
An Interview with Burkard Schliessmann

BY JAMES HARRINGTON

Greetings, Burkard. This is your ninth Fanfare interview by my count. Maybe you should be considered a regular contributor at this point. It's always a pleasure to put together a few questions for you. The newest item in your discography is a three-LP set. For many of us, the huge space that a vinyl LP library took up has been replaced by CDs and even electronic collections on our computers and cell phones. Your new release is a very attractive item and brings back memories of working in a record store for several years.

I'm deeply touched. I just reflected: yes, it has been nine interviews for *Fanfare*! What a journey it has been! I was featured in: issue 27:4, March/April 2004, with "A Philosophy, Not a Profession: The Art of Burkard Schliessmann" by Peter J. Rabinowitz; issue 31:3, Jan-

uary/February 2008, "Burkard Schliessmann Articulates His Approach to Bach" by James Reel; issue 33:5, May/June 2010, "'Cannons Camouflaged by Flowers': Burkard Schliessmann Talks about Chopin," by Peter J. Rabinowitz; issue 38:4, March/April 2015, "Talking Bach with Pianist Burkard Schliessmann" by Jerry Dubins; 39:4, March/April 2016: "Chopin by the Numbers? A Perspective by Burkard Schliessmann" by Jerry Dubins; issue 45:3, January/February 2022, "Heart, Ecstasy, Intellect" by Robert Schulslaper; issue 46:2, November/December 2022, "Burkard Schliessmann and His Affective Affinities" by Gary Lemco; issue 47:4, March/April 2024, "LIVE & ENCORES" by James Harrington; and issue 47:6, July/August 2024, "Mystical Fusion and Ecstasy: A Conversation with Burkard Schliessmann" by Robert Schulslaper.

And now, with you, this is my 10th interview—an anniversary. All these interviews revealed an incredible range of art and music, akin to a revelation. These interviews could be compiled in a book of their own! This means that our interview today should be given a special place and significance....

The release of a triple, heavyweight gold vinyl LP set is quite unusual these days, making your Schumann Fantasies a real collector's item. I am curious about the decision to produce this release and I am sure you are pleased with it. Was it mostly your idea or Divine Art's?

So, this was the common idea of Divine Art and me. By this I could start in answering your question: in an era where digital clarity reigns supreme, I dare to take a step back—and forward—into the tactile, analog world of vinyl. The critically acclaimed Schumann Fantasies, originally released in 2024 as a triple SACD and Dolby Atmos digital edition, now returns in 2025 in a format that's as much about presence as it is about sound: a deluxe triple LP pressed on heavyweight gold vinyl. This was the way we worked.

The vinyl edition of my Schumann Fantasies isn't just a format shift—it's a meticulous transference of sonic philosophy. Moving from SACD and Dolby Atmos to triple heavyweight gold vinyl required more than technical adaptation; it demanded a rethinking of how Schumann's emotional landscapes could be etched into analog grooves.

And yes, it was a complex, collaborative process. The transformation began with the original high-resolution masters, recorded at Berlin's Teldex Studios using a 14-microphone setup. These files—already engineered for spatial clarity and dynamic range—had to be remastered specifically for vinyl, a medium that responds differently to frequency, phase, and stereo imaging.

Vinyl-Specific Mastering: The audio was re-EQ'd and dynamically adjusted to suit the physical limitations and strengths of vinyl playback. This ensured that my nuanced phrasing and tonal shading remained intact—even enhanced—on analog.

Lacquer Cutting: Using custom lathes and diamond styluses, the lacquer masters were cut with extreme care to preserve the full breadth of the piano's resonance.

Triple Disc Format: By spreading the program across three heavyweight LPs, groove spacing was optimized for fidelity, reducing inner groove distortion and allowing for wider dynamic expression.

Gold Vinyl Pressing: The choice of gold-colored vinyl wasn't just aesthetic—it symbolizes rarity and prestige. Each disc is pressed on 180g audiophile-grade compound, ensuring stability, durability, and minimal surface noise.

So, why does it matter? This wasn't a simple duplication—it was a reinterpretation. The vinyl edition brings a warmer, more present sound, with a physicality that digital formats can't replicate. It's a format that invites listeners to slow down, engage deeply, and rediscover Schumann's poetic world through my visionary lens.

I was one of many here at Fanfare who praised the original release of Fantasies on the superb original Divine Art release. Would you comment on the differences you hear between the LPs and SACDs?

