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## The Atlantis Trio Plays the Schumanns



Clara Schumann: Piano Trio in g, Op. 17; Robert Schumann: Piano Trio No. 1 in d, Op. 63; The Atlantis Trio: Penelope Crawford, piano (Graf, Vienna, 1835), Jaap Schröder, violin (Gofriller, Venice, 1700), Enid Sutherland, cello (Anon., Tyrol, 18th century); [Musica Omnia MO 0207](#), © 2008, 62:47; \$11.99.

Clara Schumann gave her piano trio to Robert in 1846 on the occasion of their 6th wedding anniversary (13 September); 366 days later, the day after their 7th, Robert had this, his 1st of 3 trios played for Clara. In October of that year, both works were played together in chronological order, as they are on this recording, in an informal reading that gave Robert "great joy." The piano used in this recording was 11 and 12 years old on the 3 occasions, hence undoubtedly very similar to the one(s?) on which the works were composed and played. Conrad Graf offered the Schumanns his latest model as a wedding present in 1840. Clara had already acquired an 1839 6.5-octave Graf, which she gave to Johannes Brahms in 1856 after Robert's death.

It is uncanny how the 2 works seem to fit together, and they are incredibly pleasing and rewarding to listen to in this way. It is almost as if they were a single long 8-movement work, because, while both use similar rhythmical patterns and have similar time lengths for their corresponding movements, none of these are identical. They seem to progress and build in succession, with the final movement of Robert's serving as a dramatic culmination for the whole. Everyone knows how Robert and Clara gave to, took from, and were inspired by each other, and blossomed and flourished in their shared music composing and making. But it is rare to witness this mutual admiration, affection, and cross-pollination in such a strikingly audible manner: the sequencing and the fine performances in this recording demonstrate it so concretely, right down to evoking the context of their time because of the instruments used. I have rhapsodized elsewhere in these pages about the sonorities of this piano; no need to repeat here. Recorded sound is the standard MO superb. This CD consequently gives the listener great joy.

The booklet is also the customary classy MO production. A color reproduction of a work of art more or less contemporary to the music graces the front cover: in this case, Caspar David Friedrich's "On Board a Sailing Ship" from 1819, depicting a couple seated on the prow of a sailboat holding hands and looking towards a distant shore. Is this meant to suggest that the music and the performance of it will carry the listener along over waves of melody as if s/he were floating on the waters? Not an altogether inappropriate evocation. The essay that follows the work titles and track listings is by a credentialed musicologist, here the late John Daverio. Because it is one of the last things he wrote, it is followed by a tribute and the dedication of the product to him written by the founder of MO, Peter Watchorn, who was a student of Daverio. A note about the piano follows, with bios of each of the Trio's members and a note about the Trio itself following that. Production credits are on the inside of the back cover, which features a photo of the Atlantis Trio. Black and white reproductions of some details of the painting are interspersed and a reproduction of an 1847 portrait of the Schumanns is also included. One curious detail: the total time is listed as 62:47, but my player displayed 62:38.

There seems not to be any other recording currently available that offers these 2 works together on the same disk, and only an expensive box set offers both in a single purchase. This, together with the historically informed aspects of the performances along with their superior quality and the reasonable price make this a very valuable purchase that one ought not to hesitate making.

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