

SCHUMANN

HERMANN AND DOROTHEA OVERTURE
OVERTURE, SCHERZO AND FINALE
VIOLIN CONCERTO

Elmar Oliveira, violin

Atlantic Classical Orchestra

Stewart Robertson, conductor

- | | | |
|----------|--|--------------|
| 1 | Hermann and Dorothea Opus 136 | 09:37 |
| | Overture, Scherzo and Finale Opus 52 | 18:12 |
| 2 | Overture | 06:28 |
| 3 | Scherzo | 05:02 |
| 4 | Finale | 06:42 |
| | Concerto for Violin and Orchestra
in D minor, WoO 1 | 30:48 |
| 5 | Im kraftigen, nicht zu schnellem Tempo | 14:40 |
| 6 | Langsam | 06:31 |
| 7 | Lebhaft, doch nicht zu schnell | 09:37 |
| 8 | A conversation on Schumann
Violin Concerto with Elmar Oliveira
and Stewart Robertson | 20:25 |

Total Time: 79:08

This CD is dedicated to the memory of Shirley Zemsky, an early and ardent patron of the ACO and was made possible by underwriting by her family.



Recorded March 5, 2012, live at Lynn University's Wold Performing Arts Center, Boca Raton, Florida
Engineer: Da-Hong Seetoo
Producer: Elmar Oliveira
Designer: Armand Alcazar
Cover: *Die alte Akademie Düsseldorf* by Andreas Achenbach (1815-1910)

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LIVE IN CONCERT

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

It seems amazing that 156 years after Schumann's death it is still possible to read accounts of the 'unevenness' of Schumann's creativity based on present-day speculations as to the state of his mental health towards the end of his life. Certainly throughout his creative career he could have served as a 'poster boy' for the archetypical artist of the Romantic era. He smoked and drank heavily and was clearly subject to dramatic changes of mood. He also had to undergo many personal challenges amongst which were the failure to achieve his goal as a concert pianist due to a hand injury, and his attempts, ultimately successful, to marry Clara Wieck, the daughter of his piano teacher. Certainly to read of Friedrich Wieck's attempts to prevent the union make for an entertaining evening reading of jaw-dropping incredulity.

Schumann's intense involvement both with literature as well as music leave us with a picture of a creative personality verging on artistic schizophrenia, and yet that same capacity for intense absorption and insight has left us a body of compositions that are entirely unique and in my view consistently so from his earliest creative endeavors through his last visionary masterpieces.

Schumann claimed that the theme of the second movement of the violin concerto was dictated to him by angels. The young Brahms was so captivated by this theme that he made it the basis of his own *Variations for Piano Four Hands Op 23*.

The overture, *Hermann and Dorothea Op 136* was written in Duesseldorf in December 1851. The composition of this unjustly neglected lyrical gem apparently took place remarkably quickly as is revealed by two of Schumann's diary entries: 19th December 1851. "*Finished* rescoring the symphony (Fourth Symphony), began the overture", and the following day "20th December 1851, "*finished the overture*".

The work is based on an epic poem by Goethe involving the fate of two young lovers marrying despite parental opposition, and set against the background of the French Revolution. While Schumann was reading the poem he received news of Louis Napoleon's coup d'etat. Clearly this short piece had both historical and personal significance for the composer. The work contains many fragmentary references to the Marsellaise and opens with a serious B minor theme that is intended to portray the character of Hermann. The second and more lyrical theme makes reference to the

Atlantic Classical Orchestra

The Atlantic Classical Orchestra (ACO) is based in Florida, its primary purpose being to present performances of both orchestral and chamber music in the rapidly growing urban communities on the state's eastern seaboard north of Miami. The ACO's principal subscription series are centered on the towns of Vero Beach and Stuart and the orchestra's members are drawn not only from Florida's principal musical organizations but also major orchestras throughout the USA. As its name implies, the ACO's core repertory is based in the late 18th and early 19th century, while the orchestra has developed an active commitment to the rediscovery of much unjustly neglected music from the Romantic era, written for an orchestra of classical proportions alongside championing the best and most accessible of contemporary music with a special emphasis on the younger generation of American composers.

Since the ACO's inception in 1991 this adventurous approach to programming was in evidence under the orchestra's founder and first Music Director, Andrew McMullan. Since assuming the role of Artistic Director in 2004, Stewart Robertson has sought to cultivate for the orchestra an artistic personality in which a variety of styles play an integral role. Artistic vision, playing of the highest caliber and a unique sense of enjoyment, combine to make ACO concerts into unforgettable events. This is perhaps best expressed by Palm Beach Post reviewer, Charles Passy, when he wrote "*What a remarkable group the Atlantic Classical Orchestra has become....under Grammy- nominated Music Director, Stewart Robertson, it has become an ambitious and poised group that could claim an honored place in even the most culturally rich communities*".



'Clara' theme of the Fourth Symphony and the Overture is affectionately dedicated to Schumann's wife.

