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# Robert Schumann's Piano Sonata no. 1 in f-sharp minor, op. 11—style and structure

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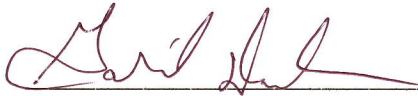
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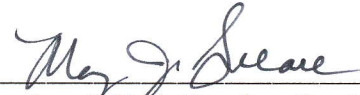
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Robert Schumann's Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp Minor, op. 11 – Style and Structure

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A document submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the degree of

Doctor of Musical Arts

School of Music

July 2013

## Dedication

There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done,  
    There are thousands to prophesy failure;  
There are thousands to point out to you, one by one,  
    The dangers that wait to assail you.  
But just buckle in with a bit of a grin,  
    Just take off your coat and go to it;  
Just start to sing as you tackle the thing  
    That “cannot be done,” and you’ll do it.

– from “It Couldn’t Be Done” by Edgar Guest

This dissertation is dedicated to all those who have come alongside and supported me throughout this degree program. It has been one of the most important and formative challenges of my life, and your encouragement has brought a smile to my face and kept me working on those days when I wanted to give up.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Lori E. Piitz, for her continuous support, patience, guidance, and encouragement during my doctoral studies in piano performance. She has always seen the best in me, even when I had trouble seeing it myself. Her mentorship has helped me grow as a pianist and teacher in ways I never dreamed of, and without her insight and advice throughout my research, writing, and rewriting, this document would not have been possible.

I would like to thank the other members of my committee, Dr. Gabriel Dobner and Dr. Mary Jean Speare, for giving their time and expertise to better my work. I would also like to especially thank Professor Evelyne Brancart for taking time out of her busy schedule to critique this document and discuss valuable insights with me about Schumann and op. 11.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my parents for listening to a three year old who knew what she wanted to do with her life and for helping me so much, especially these last few months. There have been many unexpected challenges along the way, but “the road less traveled by...has made all the difference.”

## Table of Contents

Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgements .....	iii
List of Figures.....	v
List of Musical Examples .....	vi
Abstract .....	viii
Introduction .....	1
Influences.....	4
Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11 .....	11
Conclusion .....	50
Bibliography .....	56

## List of Figures

Figure 1 .....	16
Figure 2 .....	36
Figure 3 .....	41
Figure 4 .....	41



## List of Musical Examples

Example 1a.....	7
Example 1b.....	8
Example 2 .....	17
Example 3 .....	17
Example 4 .....	18
Example 5 .....	18
Example 6 .....	19
Example 7 .....	19
Example 8 .....	20
Example 9 .....	21
Example 10a .....	23
Example 10b.....	23
Example 11.....	24
Example 12.....	25
Example 13.....	26
Example 14.....	27
Example 15.....	28
Example 16.....	29
Example 17.....	31
Example 18.....	31
Example 19.....	32
Example 20.....	32
Example 21.....	33
Example 22.....	35
Example 23.....	37
Example 24.....	37
Example 25.....	37
Example 26.....	40

Example 27.....	43
Example 28.....	43
Example 29.....	44
Example 30.....	44
Example 31.....	45
Example 32.....	45
Example 33.....	45
Example 34.....	46
Example 35.....	46
Example 36.....	47
Example 37.....	47
Example 38.....	48
Example 39.....	51
Example 40.....	53

## Abstract

Robert Schumann's music reflects the complexity of his life and psyche. Even Schumann himself acknowledged the challenges this presented to anyone attempting to understand his music, and the Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11 is an example of the complex inter-relationship between Schumann's music and life. This document will have a three-fold approach to discussing Schumann's Sonata. I will outline the literary characteristics of German Romantic authors, discuss how Schumann musically interprets these characteristics while reflecting other composers, and show how these techniques help add extra-musical significance to op. 11, particularly in connection with Clara.

Robert Schumann's compositional style reveals a wide range of influences, such as Romantic authors Jean Paul Richter and E. T. A. Hoffmann and fellow composers Ludwig van Beethoven, Franz Schubert, and Johann Sebastian Bach. While these people were influential in Schumann's life, perhaps no one was more important to Schumann than Clara Wieck. During the composition of the Sonata op. 11, Clara's father, Friederick Wieck, attempted to end their relationship by sending Clara far away. Schumann used this Sonata as a means of communicating with Clara. These elements give op. 11 an additional level of meaning.

I believe that this Sonata accurately reflects Schumann's influences, compositional style, and his life and that understanding this diverse spectrum of elements can be invaluable to anyone attempting to interpret this great work.

## Introduction

“Anything in the world affects me – politics, literature, people. I reflect on these things in my own way, and these reflections find an outlet in music. This is also the reason why so many of my compositions are hard to understand.”<sup>1</sup>

- Robert Schumann

Robert Schumann was a pianist who, after a self-inflicted injury to his right-hand, focused on a career as a composer and music critic. The majority of his piano music was completed in the years immediately following this injury. His compositions tend to be technically and emotionally demanding, and this can make his music, at times, difficult to perform.<sup>2</sup> Ignaz Moscheles,<sup>3</sup> a fellow composer and music critic, recognized these difficult aspects of Schumann’s music. While he did write a favorable critical review of Schumann’s Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, he confided privately that “the novelty of some of the work both disturbed and perplexed him.”<sup>4</sup> In a brief description of the Sonata, pianist Evelyne Brancart also commented on the Sonata’s difficulty. She used the analogy of a love letter to help explain this Sonata, which she views as both “challenging to play and challenging to listen to.”<sup>5</sup> My goal in this document is to explain the connections between literary and musical techniques and extrapolate extra-musical references,

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<sup>1</sup> Ronald Taylor, *Robert Schumann: his Life and Work* (New York: Universe Books, 1982), 104.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 702.

<sup>3</sup> The diaries of Ignaz Moscheles (1794-1870) were edited and published by his wife shortly after his death.

<sup>4</sup> Wilhelm Joseph von Wasielewski, *Robert Schumann: Eine Biographie* (Leipzig, 1906), in Eric Jensen, *Schumann*, ed. Stanley Sadie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 159.

<sup>5</sup> Evelyne Brancart, *Concert*, Forbes Center for the Performing Arts Concert Hall, Harrisonburg, Virginia, 6 April 2013.

which may help explain the idiosyncrasies of and offer insights to interpreting this eclectic Sonata.

The novelty of the blend of poignancy and humor in op. 11 reflects the influences on Schumann. German Romantic authors Jean Paul Richter and E. T. A. Hoffmann wrote novels and fantasies that combined both the supernatural as well as daily life – the ideal and the reality – in stories that examine different aspects of the human psyche.<sup>6</sup> Richter and Hoffmann juxtapose moods and points of view, often with an ironic sense of humor. Schumann appears to translate these principles into music by combining musical techniques from Ludwig van Beethoven, Franz Schubert, and Johann Sebastian Bach as part of his own style. From Beethoven, Schumann borrowed the idea of using short motives as structural building blocks of form. The primacy of melody in Schubert's Lieder can be seen in Schumann's lyrical themes, and the many contrapuntal places in Schumann's works could be credited to the influence of J. S. Bach.

One of Schumann's main purposes in writing the Sonata op. 11 was to communicate to Clara his love for her. During its composition, Schumann suffered both the loss of his mother (she died in February of 1836) and the loss of Clara when her father, Friederick Wieck, took her away.<sup>7</sup> Peter Ostwald's biography of Schumann explains that Wieck's purpose in doing this was to "completely isolate Clara from Schumann by intercepting and destroying any letters that might pass

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<sup>6</sup> "E.T.A. Hoffmann," *Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica Online Academic Edition*, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/268718/E-T-A-Hoffmann> (Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2013), accessed 09 Apr. 2013.

