

## FOR YOUR LISTENING PLEASURE

Schumann's *Mass in C minor*, Op. 147, certainly doesn't suffer from over-exposure in the catalog of currently available recordings. One of the strongest performances available is Wolfgang Sawallisch's live recording from 1987 with the Chor des Stadtischen Musikverein zu Düsseldorf and the Berlin Philharmoniker (EMI CDC7 49763-2). The romantic sweep of Schumann's writing is brought to the fore by Sawallisch: dynamics are wide ranging, rubato is free, and the color of the vocal production is rich and fruity. The soloists (Mitsuko Shirai, soprano; Peter Seiffert, tenor; Jan-Hendrik Rootering, bass) are strong both individually and as a team, and Shirai's reading of the Offertory (here with organ and solo *obbligato* 'cello), is eloquent, glowing, and appropriately intimate. In her performance it serves much the same function at the apex of the work's musical trajectory as *Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit* does in Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem*. The only complaint regarding this recording is that the soloists are rather closely-placed in the sound stage relative to all the other forces. On this CD, the *Mass* is coupled with Schumann's *Requiem*, another lovely and under-performed work.

Michel Corboz's 1988 release with the Choeur et Orchestre de la foundation Gulbenkian de Lisbonne (WEA Apex Classics ECD75542) is a strong contender recorded just after Sawallisch's recording. The studio recording seems to allow for a greater control over balances, especially that of soloists vs. everyone else. A slightly cleaner and leaner performance, Corboz doesn't have the weighty impact of Sawallisch, but textures are more etched and well-defined. The choral singing is clean in both tone and execution, with convincing drama in the *Credo*. The pairing with Schumann's *Requiem für Mignon* makes for an attractive package.

Peter Neumann's performance with the Kölner Kammerchor and organ accompaniment by Christoph Anselm Noll instead of orchestra (MDG Gold MDG3320598) has an appealing intimacy that allows textures to emerge without forcing or overstatement. The choral singing is top notch, as are the soloists. The pairing with rarely heard works by Brahms (*Missa Canonica Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei*, *Kyrie in G minor*, *Fugue for Organ in A-flat major*) makes this something of a novelty as well.