In an age dominated by digital streams and compressed audio files, the vinyl LP stands as a monument to sensuality and authenticity. It is far more than a mere sound carrier—it is an experience, a ritual, a work of art. Anyone who has ever placed the stylus upon that black gold knows: music does not merely play here—it really breathes!

The sound of a vinyl record is warm, organic, and full of character. It eschews sterile perfection in favor of a living dia-

logue between groove and needle. Analog playback reveals nuances that digital formats often smooth over—one does not simply hear the music; one feels it.

Yet vinyl captivates not only acoustically. The format itself is a feast for the senses: the reassuring weight of a 180-gram pressing promises quality, the large-format cover invites admiration, and the act of playing a record becomes a meditative ceremony. Each disc is a physical artefact—often adorned with lovingly crafted booklets, limited editions, or colored vinyl that sets collectors' hearts racing.

Technically, vinyl offers much to admire: many LPs are cut directly from analog master tapes, some even via direct-to-disc methods—a true audiophile's delight. And those who have experienced recordings in Dolby Atmos or on SACD understand how deeply vinyl can immerse one in the sonic landscape.

Vinyl is both nostalgia and future. It bridges generations, tells stories, and grants music the stage it so richly deserves. For those who wish not merely to hear music but to experience it, the record is an indispensable treasure.

The original SACD release was a triumph of modern recording. Captured at Berlin's legendary Teldex Studios with a 14-microphone array, the album enveloped listeners in a multidimensional soundscape. My interpretations—introspective, expansive, and deeply poetic—were praised for their philosophical depth and technical finesse. The Atmos mix added spatial immersion, placing the listener inside the piano's resonance, as if Schumann's dreams were unfolding in real time.

But vinyl offers something different. Something elemental.

This new edition isn't a mere reissue—it's a reimagining. The analog format brings a warmth and intimacy that digital precision can't replicate. The piano's lower registers bloom with a fuller, more tactile resonance; the upper voices shimmer with a softness that feels almost whispered. There's a sense of immediacy, of presence, that makes the music feel not just performed, but lived.

For me personally, this isn't just about sound—it's about philosophy. "Music must breathe," as I often said and pointed out so many times. "It must speak to the soul, not just the ear." Vinyl, with its ritualistic charm—the lifting of

the tonearm, the gentle drop of the stylus, the slow spin of the platter—invites listeners into a slower, more reflective engagement with the music. It's a format that demands attention, and rewards it with emotional depth.

The packaging reflects this ethos. Housed in a gatefold sleeve with gold-foil embossing and archival artwork, the edition includes extensive liner notes, artist reflections, and high-resolution photography from the recording sessions. It's a collector's item, yes—but more importantly, it's a vessel for Schumann's spirit, channeled through my personalized artistry.

In a time when music is often reduced to background noise, Schumann Fantasies on vinyl is a bold statement: that great art deserves a great medium. And that sometimes, the most forward-thinking move is to return to where presence and poetry meet—in the groove of a record.

In the case of Schumann Fantasies, the vinyl format adds a new layer of intimacy. The analog medium softens digital edges, lending the piano a velvety warmth and a sense of immediacy that feels almost tactile. It's as if the listener is seated beside the instrument, breathing in the same air as the artist.

In conclusion: This edition is not merely a record—it's a curated artefact. Housed in a lavish gatefold sleeve with gold-foil embossing, archival photography, and extensive liner notes, it invites not just listening, but contemplation. It's the kind of release that belongs in a personal library, not just a record shelf—a testament to the enduring power of music as both sound and object.

Very recently, Decca Classics announced the launch of the Decca Pure Analogue vinyl series, pressed on 180g vinyl. It appears that classical LPs are headed toward a resurgence. Do you see these LPs mostly as specialty items or ones that will be more often available?

Not only Decca, also Deutsche Grammophon. DG comes back to release Pure Analogue Vinyls, e.g., this one of Mikhail Pletnev with Chopin and Scriabin Preludes.

I'm convinced: the warm crackle of vinyl records has staged a remarkable comeback. At the heart of this revival lies the 180-gram vinyl pressing, a format that has become synonymous with quality, durability, and audiophile prestige.