<sup>7</sup> I will refer to Clara Wieck Schumann throughout this paper by the name "Clara" to differentiate her from her husband (Schumann) and her father (Wieck).

between them.”<sup>8</sup> Wieck was almost entirely successful for seventeen months. When Schumann could not communicate through letters, he communicated using the piano music he wrote for her. The Piano Sonata op. 11 served that purpose.

Following a discussion of the background of this Sonata, I will examine the Sonata itself and how Schumann uses specific techniques to establish the character of each movement. These techniques will be examined in relation to the influences on Schuman at the time, both historical and biographical. Looking at the Sonata from this perspective, I will outline the literary characteristics of German Romantic authors, discuss how Schumann musically interprets these characteristics while reflecting other composers, and show how these techniques help add extra-musical significance to op. 11, particularly in connection with Clara.

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<sup>8</sup> Peter Ostwald, *Schumann: the Inner Voices of a Musical Genius* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1985), 121-123.

## Influences

The ways in which Jean Paul Richter (1763-1825), E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776-1822), Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), Franz Schubert (1797-1828), and Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) portrayed life captured Schumann's creative imagination. His father was a bookseller and introduced Schumann (1810-1856) to a wide variety of literature. German Romantic writers Richter and Hoffmann were among his favorites.<sup>9</sup> They were so important to Schumann that, upon his marriage to Clara Wieck, he wanted her to read their novels.<sup>10</sup> Richter wrote literary fantasies in a hyper-expressive style. The insertion of seemingly irrelevant details and clauses helped him articulate emotions but also resulted in unusual sentence structures and lengths for that time period. His novel *Leben des vergnügten Schulmeisterleins Maria Wutz in Auenthal* ("Life of the Cheerful Schoolmaster Maria Wutz") contains many examples of lengthy sentences.

"He [Wutz] would have jumbled together the most disparate things had he remembered the activities of his childhood December during those two imagined evenings; but he had the wisdom to wait for a third before recalling the way he used to look forward to the locking of the shutters, for now he would be safely sitting inside the brightly lit room, wherefore he did not care to look long into the room, which the reflective windowpanes transposed beyond the shutters; how he and his brothers and sisters spied on, assisted, and interrupted his mother while she was cooking their supper, and how he and they, eyes tightly shut and hiding between the ramparts of their father's legs, eagerly awaited the dazzle of tallow light to come, and how sheltered they were in the enclosure of their room, carved out of or built into the boundless vault of the universe, how warm, how well provided for, how snug..."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Harold C. Schonberg, *The Lives of the Great Composers* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 152.

<sup>10</sup> Ostwald, *Schumann: the Inner Voices of a Musical Genius*, 167.

<sup>11</sup> Jean Paul Richter, *Jean Paul: a Reader*, ed. and commentary Timothy J. Casey, trans. Erika Casey, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 85.

This sentence continues on for another four lines, and each new clause fills out the picture of a safe and carefree youth.

Richter enjoyed using exaggerations and ironic sarcasms in an often-pessimistic tone. In listing reasons why Wutz is so happy, Richter's final reason is that Wutz has fallen in love. The following quote is Richter's paragraph of inserted commentary about why love is important in one's youth. "Why is it to youth that heaven assigned the lustrum of love? Perhaps because it is then that one gasps in classrooms, clerical offices, and other poisonous furnaces: there love rises like a burgeoning rambler about the windows of the said chambers of torture and shows in flickering shadows the great Spring from the outside."<sup>12</sup> Richter points out the discrepancies between the ideal (Wutz's happiness) and the reality of daily life ("torture") in a tone that could be seen as both longing and bitter. Indeed, Richter summarizes Wutz's life by saying, "while he had life he enjoyed it more merrily than we all."<sup>13</sup>

E. T. A. Hoffmann's writing is often characterized by the integration of diverse elements. He presents a full picture of events and characters by juxtaposing fantasy and reality,<sup>14</sup> best seen in his masterpiece *Lebens-Ansichten des Katers Murr* ("The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr"). The cat Murr "writes" his "autobiography" using the manuscript pages for the "autobiography" of the musician Johannes Kreisler. The novel alternates between fragments of the "autobiography" of Johannes Kreisler and the full "autobiography" of Murr. Both "autobiographies"

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>14</sup> Holly Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth in German Musical Thought: From E. T. A. Hoffman to Arnold Schoenberg* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 88.



relate the same incidents, but since Murr “wrote” on blank side of the pages of Kreisler’s manuscript, the stories often interrupt each other in the middle of sentences.<sup>15</sup> Hoffmann includes Murr’s Introduction and follows that with Murr’s Preface, which was not “supposed” to be published. In the Introduction, Murr is the ideal combination of intellect and humility, but in the Preface Murr writes with the more haughty and arrogant language that one might stereotypically associate with a cat. Hoffmann offers an apology paragraph that explains Murr’s contrasting tones of voice while also providing a sarcastic criticism about the expectations for a preface. “This is too irritating! Even the author’s preface, which was supposed to be suppressed, has been printed! – Nothing can be done except to beg the gentle reader not to condemn the literary tomcat too severely for the somewhat proud tone of his preface, and may he bear in mind that if many a sad preface by other sensitive authors were literally translated into their true sentiments, the result would not be much different.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, before the novel has begun, Hoffmann presents a full sense of Murr’s personality and his use of Murr as the vehicle for his satire.

Both Hoffmann and Richter write in layers of meaning by using the above-mentioned devices in their style. The surface can be easily understood, but there is always more to be discovered. Holly Watkin’s book about German musical thought connects this Romantic era concept of poetic meaning to music.<sup>17</sup> Romantics placed

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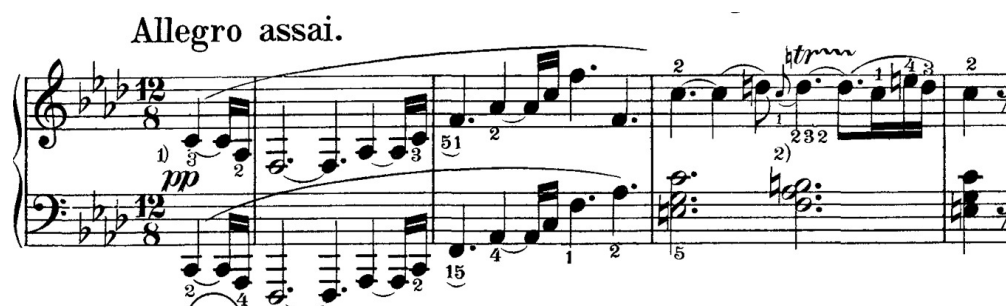
<sup>15</sup> E. T. A Hoffmann, *Selected Writings of E. T. A. Hoffmann: Volume II, The Novel*, ed. and trans. Leonard J. Kent and Elizabeth C. Knight (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), 17.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>17</sup> Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth in German Musical Thought From E. T. A. Hoffman to Arnold Schoenberg*, 86-94.

importance on the unlimited meanings available in a work, a “metaphor of depth,”<sup>18</sup> as Watkins terms it. A given work could have any number of “correct” titles, programs, or ways to be interpreted. Charles Rosen writes that “like the Romantic poets, Schumann both opposed and combined rational and irrational, conscious and unconscious.”<sup>19</sup> To reflect the complex sensations of life, Schumann combined compositional traits of Beethoven, Schubert, and J. S. Bach in ways that can be seen as imitating the depth found in Hoffmann and Richter’s novels.

