

HOLLIGER, H. / SCHUMANN, R.: Aschenmusik ECM New Series 2395

**HOLLIGER, H.: Romancendres / Feuerwerklein / Chaconne / Partita (D. Haefliger, Vonsattel)
GEN14330**

Heinz Holliger's attachment to the music of Robert Schumann is a facet of both these CDs. Because each sheds a very different light on the question, they can easily be considered as a pair.

ECM has already recorded Holliger's impressive Scardanelli Cycle. Here he is composer, performer and curator. The Three Romances, Op 94, are beautifully done, and Holliger's oboe features with Anita Leuzinger's cello and Anton Kernjak's piano in the Six Canonic Studies, Op 56. Schumann's love of canon is known through more famous pieces but these vignettes make for fascinating listening.

The choice of a version for cello of the First Violin Sonata evokes a Schumann work whose loss haunts Holliger. Robert requested from the asylum at Endenich that his Five Romances for cello and piano be published; believing them to be flawed, Clara ignored his plea, finally burning the manuscript shortly before her own death. Written for the same combination, Romancendres is Holliger's response to this act of well-meaning sabotage – though in no sense, be it said, an attempt at recreation: its ghostly melding of the two instruments' identities is very much Holliger's own. It's difficult to over-praise this project, whose elements combine as an alchemical spell to conjure up Schumann's phantom work, a tour de force of imaginative programming. More conventional in approach is the recital from Daniel Haefliger and Gilles Vonsattel, which presents Romancendres in the context of a monographic CD consisting mostly of solo works. In Romancendres there's not much to choose between this and the version for ECM, though the latter's finer-grained recording enhances the sense of alchemy referred to earlier. Written in 1999 (only a few years before), the half-hour Partita for piano is the most extended work on the disc, though the extent of its allusions (Bach, Liszt, Schumann) dilutes its overall effect; however, the concluding ciaccona monoritmica is broodingly effective and nicely paced. The 1975 Chaconne is a bravura piece of cello-writing, very much of its time but bracing, and brilliantly executed by the soloist. © 2014 Gramophone

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