Unlike standard lightweight records of the past, 180-gram vinyl is heavier, sturdier, and less prone to warping. Collectors and music lovers often describe the experience of holding one as tactile proof of craftsmanship—a physical connection to the music that digital files can never replicate. The added weight doesn't necessarily change the sound itself, but it does enhance stability on the turntable, reducing vibrations and ensuring a smoother playback. For many, this translates into a listening experience that feels richer, more immersive, and closer to the original studio recording.

The renaissance of 180-gram vinyl is fueled by more than nostalgia. It represents a cultural shift toward slow listening—taking time to sit down, place the needle on the groove, and engage with an album as a complete work of art. In a world of shuffled playlists and algorithm-driven recommendations, vinyl encourages listeners to appreciate music in its intended sequence, with cover art, liner notes, and even the ritual of flipping sides adding to the experience.

Record labels have embraced this trend by reissuing classic albums on 180-gram vinyl, often remastered to highlight sonic details that were lost in earlier pressings. At the same time, contemporary artists are releasing new albums in this format, recognizing that fans crave not only the music but also the tangible artistry of a well-crafted record.

For collectors, 180-gram vinyl has become a symbol of authenticity. Owning these records is not just about sound—it's about preserving a piece of cultural heritage. Each pressing carries with it the weight of tradition, artistry, and a renewed appreciation for analog beauty in a digital age.

In short, the renaissance of 180-gram vinyl is more than a trend. It's a movement that celebrates music as a physical, emotional, and timeless experience—proof that even in the era of instant access, there's still magic in slowing down, dropping the needle, and letting the grooves tell their story.

Since Schumann has been quite prominent in your musical life, do you have any plans for more? I'm thinking about his piano sonatas and a few of the big collections that you haven't recorded yet, all of which I would love to hear you play.

Of course, on my slate are Davids-

bündlertänze, op. 6, *Carnaval*, op. 9, *Humoreske*, op. 20, and the *Noveletten*, op. 21. So, enough for future plans....

As far as other repertoire, I seem to remember that you mentioned Bach's Art of the Fugue played on organ. Has that or other Bach come into your performing or recording plans?

As often mentioned, I played and performed the Complete Organ Works of Bach at the age of 21, and this by memory. Still today I do love the organ. I had been inspired by Helmut Walcha since my earliest youth. For my 13th birthday, I wished for the *Art of Fugue* in the Interpretation of Helmut Walcha at the great organ of the Laurenskerk in Alkmaar, the Netherlands. So, I really grew up with Bach. And in my earliest youth I played Bach more than any other composer. For my understanding of Schumann and Chopin, Bach is essential. For me, interpreting Bach is not simply a matter of performance—it is a dialogue with timeless truth. Bach's music embodies the architecture of the cosmos, a perfect balance of intellect and emotion, structure and freedom. When I approach his works, I strive to reveal not only the mathematical precision of his counterpoint but also the profound humanity that lies beneath each phrase.

My interpretations are guided by a conviction that Bach's music is a living organism, breathing and evolving with every performance. I seek to illuminate its spiritual dimension, allowing listeners to experience the transcendence that Bach himself must have felt when composing. Each fugue, each chorale, each dance is a universe in miniature, and my role as an interpreter is to open that universe to the audience—inviting them to hear both the divine order and the deeply personal voice within.

Ultimately, my Bach is not about rigid historicism or mere technical display. It is about truth, clarity, and emotional resonance. I want listeners to feel the eternal pulse of life in his music, to recognize themselves in its beauty, and to leave with the sense that Bach's art speaks directly to the human soul, across centuries and cultures.

And both composers, Schumann and Chopin, held Bach in high esteem in their own unique way and were inspired by him throughout their lives.

Schumann saw Bach as the origin of all combinatorics in music, while for

Chopin, Bach represented greatness, order, and tranquility, but also a sense of security in the past. He himself mastered the laws of logic and construction in a masterful way and, in contrast to many of his contemporaries, gave his works a classical structure that went beyond the Romantic element.

As I mention in nearly all my interviews, I start my day with Bach. I play one of the Partitas, then the *Italian Concerto* and the *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue*.

I am constantly acquiring new colors and nuances and perfecting my technique. Only then do I devote myself to "my" Romantic repertoire.... And I demand the same of my students. I don't want to hear Rachmaninoff or Prokofiev, no, I want to hear Bach and Mozart.... That is the secret. I agree with Pablo Casals, who said: You have to play Mozart like Chopin, and Chopin like Mozart. Only then does the true aesthetic of these works become apparent....