Schumann may have viewed Beethoven’s extreme contrasts and short motives as the musical equivalent to what Richter and Hoffmann were doing in literature. Richter builds lengthy sentences from short clauses, and Hoffmann often juxtaposes contrasting moods, as can be seen when Kreisler and Murr’s “autobiographies” interrupt each other. Beethoven illustrates the same techniques in the exposition of his Piano Sonata in F minor, op. 57. The opening theme outlines an F minor arpeggio and is monophonic in texture (Example 1a).



**Example 1a.** Ludwig van Beethoven: Piano Sonata in F minor, op. 57, I, mm. 1-4<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>19</sup> Rosen, *The Romantic Generation*, 683.

<sup>20</sup> All examples of Ludwig van Beethoven’s piano sonatas from *Complete Sonatas, Volumes 1-2*, ed. Heinrich Schenker (New York: Dover Publications, 1975).

When the theme returns at measure sixteen, Beethoven suddenly interrupts the line in three places with a measure of alternating *fortissimo* chords (Example 1b).



**Example 1b.** Ludwig van Beethoven: Piano Sonata in F minor, op. 57, I, mm. 17-20

The sudden contrast of dynamics and textures is striking and effective. This aspect of Beethoven's music carries through to the late sonatas. A perfect example of this is the beginning of the Piano Sonata in E major, op. 109, where the entrance of the second theme interrupts the first theme without a transition.

Schumann's connection to Franz Schubert<sup>21</sup> extended beyond playing his Lieder, trios and solo piano music. He was also a close friend of Franz Schubert's older brother, Ferdinand,<sup>22</sup> and Peter Ostwald's biography demonstrates the depth of their friendship. Schumann visited Ferdinand after Franz's death. Ferdinand introduced him to many of Franz's unpublished works and gave Schumann permission to publish some of them and to send the C major Symphony, D. 944 to Felix Mendelssohn so that it could be performed.<sup>23</sup> Franz Schubert's melodic lyricism, especially in his Lieder, influenced Schumann's composition of longer

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<sup>21</sup> Within this paragraph, Franz and Ferdinand Schubert will be referred to by their first names. Any uses of the last name Schubert throughout the remainder of this document refer only to Franz Schubert.

<sup>22</sup> Ostwald, *Schumann: The Inner Voices of a Musical Genius*, 144-145.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

melodies. Schumann's slow movements often focus on the primacy of a single, sparsely ornamented melodic line. Even when there is no poem or programmatic background, the accompaniment figures color the melody in a way that could resemble a song without words.

Schumann was as dedicated a champion of Johann Sebastian Bach's music as Mendelssohn was. After his formal composition lessons ended, Schumann continued his personal study of counterpoint by analyzing J. S. Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*.<sup>24</sup> His writings helped to generate greater interest in the music of J. S. Bach,<sup>25</sup> and a book of selected translations gives examples of Schumann's efforts on behalf J. S. Bach's music. "The wish recently expressed in this paper that a complete edition of his [J. S. Bach's] works might be published seems to have borne fruit at least in so far as his piano compositions are concerned. The first two volumes containing *The Well-tempered Clavichord* have been followed by two more volumes."<sup>26</sup> One of Schumann's letters points a young composer to J. S. Bach's chorales and the *Well-Tempered Clavier* as models of counterpoint, saying, "Bach has left us the loftiest of examples."<sup>27</sup> Immersing himself in J. S. Bach's music may have led Schumann to include fugue-like passages in his own compositions. Schumann's textures are often contrapuntal, though he wrote few actual fugues. A passage may layer voice entries of a theme or include independent chromatic lines in inner voices. Schumann begins

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<sup>24</sup> John Daverio, *Robert Schumann: Herald of a New Poetic Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 69-71.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Schumann, *On Music and Musicians*, ed. Konrad Wolff, trans. Paul Rosenfeld (New York: Pantheon Books, 1946), 90.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 77-78.

sections with a contrapuntal texture as a way of changing the aural complexity of a theme, but this independence of line is typically brief.

The Piano Sonata op. 11 is an example of Schumann's synthesis of literary and musical influences. Musical examples will be used to demonstrate where compositional idiosyncrasies of articulation, rhythm, and melody appear in the score. These traits alone, though, do not reflect Schumann's application of the Romantic artistic philosophy desiring poetic depth. To achieve this, the Sonata needed to be more than just a sonata; it needed to have layers of meaning. Beyond its compositional nuances, the biographical circumstances surrounding op. 11 contribute substantially to its depth.

## Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11

The Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11 was Schumann's first experiment with the multi-movement sonata genre. All of his previous works were shorter pieces or sets of shorter pieces such as the Toccata in C major, op. 7, the *Six Concert Studies on Caprices by Paganini*, op. 10, and the character pieces of the *Davidsbündlertänze*, op. 6. Schumann did not want Wieck to know he had written the Sonata for Clara, so he published the work anonymously in 1836. He dedicated the Sonata "to Clara from Florestan and Eusebius" in order to keep his identity a secret. The pseudonyms Florestan and Eusebius first appeared in Schumann's diary in June and July of 1831.<sup>28</sup> Florestan represented the fiery, excitable, and impetuous side of Schumann, while Eusebius represented his dreamy, melancholic, and introverted side. Whenever Schumann felt balanced and level-headed, he would use the name Raro, a combination of the names Clara and Robert. Schumann used them publically in December for his first critical review. This now famous review of Frédéric Chopin's "Là ci darem la mano" Variations, op. 2 tells the story of Florestan and Eusebius' first "encounter" with the work to demonstrate how wonderful it was.<sup>29</sup> Schumann later used these pseudonyms for articles published in his periodical, the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, and as "composers" not just of the Sonata op. 11 but also of various movements of the *Davidsbündlertänze*, op. 6. While Schumann's use of the names Florestan and Eusebius is common knowledge today,

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<sup>28</sup> Ostwald, *Schumann: the Inner Voices of a Musical Genius*, 74, 77-79.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Schumann, "An Opus II," *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, No. 49: 7 December 1831, trans. David Wörn (Op. 111 Productions, 2010), [www.pianostreet.com/blog/files/schumann-article-on-chopin-opus-2.pdf](http://www.pianostreet.com/blog/files/schumann-article-on-chopin-opus-2.pdf), accessed 9 April 2013.

few people at that time knew who they were, even among Schumann's closest friends.

One of the most powerful of Schumann's life experiences was being in love with Clara Wieck.<sup>30</sup> Clara was the daughter of Friederick Wieck, Robert's piano teacher, and Wieck strongly disapproved of Robert and Clara's relationship. Before Clara was even born, Wieck had practically mapped out each step of her development into a virtuoso pianist. He had devoted his life to demonstrating his pedagogical ideas through Clara, and he was not going to allow her to end her career over someone he considered unstable and unable to support her. This may sound like Wieck was being selfishly overprotective or tyrannical, and to some extent that may be true. While Wieck's methods may have been flawed, however, he was only trying to protect his daughter. In an attempt to end their relationship, Wieck sent Clara to Dresden to perform and live in January 1836.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, Robert and Clara found ways to secretly meet, exchange letters and compose pieces for each other with motives of special significance to each of them. German law during the nineteenth century did not allow a woman under the age of twenty-one to marry without her father's consent. Friederick Wieck would not give them his blessing, so Robert went to court to win the right to marry Clara. After an arduous court battle, Robert and Clara were married in September of 1840, one day before Clara's twenty-first birthday.