The years 1840-42 marked a period of intense creativity for Schumann. He and his beloved Clara were at last able to marry. In 1840 alone Schumann wrote 168 songs and the following year saw the composition of both the First Symphony (Spring) and what was later to become in its revised version the Fourth Symphony. Both in the songs and the Fourth Symphony, Schumann developed a style in which he used themes in a 'cyclic' manner endowing certain themes and motives with literary or extra-musical associations which would recur throughout the piece creating a structural cohesion to the entire composition.

Both the Fourth Symphony and the *Overture Scherzo and Finale* of 1841 employ this cyclic technique extensively. Perhaps the reason why the latter work has not found such a ready acceptance in concert programs as, say, the Fourth Symphony, is due to a certain uncertainty as to how to categorize the work. Schumann himself seemed unsure as to its ultimate shape. Setting out initially he wrote what he intended to be the first movement of a symphony complete with slow introduction and followed by a fast sonata structure only to conclude that the amount of thematic development fell a bit short of what one would normally expect of a symphonic first movement. The second movement is a scherzo which makes reference to material from the first movement. It is interspersed with two contrasting trios followed by a coda. The finale in turn sets out to be a brisk fugue but soon abandons this in favor of more romantically lyrical writing. This movement is full of sharp contrasts ending in a grand apotheosis. The *Overture Scherzo and Finale* exists in two versions, one with trombones and the other without. This second version is the one selected by the ACO for inclusion on the present disc. While referring to the work variously as his second symphony, a suite, and even as his 'symphonette' Schumann mentions it possibly most accurately in a letter to Clara in which he describes it as "tender, merry, siren-like, the whole has a light, friendly character."

The Violin Concerto of Robert Schumann, written in 1853 but not premiered until 1937 represents something of a conundrum. The concerto, the last major work to be completed by the composer before he descended irretrievably into the depths of mental illness was written in an astonishingly short period of 13 days and was intended for the great 19th century violin virtuoso Joseph Joachim who was a friend of both Robert Schumann and his wife Clara.

After receiving a copy of the score Joachim remarked on the difficulty and awkwardness of the solo violin part, however he did undertake a reading of the concerto with the orchestra in Hanover at which the composer was present. In a letter to the composer written almost a year later Joachim apologizes for his performance saying, "If I could only play your D minor concerto to you; I know it better than that time in Hanover when, to my great annoyance I did it such injustice at the rehearsal because my arm was so tired with conducting." Joachim clearly had got off to a bad start with the concerto, which is, admittedly ferociously difficult, however this experience may have permanently prejudiced him against the work.

After Schumann's death Joachim was to suggest to the composer's very sensitive widow that perhaps the concerto was not up to Schumann's high standards and convinced her that it would be better if the work were not to be published. Thus the concerto languished in obscurity for some 80 years until an odd set of circumstances led to the concerto once again surfacing into the light of day.

Joachim's great-niece, Jelly d'Aranyi held a séance in which she claimed to have received a message from Schumann's spirit requesting her to travel to Berlin to find the lost concerto! She followed the instructions and indeed in a library in Berlin discovered four separate manuscript copies. The concerto was subsequently published and performed. The musical press at the time was once again equivocal about the quality of the work and so once more an aura of doubt and skepticism was cast over the work's reputation.

This has not prevented several world-class violinists from performing the work since the thirties but it is only within the last few years that the piece has begun to slowly gain acceptance as a cornerstone of the concerto repertoire. A perfect example of the durability of the effect of bad press!

The concerto is cast in three movements. The first is a dramatic *allegro* while the slow movement has a rare beauty, a visionary quality that places it on that fine line that is said to exist between genius and madness. The *finale*, an energetic Polonaise was written two days after Schumann had met the young Johannes Brahms for the first time. The older composer seems to have been extraordinarily inspired by this visit as is clear from his letter to Joachim describing the encounter in almost Biblical language and saying of Brahms, "this is the one who had to come."

S Robertson

highly successful debut with the Arturo Toscanini Philharmonic and the chorus of the Maggio Musicale Florence conducting the closing concert of Italy's famed Festival of the Nations in Citta di Castello, Umbria.

In the realm of opera Robertson's appearances include New York City Opera, The Lyric Opera of Chicago, the companies of Montreal, Detroit, Philadelphia, Opera Theater of St Louis, the Deutsche Oper am Rhein, Duesseldorf, The Norwegian National Opera, the Jesi

Festival in Italy, the Wexford Festival, Opera Ireland and the Fort Worth Opera Festival.

Robertson's performances with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Utah Symphony, Ukraine State Philharmonic and Glimmerglass Opera can be heard on the Chandos, Naxos, New World and Verdi/EMI labels. His recording of Sir Richard Rodney Bennett's opera *The Mines of Sulphur* was nominated for a Grammy award. His world premiere recording of David Carlson's, *Anna Karenina* has recently been released on the Signum label and his interpretation of Puccini's *La Boheme* at the Puccini Festival in the composer's home town of Torre del Lago is available on DVD. In the USA Robertson's performances have been televised by PBS on both the 'Great Performances' and 'Live from Lincoln Center' series.