Back to your question: Bach is inextricably linked to my future recording plans: The 7 Toccatas BWV 910-916 and the 6 Partitas BWV 825-830....

Will we get a chance to hear you play in person in the New York City area any time in the near future?

Yes. My agency is in discussion and we are trying to find some sponsors so this event can work out. As you know, I'm playing on special voiced Steinway or Fazioli Concert Grands and we need financial support. I would be grateful to find someone.

I see that your life outside of music includes being a professional scuba diver working with the PADI AWARE Foundation. Would you care to comment a little about ocean conservation with Project Aware?

Of course. I'm thrilled again, because this is my passion and responsibility!

The PADI AWARE Foundation is a global nonprofit dedicated to ocean conservation, mobilizing divers and communities worldwide to protect marine ecosystems.

The PADI AWARE Foundation is an environmental nonprofit organization that operates across the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Originally founded in 1989 as the Project AWARE Foundation, it was created by the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) to harness the

passion of divers for the protection of the ocean. Today, it stands as a powerful conservation partner to PADI, connecting local initiatives with global impact.

At its core, the Foundation's mission is to drive meaningful change for the ocean by empowering divers, dive professionals, and marine advocates to take action. Through programs such as marine debris removal, citizen science projects, and marine policy advocacy, the Foundation addresses urgent threats like plastic pollution, declining coral reefs, and overfishing. By engaging the world's largest network of divers, it ensures that conservation efforts are not only widespread but also deeply rooted in local communities.

One of the Foundation's most impactful initiatives is the Mission Hub Community Grant Program, launched in 2022. This program provides funding to grassroots organizations and dive centers working on critical marine issues. Since its inception, more than \$700,000 has been awarded to over 80 projects worldwide, supporting efforts ranging from coral reef restoration to community-led marine education campaigns. These grants highlight the Foundation's commitment to empowering "Ocean Torchbearers"—individuals and groups who champion the health of our seas.

The Foundation also runs the Conservation Action Portal, a digital platform that makes it easier for divers and ocean lovers to participate in conservation activities. Whether signing petitions against single-use plastics, reporting marine debris, or joining local clean-up dives, participants can see how their actions contribute to a larger global movement.

Beyond grassroots action, the PADI AWARE Foundation plays a vital role in shaping marine policy. By collaborating with governments, NGOs, and scientific institutions, it advocates for the establishment of marine protected areas and stronger environmental regulations. This dual approach—combining local engagement with global advocacy—ensures that conservation efforts are both practical and systemic.

The Foundation's vision is clear: a future where humanity and the ocean thrive in balance. It recognizes that divers are uniquely positioned as ambassadors for the underwater world, witnessing firsthand the beauty and fragility of marine ecosystems. By channeling

this passion into structured conservation programs, the PADI AWARE Foundation transforms recreational diving into a force for environmental change.

In essence, the PADI AWARE Foundation is more than a charity—it is a movement of ocean advocates united by the belief that every action, no matter how small, shapes the future of our blue planet. Through education, community empowerment, and global collaboration, it continues to inspire hope and drive tangible progress for the health of the ocean.

My journey into diving is not merely recreational—it is deeply tied to my philosophy of connecting human creativity with the natural world. As a PADI Master Instructor with more than 8,500 logged dives all over the world, I have trained and mentored divers, instilling both technical skills and a profound respect for marine ecosystems. My work aligns seamlessly with the Foundation's mission to empower "Ocean Torchbearers," individuals who take active roles in protecting the ocean. By guiding divers to become responsible stewards of the underwater environment, I contribute directly to the Foundation's global conservation goals.

Beyond instruction, my engagement with diving reflects my personal commitment to marine preservation. I have been involved in initiatives that echo the Foundation's priorities: reducing marine debris, supporting reef restoration, and promoting sustainable diving practices. My influence extends beyond the dive community, as my reputation in the world of classical music allows me to reach audiences who might not otherwise encounter ocean conservation narratives. In my way, I bridge cultural spheres, showing that the ocean's protection is a universal responsibility.

The synergy between my artistry and my diving expertise illustrates the interdisciplinary nature of conservation. Just as music requires precision, sensitivity, and imagination, so too does the act of safeguarding marine life. My dual identity as pianist and PADI Master Instructor underscores the Foundation's belief that ocean advocacy can—and should—be woven into every aspect of human endeavor.