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<sup>30</sup> Biographical information about Schumann used for much of this background comes from biographies written by John Daverio, Eric Jensen, Peter Ostwald, Robert Schaufner, Harold C. Schonberg, Alan Walker and John Worthen.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Ostwald, *Schumann: the Inner Voices of a Musical Genius*, 123.

Wieck's attempts to end Clara and Robert's relationship led to an initial seventeen-month separation. During this time, Robert completed the Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11 and sent it to Clara. He used the names Florestan and Eusebius in the dedication to secretly tell Clara that the Sonata op. 11 was from him and that he was still thinking about her. However, when Wieck saw the Sonata's dedication, he knew that it was from Robert and refused to allow his daughter to confirm receiving the work. Jensen's biography of Schumann relates that, after this, Wieck went even further in his attempts to end their relationship by forcing Clara to return all of the letters Robert had sent to her before she moved away.<sup>32</sup> Since she could not reply to Robert, Clara responded to her father's actions by placing Robert's Sonata on her August 13, 1837 concert program, and Robert attended the concert.<sup>33</sup> Victor Bausch quotes a letter Clara later wrote to Robert about that night, "Did you not understand that I played it [op. 11] because I knew of no other way of showing you a little of what was going on within me? I might not do it in secret, so I did it in public. Do you think my heart was not trembling?"<sup>34</sup> This heightened sense of alienation from each other led Robert to write to his former composition teacher that "[Clara] was practically the sole motivation for...the sonata [op. 11]."<sup>35</sup>

Schumann enjoyed this type of musical communication. He frequently included cryptic messages in his music or transcribed names and places for use as musical motives. The *Variations on the Name Abegg*, op. 1 is based on the notation of

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<sup>32</sup> Jensen, *Schumann*, 123-124.

<sup>33</sup> Victor Basch, *The Painful Life of Schumann*, trans. Catherine A. Phillips (New York: Tudor, 1936), 107.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>35</sup> Worthen, *Robert Schumann: the Life and Death of a Musician*, 127 and Daverio, *Robert Schumann: Herald of a New Poetic Age*, 131.



the name Abegg (A, B-flat, E, G, G), the surname of a family he knew. *Carnaval*, op. 9 is based on the musical transcription of ASCH (A, E-flat, C, B), the hometown of Ernestine von Fricken (Schumann's previous girlfriend) as well as the only letters of the name "Schumann" able to be musically transcribed. Op. 9 also uses the names of people or fictional characters as the titles of movements. "Sphinxes" falls between the eighth and ninth movements, and its meaning is still unclear. They are unmeasured notations of the three variations of the ASCH motive. It is unknown whether or not the measures should be performed and, if they are performed, how they ought to be played.

Schumann scholars debate the nature and even the existence of secret communication in his music, particularly the existence of a "Clara motif." Some scholars, such as Robert Schaufler, Marin Alsop, and Peter Ostwald, appear to hold to the view that the Clara motif is a descending or ascending fifth, most often in stepwise motion. Marin Alsop, the music director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, writes that Schumann used five notes owing to the number of letters in the name Clara,<sup>36</sup> but Ostwald discusses the motif without explaining its origins. In his article about Schumann's ciphers, Eric Sams attempts to explain the origins of the Clara motif, stating that it may be derived from a melody of Clara's *Quatre Pièces Caractéristiques*, op. 5.<sup>37</sup> Many authors choose to avoid the debate altogether, while others, such as John Daverio, do not believe in the existence of a Clara motif at

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<sup>36</sup> Marin Alsop, *Robert Schumann: Music Amid the Madness* (National Public Radio, 2008), <http://www.npr.org/2008/06/20/91707206/robert-schumann-music-amid-the-madness>, accessed 30 March 2013.

<sup>37</sup> Eric Sams, "Did Schumann use Ciphers?" *The Musical Times*, August 1965, <http://ericsams.org/index.php/on-music/essays/on-schumann/97-did-schumann-use-cyphers-aug-1965>, accessed 1 March 2013.

all. Daverio believes that the Clara motif is a myth stating, “Clara Wieck was far too compelling a figure in Schumann’s life to serve as the object of a game.”<sup>38</sup> His disbelief and disapproval in the concept of a Clara motif can be summed up in one sentence: “This widely accepted hypothesis simply requires too many leaps of faith.”<sup>39</sup>

Daverio defends his position using one example, the *Davidsbündlertänze*, op. 6. He discusses the background of and compositional traits in Schumann’s other works from the assumption that a Clara motif does not exist. It is important to point out, however, that the purpose of op. 6 is entirely different from the purpose of the Sonata op. 11. This Sonata was specifically meant to communicate Schumann’s love to Clara.

Richter and Hoffmann both manipulated form and sentence structures to suit their expressive moods. Schumann did the same thing in his manipulation of classical sonata form. This was not an unusual emphasis. Romantic artists and composers placed emphasis on emotional content over formal structure. An overview of op. 11 reveals its similarities to traditional sonata form. The *Allegro vivace* is in sonata-allegro form. The *Aria* is in ternary form, and the third movement is a scherzo. All movements are in the tonic key of F-sharp minor, except for the second movement, which is in the relative major. The finale stands out because its form is not in either of the expected forms: sonata-allegro or rondo. Schumann instead creates a two-part form with coda, consisting of multiple themes and smaller sections.

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<sup>38</sup> Daverio, *Schumann: Herald of a New Poetic Age*, 159.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

Schumann begins with a regal Introduction in ternary form, similar to the tradition of Beethoven's Piano Sonata op. 13, "pathetique." The Introduction is integral to the entire Sonata in that it introduces motives that will reappear in both the *Allegro vivace* and second movement (Figure 1). Its key scheme even parallels that of the Sonata movements: F-sharp minor, A major, and F-sharp minor.

Section	Measures	Key	Unifying Idea
A	1-21	F-sharp minor	- Importance of upbeats - Melody returns in the development of mvt I
B	21-38	A major	- Melody returns in mvt II - Dotted rhythms - Clara motif
A	38-52	F-sharp minor	- End of Introduction ties into the beginning of the <i>Allegro vivace</i>

**Figure 1.** Robert Schumann's Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, I: structure of the Introduction

The opening of the Introduction could be viewed as Schumann's initial declaration of love to Clara. The melody of Section A is characterized by a repeated rhythmic motive and a descending line that spans an octave (Example 3).

**Introduzione**  
**Un poco Adagio** Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

The image shows the first system of the musical score for the Introduction of Robert Schumann's Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, I. The score is in 3/4 time and F-sharp minor. It features a piano introduction with a 'Pedale' marking. A specific melodic phrase in the right hand is circled in red.

**Example 2.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, I, mm. 1-5<sup>40</sup>

This melody returns in the *Allegro vivace* (Compare Examples 2 and 3). Schumann places the melody exactly in the middle of the movement, interrupting the development.

268 *più lento*

The image shows the musical score for the 'più lento' section of Robert Schumann's Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, I. The score is in 3/4 time and F-sharp minor. It features a 'Basso parlando' marking. A specific melodic phrase in the right hand is circled in red.

**Example 3.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, I, mm. 268-272: compare to Example 2

In the Introduction, Schumann changes mood in Section B by introducing a lyrical, flowing melody marked *sotto voce*, or “in an undertone, subdued”<sup>41</sup> (Example 4).

<sup>40</sup> All examples of Robert Schumann’s op. 11 from Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, ed. Sauer (New York: Peters International, 2009).



**Example 4.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, I, mm. 22-24: Clara motif E to B

It is as if Schumann wants to whisper intimately just to Clara, and the significance of this melody will be discussed later. The volume of the melody slowly *crescendos* to a *fortissimo* (Example 5). Schumann may have meant to communicate to Clara the difficulty he had being away from her, and this sense of longing continues to the end of the Introduction.