Stewart Robertson

A native of Glasgow, Scotland, Stewart Robertson is a graduate of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music. He studied piano in London with Denis Matthews, conducting with Hans Swarowsky in Vienna, and with Otmar Suitner at the Mozarteum, Salzburg, where he was a finalist in the Austrian Radio Conductor's Competition. Robertson thrives on a wide range of musical interests. He has become particularly associated with the music of Mozart, Beethoven, and Benjamin Britten and his close involvement with new music has led him to having conducted over 100 orchestral and operatic world premieres. Robertson is Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Atlantic Classical Orchestra in Florida and is Music Director Emeritus of Glimmerglass Opera in New York.

Robertson gained his early experience at the opera houses of Cologne and Zurich and at Scottish Opera, where he was Music Director of the touring company. Subsequently he became Music Director of the San Bernardino Symphony and the Santa Fe Symphony Orchestra where he was a champion of new music and a frequent broadcaster on National Public Radio. Additionally, he has enjoyed two highly successful periods as Artistic Director of Opera Omaha and Music Director of Florida Grand Opera in Miami as well as his now legendary two decades at the helm of Glimmerglass Opera.

Equally at home in opera as in the concert hall, Robertson has led performances with orchestras as diverse as The BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, The Hong Kong Philharmonic, Louisville Orchestra, Netherland Symphony Orchestra, Mecklenburg Staatskapelle, Buenos Aires Philharmonic, Sicily Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Sinfonica Nacional of Mexico, the North German Philharmonic and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

Highlights include performances at the Lille Festival in France with the Orchestra of Maastricht, Igor Oistrakh, soloist, and at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam with the Ukraine State Philharmonic. He has also led this orchestra both in Kiev and on tour in Holland and has recorded with them symphonies of Shostakovich, and Prokofiev. Recently Robertson made a

Elmar Oliveira is one of the most commanding violinists of our time, with his unsurpassed combination of impeccable artistry and old-world elegance. Mr. Oliveira is one of the few major artists committed to the entire spectrum of the violin world – constantly expanding traditional repertoire boundaries as a champion of contemporary music and rarely-heard works of the past, devoting energy to the development of the young artists of tomorrow, and enthusiastically supporting the art of modern violin and bow makers.

Among his generation's most honored artists, Elmar Oliveira remains the first and only American violinist to win the Gold Medal at Moscow's Tchaikovsky International Competition. He is also the first violinist to receive the coveted Avery Fisher Prize, in addition to capturing First Prizes at the Naumburg International Competition and the G. B. Dealey Competition.

Mr. Oliveira has become a familiar and much-admired figure at the world's foremost concert venues. His rigorous international itinerary includes appearances in recital and with many of the world's greatest orchestras, including the Zurich Tonhalle, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestras; the New York, Helsinki, Los Angeles and London Philharmonic Orchestras; and the San Francisco, Baltimore, Saint Louis, Boston, Indianapolis, Oregon, Vancouver, Taiwan and Chicago Symphonies, and the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. He has also extensively toured the Far East, South America, Australia, New Zealand, and regularly performs at many of the most prestigious summer music festivals.

Mr. Oliveira's repertoire is among the most diverse of any of today's preeminent artists. While he has been hailed for his performances of the standard violin literature, he is also a much sought-after interpreter of the music of our time. He has premiered works by such distinguished composers as Morton Gould, Ezra Laderman, Charles Wuorinen, Joan Tower (written for him and released on d'Note), Aaron Kernis, Andrzej Panufnik, Benjamin Lees, Nicolas Flagello, Leonard Rosenman, Hugh Aitken, and Richard Yardumian. He has also performed seldom-heard concerti by Alberto Ginastera, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Joseph Achron, Joseph Joachim, and many others. He also gave the Spanish Premiere of Krzysztof Penderecki's Second Violin Concerto, conducted by the celebrated composer.

A prodigious recording artist, Elmar Oliveira is a two-time Grammy nominee for his CD of the Barber Concerto with Leonard Slatkin and the Saint Louis Symphony. His discography on Angel, SONY Masterworks, Vox, Delos, Naxos, IMP, Ondine, and Melodiya and Artek ranges widely from works by Bach and Vivaldi to the present. His best-selling recording of the Rautavaara Violin Concerto with the Helsinki Philharmonic (Ondine) won a Cannes Classical Award and has appeared on Gramophone's "Editor's Choice" and other Best Recordings lists around the world. On Artek, he has recordings of the rarely heard Pizzetti and Respighi sonatas, the Chausson Concerto for Violin, Piano, and String Quartet, and the Lekeu Sonata, and a recording of the Brahms and Saint-Saens B minor Concerti with Gerard Schwarz and the Seattle Symphony, the Shostakovich Violin Concerto No.1 with Maestro Schwarz and the Seattle Symphony, the Brahms 3 Sonatas, and a Favorite Encore disc, among other repertoire.

Of great historical significance are two unique projects: 3 CDs featuring Mr. Oliveira performing on some of the world's greatest violins (fifteen Stradivaris and fifteen Guarneri del Gesù) along with a book released by Bein & Fushi of Chicago, and a recording of short pieces highlighting the rare violins from the collection of the Library of Congress on Biddulph Recordings.



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