In the broader context of the PADI AWARE Foundation's mission, I stand as a living example of how individuals can leverage their unique talents to amplify

conservation efforts. My work demonstrates that protecting the ocean is not confined to scientists or activists alone, but is a calling that resonates across professions, passions, and cultures.

In essence, my role as a PADI Master Instructor enriches the Foundation's vision of a world where humanity and the ocean thrive together—proving that both music and diving can inspire action for the blue planet.

↓ **SCHUMANN *Kreisleriana*, op. 16. *Drei Fantasiestücke*, op. 111. *Nachtstücke*, op. 23. *Fantasiestücke*, op. 12. *Fantasie in C*, op. 17. *Gesänge der Frühe*, op. 133 • Burkard Schliessmann (pn) • DIVINE ART 12404 (153:28) Reviewed from an MP3 download: 320 kbps**

Burkard Schliessmann's new album, *Robert Schumann Fantasies*, is a splendid look at the music and career of Schumann, one of the most compelling and frustrating composers who ever lived. I write "frustrating" because both his life and his music were lived on the thin edge of sanity. Schumann himself acknowledged his split personality when he signed both his music and his critical writings under two different aliases, the bold, Romantic "Florestan" and the dreamy, poetic "Eusebius." (One wonders if he got the name "Florestan" from the hero of Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*, a work Schumann admired.)

The best aspect of Schliessmann's new Schumann album—which Divine Art has issued first as three SACDs, then as a download, and now as three LPs—is how well he brings together the "Florestan" and "Eusebius" sides of Schumann's art and character. Other Schumann pianists are either "Florestanites" or "Eusebius"; Schliessmann is both. He can play boldly and loudly when Schumann is in his "Florestan" mode, and he can quiet down and phrase eloquently when Schumann is being "Eusebius."

For this release Schliessmann has chosen to play only those Schumann pieces which can be classified as "fantasies." That leaves out some of Schumann's most famous works for solo piano, including the *Abegg Variations*, *Papillons*, *Davidsbündlertanze*, *Carnaval*, *Études Symphoniques*, *Waldszenen*, and the formal sonatas. Schliessmann includes not only the pieces Schumann called "fantasies" but *Kreisleriana* (which I suspect he included because

Schumann wrote a letter to Clara Wieck—not yet Mrs. Schumann—in which he referred to it as a "fantasie" in a subheading), *Nachtstücke* (Night Pieces), and the haunting *Gesänge der Frühe* (Songs of Dawn).

Schliessmann seems to have included both *Kreisleriana* and the *Vier Nachtstücke* at least in part because they were inspired by the fantasy writings of E. T. A. Hoffmann. Hoffmann is best known in the classical music world as the inspiration for Offenbach's opera *The Tales of Hoffmann* (which dramatized three of his stories and made him an onstage character) and as author of the story source for Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Nutcracker*. But in addition to being a major writer, he was also a composer in his own right and some of his music is quite capable and well worth reviving.

To prepare this LP version Schliessmann has done some judicious editing and paring down of his original three CDs. Missing are Schumann's *Arabesque*, which the CD edition presented in two separate performances, and the encore of "Des Abends" from the op. 12 *Fantasiestücke*. One reason Schliessmann played alternate versions of these pieces on the original CD release is that he was shifting back and forth between two different keyboards attached to the same piano (a Steinway D) and luxuriating in the sound differences between the actions of both. Apparently the two keyboards activated two different sets of hammers, and only the body and the strings remained the same.

Both in his liner notes and in Robert Schulslaper's interview with him in 47:6, Schliessmann makes a big deal out of Schumann's *Fantasy in C*, a remarkable piece whose slow-fast-slow three-movement structure is quite unusual for the 1830s. Schliessmann refers to it both in connection with Bach's *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue* and Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. He claims that not only Schumann but Chopin used the famous opening "Tristan chord" before Wagner did, though the precedent that comes to my mind is the opening of the "Romeo Alone" movement from Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette*. (Ironically, Schumann himself once considered composing an opera on *Tristan und Isolde*, and he had Robert Reinick, librettist for Schumann's one completed opera *Genoveva*, write him an outline. But he abandoned

the project after *Genoveva* flopped.)