**Example 5.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, I, mm. 34-38

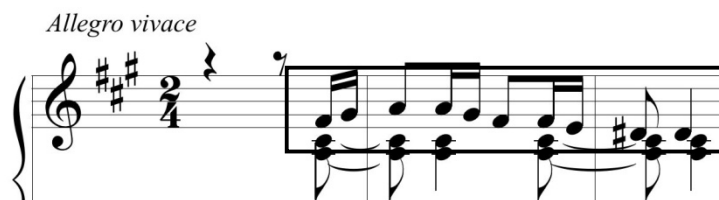
The first theme of the *Allegro vivace* combines two contrasting motives, one characterized by linear motion and the other more disjunct. The linear motive quotes the main melody from Schumann's unfinished work titled *Fandango*

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<sup>41</sup> "Sotto voce," *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, ed. Don Michael Randel, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999).

(Example 6).<sup>42</sup> This work was also in F-sharp minor and was composed in the same year that he began writing op. 11.<sup>43</sup> What is fascinating is that Schumann combines “his” motive with a motive representing Clara. “Clara’s” motive is from her *Scène fantastique* op. 5, no. 4 (Example 7), and together, these two motives comprise the first theme of Schumann’s Sonata op. 11 (Example 8).<sup>44</sup>

“Robert’s” motive:



**Example 8.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, I, mm. 53-57: Clara motif G-sharp to C-sharp and A to D-sharp

When one looks for Clara motifs (i.e. – ascending or descending fifths in stepwise motion or leaps), one must be able to support the idea that a particular fifth could somehow be related to Clara. The use of fifths is quite common in music, and they can be found in many places. If Schumann meant for these motifs to communicate something to Clara, one would expect these fifths would be found in key melodies and themes. Such is the case with the first theme. The quote from Clara's *Scène fantastique* includes the leap of a fifth, and the quote from Schumann's *Fandango* includes a stepwise fifth (See Example 8). Since the first movement quotes pre-existing compositions that both prominently contain fifths, one could view the existence of a Clara motif in op. 11 as highly probable. This does not necessarily confirm the intentional use of such a motive throughout Schumann's output, but I believe it is probable that Schumann's extensive use of a fifth in important themes and musical sections within op. 11 is intended as a clear and intentional reference to Clara. The first use of this Clara motif can actually be found in the lyrical second theme of the Introduction (See Example 4). This second theme returns as the opening melody of the second movement and serves to tie the two movements together musically as well as emotionally (Example 9).



**Example 9.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, II, mm. 1-4: theme found in the B section of the Introduction to I

By combining quotes from each of their works in the *Allegro vivace*, Schumann may have hoped to communicate to Clara his belief that they were destined to be together. Robert Jensen quotes a letter from Schumann to Clara where Schumann writes that the Sonata op. 11 was “a cry from my [Schumann’s] heart to yours in which your theme appears in every possible form.”<sup>46</sup> Jensen believes that Schumann is specifically referring to his inclusion and treatment of the quote from Clara’s *Scène fantastique*.

Rhythms add character and life to Schumann’s compositions, and he especially loved using dances and extended sections in dotted rhythms. In John Daverio’s essay in *The Cambridge Companion to Schumann*, Schumann is quoted as saying that he viewed dance as the genre in which “art is most sensuously and blatantly tied to life.”<sup>47</sup> In this Sonata, he alludes to dances such as the waltz, fandango, and polonaise and often shifts accents, adds syncopation, or employs hemiola. A single rhythmic pattern can continue for dozens of measures with an

<sup>46</sup> Jensen, *Schumann*, 145.

<sup>47</sup> John Daverio, “Piano Works I: a world of images,” *The Cambridge Companion to Schumann*, ed. Beate Perrey (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 71.



almost obsessive, hypnotic intensity. At times, one can recognize the rhythmic pattern of a motive more quickly as the melody itself.

The rhythm of “Robert’s” motive in the *Allegro vivace* is a fandango, a Spanish dance that includes guitar accompaniment, vocal song, cross rhythms, and improvisation.<sup>48</sup> The waltz was popular in the nineteenth century because, for the first time, the dancing couples were allowed to embrace. The fandango was provocative for exactly the opposite reason. The dancers would get as close as possible to each other without ever actually touching. The Spanish used the fandango as their courtship dance, and this may explain why Schumann chose to use this particular quote from his music in combination with “Clara’s” motive. Schumann was courting Clara, and although Friederick Wieck had sent Clara away, “Robert’s” and “Clara’s” motives could still be close to each other in Schumann’s music. John Worthen also views Schumann’s use of the “Robert” and “Clara” motives as picturesque. “When Schumann wanted to reach out to Clara, his best way of doing so was in music; when she played the Sonata, she remembered what he had done with her motif and was now saying to her. The way her theme had become inextricably linked with Schumann’s own might be seen as a symbol of their underlying relationship.”<sup>49</sup>

Just as the dancers in the fandango never touch, Robert similarly varies the registers in which his and Clara’s motives appear. The opening measure of the *Allegro vivace* could be seen as an introduction to a dance. Initially, Robert’s motive follows Clara’s (See Example 8). After the sequencing and repetition of Robert’s

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<sup>48</sup> “Fandango,” *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*.

<sup>49</sup> Worthen, *Robert Schuman: the life and death of a musician*, 127.

motive, Clara's motive reappears as the dynamic and emotional culmination of the phrase (Example 10a).

**Example 10a.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, I, mm. 70-74

If one thinks programmatically and extends my analogy, the following measures could be viewed as the beginning of Robert and Clara's dance together. It is as if Robert kept asking Clara to dance and eventually she said yes, and their motives are soon stated simultaneously (Example 10b).

**Example 10b.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, I, mm. 81-86

In the fandango, dancers continually circle each other, and Robert and Clara's motives do the same. A "circling" effect is musically created by the way Schumann shifts registers up and down for the motives (Example 11).

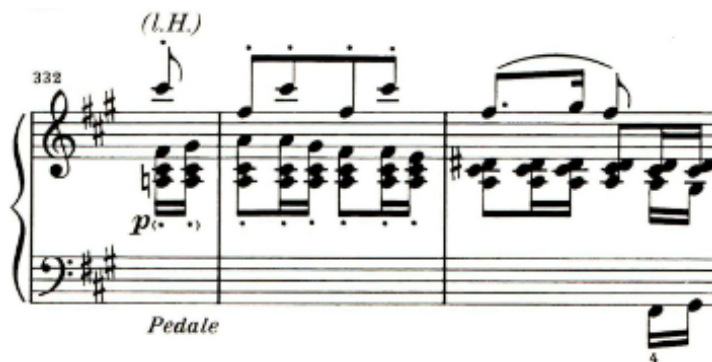
**Example 11.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, I, mm. 76-79

In performing this part of the exposition, the “circling” effect extends to the piano technique of playing with one’s hands crossed. The bold and acrobatic hand movements add virtuosic excitement to this dance. While Daverio does not mention this effect, he does view the opening movement of op. 11 “as the aesthetic analogue to the flirtatious exchanges in which Robert and Clara must have indulged during the summer of 1835.”<sup>50</sup> My theory of the “circling” effect appears to be complimentary to Daverio’s theory of the Sonata representing “flirtatious exchanges.”

In the recapitulation, Schumann makes an even bolder statement with respect to his and Clara’s motives. A repeated chord accompaniment has typically separated the two motives. When Clara’s motive moves to the bass, Robert’s motive moves above the chords. In the recapitulation, the motives appear simultaneously from the very beginning, this time without the repeated notes separating them (Example 12).

