



MDG 947 1681-6

Site review by Polly Nomial March 12, 2011

Performance: ★★★★★ Sonics (MC): ★★★★★

An obvious pairing of two wonderful works of Schumann.

From all the Fantasia's I've heard to date (Auf Flügeln des Gesangs - Claudius Tanski, Schumann, Liszt - Pedro Burmester, Schumann: Piano Works - Nicolas Bringuier), this version is easily accorded the finest sound and technical mastery of the score. Jin Ju is not short of poetry either and this is easily the finest musical account of the quartet. Her reading is fresh with plenty of character but some will find the overall pace a little slow that occasionally is in danger of lacking momentum and undermining the musical dialogue and feels a little "safe" in conception; unsurprisingly the finale pages come off best in such an approach although there is less contrasted emotional drama preceding that diminishes the feeling of release that the tranquil ending can engender.

A similar story emerges for the sonata; compared to the classic account of Gilels (now a BBC Legends release that is worth every penny, even though it is fairly poor sound) there is a lack of momentum caused largely by Jin Ju concentrating too much on detail rather the longer line. The speeds are not slow though in any way (except when Schumann calls for it) - rather, it is more about the phrasing choices. A great shame really, for when the final coda reaches its climax the effect is not the tumult of piano arpeggiated chords that it can be when the details are placed inside a larger framework.

The sound is one of MDG's best representations of the piano and cannot be too highly praised for every detail of pedalling and tone is admirably purveyed.