But I think the most interesting piece on this album is *Gesänge der Frühe*, which closes the program on both CD and LP. This was the last piece Schumann authorized for publication before he was put in a mental institution in early 1854, though he wrote one more solo piano work, the *Geistervariationen* (Ghost Variations), before his incarceration. It's a truly remarkable work that deserves to be better known; as Colin Clarke wrote in his review of the CD version of *Fantasies* in 47:6, the piece has been "criminally neglected." Clarke also wrote that Schliessmann's version had displaced Piotr Anderszewski's as his favorite.

"It is Schliessmann who captures the elusive and entirely individual world of late Schumann to perfection," Clarke wrote of *Gesänge der Frühe*. "If I have one wish for this set, it is that Schliessmann's performance will bring Schumann's op. 133 to a wider public." It's a forward-looking piece that evokes Schumann's "frenemy" Chopin (Schumann famously proclaimed "Hats off, gentlemen, a genius" when he heard Chopin's piano-and-orchestra fantasy on Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, but when he offered to dedicate *Kreisleriana* to Chopin, Chopin turned it down) and even looks ahead to early Debussy.

In their previous reviews of this album in CD or download format, Clarke, Jerry Dubins, and James Harrington all raved about it and particularly the quality of Schliessmann's pianism. Allow me to add my praise and strongly recommend that you buy this album in whatever format is most convenient for you. **Mark Gabrish Conlan**

SCHUMANN *Kreisleriana*, op. 16. *Drei Fantasiestücke*, op. 111. *Nachtstücke*, op. 23. *Fantasiestücke*, op. 12. *Fantasie in C*, op. 17. *Gesänge der Frühe*, op. 133 • Burkard Schliessmann (pn) • DIVINE ART 12404 (3 LPs: 153:28)

This set was previously reviewed by myself in *Fanfare* 47:6 in SACD format, and in that review, I go into some detail about Burkard Schliessmann's performances; this review functions as something of a recap in light of the release of this set on LP.

The set is now issued as a triple heavyweight gold audiophile LP set in a deluxe pressing, released on January 23,

2026. Given that the original release was on both SACD and Dolby Atmos, this adds an extra audiophile corner, given the resurgence of LP. The set was recorded in Berlin, at the Teldex Studios by producer Julian Schwenkner and engineer Jupp Wegner. A full 14 microphones were used to capture every nuance of Schliessmann's playing, while the LP pressing aims to deliver an "analogue warmth." The LP set boasts a very different cover, more colorful than the concert photograph drenched in mahogany that graces the SACD box.

There are nuances aplenty. Schliessmann's interpretations are intensely personal, and the more one listens, the more one finds. The trick is to jettison one's expectations; Schliessmann has clearly gone back to the score with a free and open mind, and so should we, the listeners.

The piano recording is superb, especially the definition of the bass. Sample the second of the op. 12 *Fantasiestücke*, where Schliessmann has given enough passion to rival Argerich (as compared to her live late 1970s Concertgebouw concert issued on EMI). "Warum?," the third of the set and the very epitome of Romantic dreaming, is heard in one of the finest accounts out there, and to hear it with such depth of sound is revelatory.

As this is something of a recapitulatory review, I will give the first disc short shrift except to mention that the *Kreisleriana* and the *Fantasie in C* demand not only on interpreter, but on the piano itself act as testament also to the talents of piano technician Daniel Brech. The depth of sound (without doubt underlined via the "triple heavyweight aspect of the LPs") seems particularly apt to the final disc (disc 3, or, given that the LPs label the sides A to F, sides E and F). This, to me, is the most significant part of the set. Night and dawn inform this segment, the op. 23 *Nachtstücke* fascinating in that shafts of light are themselves overshadowed by dark thoughts. And while the op. 111 pieces have huge importance (and, in this performance, importance is baked into the performance), I repeat my plea to listen to the op. 133 *Gesänge der Frühe*, pieces shot through with light. Use it, please (don't make me beg!), as a launching pad to explore as much late Schumann as you can: it is a rarefied, strange world, but an infinitely fascinating and deeply touching one. Schliessmann's depth of sound

and interpretation and his precise placement of chords are key to the success here: when all is intact technically, there is nothing to detract from the interpretation. Schliessmann realizes this, and excels. The unfolding of the second piece is mesmeric, as are its juxtapositions. Op. 133 is Schliessmann's highest achievement so far, and to hear it in such luxury audiophile terms is a privilege indeed. **Colin Clarke**