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<sup>50</sup> Daverio, *Robert Schumann: Herald of a New Poetic Age*, 144.



**Example 12.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, I, mm. 331-333

Schumann's progressive treatment of these two motives could represent his relationship with Clara. At the beginning of the *Allegro vivace*, the motives are stated separately and then start the fandango together. The repeated chord accompaniment standing between them at the beginning of this courtship dance could be seen as representative of the disapproval of Friederick Wieck. By the recapitulation, however, the barrier between them has been removed. Schumann may have hoped to communicate to Clara that, in time, all of the obstacles to their love would be removed.

Schumann's treatment of this first theme is similar to Beethoven's treatment of themes in that both composers often base themes on small motives. Authors may use the terms fragmentation or foreshortening<sup>51</sup> when referring to small motives. Fragmentation typically involves dividing a musical idea into smaller parts and exploiting those ideas individually. Foreshortening, on the other hand, is a process by which progressively smaller fragments of a musical motive or theme are used to extend a musical phrase. For example, Beethoven uses foreshortening in the

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<sup>51</sup> Terms used by Alfred Brendel in *Music Sounded Out: essays, lectures, afterthoughts* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1991).

beginning of the first movement of his Piano Sonata in F minor, op. 2, no. 1 (Example 13). The first theme opens with a two-measure figure that is first repeated then extended using progressively smaller units.

The image shows a musical score for the first movement of Ludwig van Beethoven's Piano Sonata in F minor, op. 2, no. 1, measures 1-9. The score is in F minor, 3/8 time, and marked 'Allegro.' The first system shows the beginning of the first theme with a two-measure figure. The second system continues the theme with various dynamics and articulations.

**Example 13.** Ludwig van Beethoven: Piano Sonata in F minor, op. 2, no. 1, I, mm. 1-9

Fragments of the resulting first theme form the basis of the first movement, especially the development. Similarly to Beethoven, Schumann builds his themes on motives, although he does not typically use fragmentation or foreshortening. In fact, his process often unfolds in reverse. He begins with smaller ideas and builds larger sections through their sequencing and repetition. The exposition of op. 11 is comprised mainly of the sequencing and the repetition of various combinations of the “Robert” and “Clara” motives from the first theme (See Examples 6 and 7). Gerald Abraham notes how Schumann emphasizes smaller themes over form: “The individual theme or melody being especially valuable for its own sake, its function as structural material tends to be neglected. Indeed with the earlier Schumann, structure is merely a framework on which to spread themes; the parts matter much



**Example 15.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, I, mm. 414-419

It would be hard to claim that references to Clara were not an integral part of this movement.

Schumann uses musical techniques that are parallel to literary techniques to express his musical ideas. His continual juxtaposition of contrasting sections and brief motives parallels the long sections built from short clauses in the literary works of Richter and Hoffmann. Understanding the message behind the music helps enhance any performance of this Sonata. The musical quotes and the variations of the Clara motif unify the Introduction and the *Allegro vivace* and also tie together the first and second movements.

Just as the final fifth of the Introduction becomes the basis of the first theme, the ending of the *Allegro vivace* leads into the second movement. Schumann removes voices from his texture in the last three measures until only one remains (See Example 15). This single note A, which has been sustained through these three measures, is all that remains of the F-sharp minor chord. Instead of re-playing the note, Schumann lets it fade away. At the opening of the second movement, the A returns, re-harmonized as the root of A major (Compare Examples 15 and 16). This harmonic shift from minor to major is striking.



**Example 16.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, II, m. 1

The short second movement, titled *Aria*, possesses a tranquil lyricism. Here, Schumann transcribes the Lied “An Anna II” (meaning “To Anna II”) which appeared in a set of eleven songs he composed in July 1828. In the Sonata, the Lied is transcribed from F major to A major. The poem was written by Justinius Kerner (1786-1862) as the fifth part of *Epsteln*, a set of poems from the volume *Die lyrischen Gedicht*.<sup>54</sup> Two poems from *Epsteln* tell of the love between Andreas and Anna. Schumann sets the second of these poems, which focuses on Andreas’ thoughts about Anna while he lies dying on the battlefield.<sup>55</sup> While the poem has three stanzas, Schumann only sets the first two stanzas in his song.

Translated from the German, the poem reads:<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Justinius Kerner, “An Anna II,” trans. Sharon Krebs, [http://www.recmusic.org/lieder/get\\_text.html?TextId=9287](http://www.recmusic.org/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=9287), accessed 1 June 2009.

<sup>55</sup> Graham Johnson, liner notes, <http://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/tw.asp?w=W3241>, 2003, accessed 8 April 2013.

<sup>56</sup> “An Anna II,” additional notes by Sharon Krebs, [http://www.recmusic.org/lieder/get\\_text.html?TextId=9287](http://www.recmusic.org/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=9287), 2008.



<p>Not in the valley of [my] sweet homeland          By the murmuring of the silvery spring –          But as I am carried pale from the          battlefield          I think of you, you [my] sweet life!</p>	<p>Nicht im Tale der süßen Heimat          Beim Gemurmel der Silberquelle,          Bleich getragen aus dem Schlachtfeld          denk' ich dein,          Du süßes Leben, denk ich dein!</p>
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<p>All [my] friends have fallen in battle.          Should I alone remain here?          No, the pale herald is already          approaching,          To guide me back to the sweet          homeland.</p>	<p>All' die Freunde sind gefallen,          Sollt' ich weilen hier der Eine?          Nein, schon naht der bleiche Bote, der          mich leitet,          Der nicht leitet zur süßen Heimat.</p>
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<p>Braid into [your] hair the bridal wreath,          Prepare your bridal raiment          And the full, scented bowls:          For we shall all return          To the valley of the sweet homeland.</p>	<p>Flecht ins Haar den Kranz der Hochzeit,          Halt bereit die Brautgewande          Und die vollen, duft'gen Schalen:          Denn wir kehren alle wieder          In das Tal der süßen Heimat.</p>
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Schumann had a great love for literature and enjoyed the text painting aspects of *Lieder*.<sup>57</sup> Kerner's poem, therefore, guides Schumann's compositional choices. The *Lied* is in ABA form, where A is the first stanza of the poem and B is the second. Repeating the first stanza of the poem emphasizes the hope and peace found in the death of Andreas. Schumann's writing for the piano is fairly similar between the *Lied* and its transcription in the second movement of the *Sonata*. The piano accompaniment for the *Lied* is simpler, mainly mid-register repeated chords (Example 17). In the *Sonata*, Schumann only makes minor alterations and changes the key (Example 18).

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<sup>57</sup> Brown, *The Aesthetics of Robert Schumann*, 27.

Andante *p* *cresc.*

Nicht im Ta - le der sü - ßen Hei - mat beim Ge -

*p*

8 \*

**Example 17.** Robert Schumann: *An Anna II*, mm. 1-3<sup>58</sup>

Aria

Senza passione, ma espressivo

Pedale

**Example 18.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, II, mm. 1-4: Clara motif E to B

Why would Schumann have transcribed this particular Lied in his Sonata?

One possible answer lies in Schumann's use of the Sonata to communicate to Clara. Since Schumann composed the original Lied when Clara was nine years old, it is very probable she would have been familiar with the song. Therefore, she would have recognized the melody and understood that Schumann was sending her a message. The poem emphasizes that, even in death, Andreas is thinking about Anna. It was not enough for Schumann to simply express his love for Clara. Just as Andreas was expressing his love for Anna regardless of the circumstances, Schumann wanted

<sup>58</sup> Score of Robert Schumann's original version of *An Anna II* taken from the appendices of Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11 score, ed. Wolfgang Boetticher (Berlin: Henle Urtext Edition, 2009).

to tell Clara that, no matter what happened, he loved her so intensely that she was always in his thoughts. One could almost rename the song “An Clara.” The subtle changes within the transcription reflect this emphasis and turn the original Lied into a love duet.

