, with whom I have signed an exclusive contract for future projects. Following an inspiring meeting in Mechelen with CEOs Hans Bellens, Steven Maes and Helena Gaudeus, we established a shared artistic vision that felt immediately compelling.

My debut recording for the label will be devoted to Chopin – a composer who has always occupied a central place in my artistic life, and whom I consider both the climax and the greatest interpretative challenge for a pianist. The programme will include the Preludes Op. 28, the Prelude Op. 45, the Barcarolle Op. 60 and the Polonaise-Fantaisie Op. 61.

The recording will take place at the Muziekgebouw Frits Philips in Eindhoven, the Netherlands, in September 2026, and I very much look forward to this next stage of collaboration.

View the preview on YouTube [here](#)

To discover more about Burkard Schliessmann, visit schliessmann.com

