

Institute of Music. Nominally an ingenious cycle of piano character pieces, each of which is in a more or less easily recognized form, they become magical and inscrutable when a performer considers how one relates to the next in the series—for example the tempo relationships between two successive pieces, or whether the next follows its predecessor immediately. Pompa-Baldi approaches this interpretive job with great imagination and creativity and so renders what often sounds like an unconnected series of little trifles into a powerful whole that creates a logic utterly different from, say, Beethoven's sonatas. Surely that's exactly what Schumann had in mind when he wrote a piece that included, among other things, portraits of Paganini and Chopin. Add to this Pompa-Baldi's lyrical tone and frequent projection of all kinds of inner voices in Schumann's complicated textures, and it's easy to see why my friends find so much depth in the music. There is also an authoritative performance of the Fantasy Pieces and the little-recorded four-hands piece *Pictures from the East*, which he performs with his wife.

Lori Sims, who teaches at Western Michigan University, is a fine pianist; she does a marvelous job with *Carnaval*, but there's something in her interpretive approach that's too literal: the form of the music emerges clearly but without Pompa-Baldi's sense of caprice and mystery. What's more, her tone seems a bit too brassy for the music. Her strong sense for musical architecture serves her very well in the Beethoven *Eroica* Variations, with its more classical discourse; and her considerable technique makes Rachmaninoff sound almost too easy. I recommend the release principally for the Beethoven.

HASKINS

**SCHUMANN:** *Carnaval; Abegg Variations; Papillons; Faschingsschwank aus Wien*

Maurizio Baglini, p

Decca 4765082—76 minutes

In 1985, Roland Barthes wrote that "Schumann's music goes much farther than the ear; it goes into the body, into the muscles by the beats of its rhythm, and somehow into the viscera." It is this Schumann that Baglini offers: visceral and immediate with nothing impoverished or incomplete about it. His formidable artistry conveys a full-bodied Schumann, head and shoulders above many of the Schumann recordings heard recently.

Baglini's incredible facility and fluid phrasing are well suited to the technical and expressive complexity of Schumann's pieces. The opening *Abegg Variations* sounds organic, with depth and unity. His *Papillons* shimmers gracefully, at some parts delicate and efferves-

cent, other times bold and declamatory. The *Faschingsschwank aus Wien* is brilliant. Unlike Uhlig's blander interpretation, his 'Intermezzo' maintains its emotionally charged lyricism even with the constant stream of arpeggios. The Finale, despite its furious speed, is controlled and articulate.

*Carnaval* is the high point of the recording, and it demonstrates Baglini's impressive command and sensitivity. His range of colors is astounding, and I found his subtleties of tone and nuance in the slow sections especially breathtaking. 'Eusebius' sounds introverted yet sweet, and 'Chopin' is a passionate but restless interpretation. Baglini also sets palpable contrasts, as in the impetuous 'Florestan' with its sudden motivic shifts and flights of fancy. In recreating Schumann's range of characters and scenes, his left hand is incredibly versatile, bringing out impetuous dance-like moods ('Coquette', 'ASCH—SCHA') and, as in *Abegg Variations*, voicing difficult counter-melodies with clarity. With the many quotations in 'Marches des Davidsbündler contre les Philistins' he brings *Carnaval* to a rousing close.

Baglini does justice to Schumann's poetic richness with this compelling recording. The acoustics are beautiful, with an impressive dynamic range. Informative program notes in Italian, German, English, and French elucidate the many literary and stylistic allusions in the works, along with Schumann's penchant for cryptograms. Listeners should seek out Baglini's past recordings, such as his Chopin Etudes (Sept/Oct 1999).

KANG

**SCHUMANN:** *Humoreske with Faschingsschwank aus Wien; Blumenstück; Vision, op 123/14; 3 Pieces; Arabeske*

Florian Uhlig, p

Hanssler 98650—72 minutes

*Humoreske with Paganini Caprices*

Mariya Kim, p

Naxos 572374—74 minutes

Volume 4 of Uhlig's effort to record all of Schumann's works for piano presents pieces composed during a brief half-year in Vienna. This project includes fragmentary and unpublished works as well as the canon.

Uhlig's Schumann is intelligent and controlled, and his interpretive strengths, supplemented by his smooth touch, lie towards grace and lyricism. He approaches the smaller pieces of the program with breathtaking attentiveness; his *Blumenstück* is exquisite, and his subtle shadings add much to a piece Schumann wrote as "written down for lack of better ideas". There are times when his approach tips