The melody of the second movement is poignant in its simplicity, much like someone who is dying tries to save words or breath. Each moment could be their last, and they still have important things to say. Two versions of the Clara motif alternate in Section, one in the bass and the other in the soprano (Example 19).

**Example 19.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, II, mm. 6-9

The leaping fifth recalls the first movement and sets up the soprano and bass duet. The melody moves to the bass in Section B, accompanied by a more flowing, arpeggiated figure above it (Example 20).

**Example 20.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, II, mm. 16-19

Schumann may have meant the end of the second movement to represent how much Clara was in his thoughts. A fragment of the opening melody is repeated twice, alternating with the Clara motif in the bass (Example 21).

The image shows a musical score for Robert Schumann's Piano Sonata no. 1, op. 11, II, mm. 41-45. The score is written for piano and consists of two staves: the right hand (r.H.) and the left hand (l.H.). The right hand part features a melody with a circled D-sharp note in the final entry. The left hand part features a bass line with a circled D-sharp note. The score includes markings for 'ritenuto', 'p semplice', and 'r.H.'.

**Example 21.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, II, mm. 41-45: repetition of main theme begins with circled D-sharp

Schumann resolves the dissonance in the melody by changing the original B to a C-sharp in its final entry, conforming to the A major harmony. When performing the second movement, this change means that the pedal may be held down longer to accommodate the ties in the bass, allowing the A major chord to resonate and fade away. This peaceful resolution reflects the message of hope found within the poem. Andreas' death is allowing him to rejoin his friends and Anna. Schumann wanted to comfort Clara with these words and reassure her that, in spite of their current difficulties, they would eventually be together.

The third movement enters abruptly, interrupting the solemn mood of the second movement. This Scherzo provides a dramatic change in key, volume, tempo, and mood, which is especially striking when the movements are performed *attacca*. We have seen how the association with literature heightens the emotional significance of the *Aria*. The success of the third movement results from combining

diverse musical elements to create a playful atmosphere. It is as if Schumann has thrown off the serious side of his love for Clara and is now expressing the jubilation of loving someone and knowing that they love you in return.

Schumann's concept of the word "play" is integral to his creation of musical humor. His humor does not mirror the irony and satire of Richter or Hoffmann, who both pointed out perceived discrepancies with more pessimistic sarcasm. In the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Schumann wrote, "'The word "play" is very beautiful, since "to play an instrument" must have the same meaning. He who does not play *with* the instrument does not play it."<sup>59</sup> Schumann's humor can be seen as originating from the playful perspective of a child. It focuses on neither discrepancies nor sarcasm.

Beethoven was the first to use a scherzo movement in his piano sonatas in the place of the traditional minuet and trio. The word scherzo means "joke" in Italian.<sup>60</sup> Beethoven's scherzo movements typically have a very sprightly mood and are so fast that measures are often felt in one. Schumann enjoyed the humor of a scherzo so much that he included a scherzo movement in all of his piano sonatas. Just as Beethoven transplanted the scherzo from the symphony to the sonata, Schumann's transition back to the final scherzo section indicates that he also conceived his *Scherzo e Intermezzo* symphonically. This transition includes a cadenza passage and elements derived from recitative. Solo *scherzando* lines alternate with larger chords, resembling the alternation between soloist and tutti

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<sup>59</sup> Robert Haven Schauffler, *Florestan: the life and work of Robert Schumann* (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 1945), 88.

<sup>60</sup> "Scherzo," *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*.

orchestra. The chords are also accented *sforzando*, adding to their full sound (Example 22).

**Example 22.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, III, m. 167

After a dramatic pause, Schumann specifies the solo instrument he has in mind, *quasi oboe*. The performer must be able to switch from a full orchestral color to the color of a single oboe.

Schumann uses a variety of elements in the *Scherzo e Intermezzo* of op. 11, including hemiola, syncopation, dotted rhythms, off-beat accents, dance rhythms, and imitation. A performer of this movement needs the spirit of a comedian. What is interesting about Schumann's *Scherzo* is that the Trio section is an Intermezzo (Figure 2).

Section	Theme	Key	Features
Scherzo:	A	F-sharp minor	- Dotted rhythms - Hemiola - Unusual accents - Syncopation - Changing pattern - "Unstable"
	B	A major	- Legatissimo vs. Leggierissimo - Consistent pattern - "More stable"
	A	F-sharp minor	
Intermezzo:	A	D major	- Polonaise rhythm - Exaggerated tempo, rhythm, dynamic swells
	B	E min. - B min.	
	A	D major	
Transition:		Modulatory	- Unmeasured - Improvisatory - Orchestral indications - Recitative-like
Scherzo:	A	F-sharp minor	

**Figure 2.** Robert Schumann's Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, III: structure of the third movement

John Daverio's article for *The Cambridge Companion to Music* includes a discussion of how Schumann's compositional style includes mixing ideas not previously combined. "Among the more notable features of his earlier keyboard music is its general fluidity, its straddling the boundaries between strictly segregated musical types."<sup>61</sup>

The beginning of the scherzo, Section A, provides a complete contrast in character from movement two, much like the difference between Schumann's Florestan and Eusebius. The dotted rhythms and unusual accents make it sound like a caricature (Example 23).

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<sup>61</sup> Daverio, "Piano Works I: a world of images," *The Cambridge Companion to Schumann*, 68.

**SCHERZO e INTERMEZZO**  
**Allegro**

*Pedale*

**Example 23.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, III, mm. 1-4: Clara motif circled

The left-hand melody again outlines the Clara motif. After a brief imitative section, Schumann's accents create the hemiola effect from triple to duple (Example 24).

*marcatissimo*

**Example 24.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, III, mm. 27-32: Clara motif

Schumann does not transition to Section B of the scherzo. In fact, the sudden entrance of Section B makes it feel like Section A was cut off early (Example 25).

**Più Allegro**  
*legatissimo*  
*pp leggerissimo*

**Example 25.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, III, mm. 46-52



Section B has the lilt of a waltz and is relatively stable and tranquil when compared with the jauntiness of Section A. Schumann establishes a rhythmic pattern that remains the same for the entire section. The melody is marked *legatissimo*, “as smoothly as you can play,” while the octaves accompanying the melody are marked *leggierissimo*, “as lightly as you can play.”<sup>62</sup> Although Schumann wrote *Più Allegro* for Section B, if the tempo is taken too quickly, the contrasting articulations and the waltz-like character may be lost. An interpretive dilemma is created by the *accelerando* back into Section A. If the *Più Allegro* were indeed played faster than Section A, one would expect a *ritardando* rather than an *accelerando* as one is moving back into the slower tempo.

The intermezzo originated in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a comedy inserted between the acts of *opera seria*.<sup>63</sup> The comic characters in the Intermezzo often reappeared in the final act of the opera itself, tying both plots together. Schumann chose to retain the comic character for his Intermezzo. The expression marking reads, *Alla burla, ma pomposo*, “always mockingly, but dignified.”<sup>64</sup> A *burla* is a style of musical composition that originated in Italy during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was a comic sketch in the *commedia dell'arte*, involving some kind of practical joke. Ulrich Tadday provides a possible answer as to why Schumann would label his Intermezzo “*alla burla*.”

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<sup>62</sup> Definitions from *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*.

<sup>63</sup> While composed years after Schumann’s Sonata, the three Intermezzi of Brahms’ Op. 117 are examples of the development of the intermezzi to include works of a more lyrical character.

<sup>64</sup> Definitions and origin of word “*burla*” from *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*.

By indicating the composer's intention, they [programmatic titles and expressive directions] awaken the recipient's interest in a piece of music that promises to be more than a fugue or a sonata, which their titles signify as pure forms. At the same time, by connotation and association, titles direct the recipient's interest in a specifically unspecific direction, that is, they lend wings to a player's or a listener's imagination without restricting its freedom.<sup>65</sup>

Schumann's practical joke combines the comic elements of the intermezzo and burla with the rhythm of the stately Polish polonaise. The polonaise was a processional dance of nobles typically of moderate tempo in 3/4 meter. The rhythm of the dance is continual eighth notes with two sixteenth notes on the last part of the first beat.<sup>66</sup> Schumann's version of the polonaise is in the expected meter and rhythm. The slow tempo, rhythm, accents, and dynamic swells over-emphasize the traditional characteristics of the polonaise, creating humor. The polonaise's stately processional character is completely altered by the exaggeration of the long-short element of the polonaise rhythm. Instead of sixteenth notes on the second half of beat one in the right-hand, Schumann uses double dots and two thirty-second notes (Example 26).

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<sup>65</sup> Ulrich Tadday, "Life and literature, poetry and philosophy: Robert Schumann's aesthetics of music," *The Cambridge Companion to Schumann*, ed. Beate Perrey (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 44.

<sup>66</sup> "Polonaise," *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*.

Intermezzo  
Lento *alla burla, ma pomposo*

The image shows a musical score for the Intermezzo movement of Robert Schumann's Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, III, measures 147-150. The score is in F-sharp minor and 3/4 time. It features a treble and bass staff. The treble staff has a melody with accents and triplets. The bass staff has a rhythmic accompaniment with a circled Clara motif in the treble clef.

**Example 26.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, III, mm. 147-150: Clara motif circled (in treble clef)

While the polonaise emphasizes the downbeat, Schumann includes accents on the weaker beats of the measure. Some of these accents in the left-hand appear to outline the Clara motif (C to F-sharp). The hairpin dynamic markings and *crescendi* compliment and enhance the accents. The tempo and double-dotted notes also give the Intermezzo a feeling of pomposity. Instead of the polonaise's moderate tempo, Schumann writes *Lento* (See Example 26). The entire Intermezzo feels unpredictable and self-important. Could it be that, after the love story in the first two movements, Schumann is using this movement to mock Clara's father, Friederick Wieck?

Schumann is most innovative in the finale, *Allegro un poco maestoso*. While composers typically use rondo or sonata-allegro form for their finales, Schumann interweaves a complex patchwork of nine themes. Some theorists label this movement an extended sonata-allegro form. Others consider it a rondo form or a sonata-rondo hybrid. At its simplest, this movement is a two-part form (AA') with coda (Figure 3).<sup>67</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Charles Rosen, *Sonata Forms* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1980), 368-388. Various adaptations of this idea are also used by Sekino Keiko and Robert Jensen.

Sections	Measures	Keys Used
A	1-177	<u>F-sharp minor</u> , <u>A major</u> , A minor, E-flat major, C minor, E-flat major, E-flat minor, A major, F-sharp minor, A major
(bridge)	177-190	<u>F-sharp minor</u>
A'	190-368	<u>F-sharp minor</u> , <u>A major</u> , A minor, <u>E-flat major</u> , C major, A minor, C major, E-flat major, C minor, E-flat major, B-flat minor
(bridge)	368-381	<u>E-flat minor</u>
Coda	381-end	E-flat major, <u>F-sharp major</u>

**Figure 3.** Robert Schumann's Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, IV: two-part structure with main key centers underlined

Sections A and A' differ only in the order and repetition of themes. The coda begins as though it were a return of the opening of Section A but moves to more virtuosic material. A literary trend of the time was to write in many small sections. As reflected in my adaption of Charles Rosen's analysis of this movement, Schumann's choice of nine themes could mirror this trend (Figure 4).

Part I	Bars	1	17	25	32	39	43	50	66	74	86	98	114	126	134	142	160	177
	Theme	A	B	C <sup>1</sup>	D	C <sup>1</sup>	C <sup>2</sup>	A	B	D	C <sup>3</sup>	C <sup>4</sup>	E	F	G	H	I	bridge
	Key	f#/A	a-Eb	Eb	Eb	E	Eb/c	c/Eb	eb-A	A-f#	f#	A	A	A	A	-f#	f#	V/f#
		Tritone		Tritone				Tritone (A and Eb majors)										
Part II	Bars	190	206	214	221	228	232	239	255	262	276	288	304	316	324	332	351	368
	Theme	A	B	C <sup>1</sup>	D	C <sup>1</sup>	C <sup>2</sup>	A	B	D	C <sup>3</sup>	C <sup>4</sup>	E	F	G	H	I	bridge
	Key	f#/A	a-Eb-C	C	C	C	C/a	a/c	Eb	Eb-c	c	-Eb	Eb	Eb	Eb	-bb	bb	V/eb
		Tritone		Tritone				Tritone										
Coda	Bars	381	397															
	Theme	A	new															
	Key	Eb/F#	F#															

**Figure 4.** Robert Schumann's Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, IV: formal analysis<sup>68</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Figure adapted from Charles Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, 309.

While Schumann never credited a specific inspiration for this movement, the juxtaposition of short themes calls to mind the influence of Richter and Hoffmann. The premise of Hoffmann's book *Lebensansichten des Katers Murr* ("The Life and Opinions of Tomcat Murr") is that the same event can be interpreted in different ways. Hoffmann does this by juxtaposing the "autobiographies" of Murr and Kreisler. Schumann's choice of nine themes in this finale could also reflect Richter's irregular sentence structures and spontaneous juxtapositions of emotions. Such an unpredictable patchwork of themes brings a feeling of spontaneity, as if Schumann is describing scenes at a market or fair and is continually distracted by something new.

Since Themes A, C, and D are repeated most often, one could argue that they are the most important of Schumann's nine themes. Each of these three themes is based on a different element that is closely associated with Schumann. Marked *Allegro un poco maestoso*, the movement opens with Theme A, a rising chordal pattern that feels like a heroic fanfare. The alternating staccato and legato articulation help to propel the theme upward, and contrary motion between the hands expands and then contracts (Example 27).

## Theme A:

**FINALE**  
**Allegro un poco maestoso**

*ff* *Pedale* *sf*

**Example 27.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, IV, mm. 1-5: fifths circled are F-sharp to C-sharp and A to E

The articulation makes the theme feel like it is in duple meter as opposed to triple, a hemiola effect similar to Section A of the third movement (See Example 24). Theme A is lengthened to a rounded binary form, and each return of this theme is identical in form. The complimentary phrase of the theme serves as a foil to its tension (Example 28).

*sf* *p*

**Example 28.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, IV, mm. 6-10: complimentary phrase begins at circle

Theme C is based on the melodic reinvention of a single rhythmic motive: groups of four sixteenth notes with a rest on the third sixteenth. Marked *delicato*, the first statement of Theme C is a three-note rising and falling scale pattern that follows a similar contour to Theme A (Example 29).

Theme C<sup>1</sup>:

**Example 29.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, IV, mm. 21-25: Theme C<sup>1</sup>

The articulation requires lightness of the arm to create a delicate sound, which is a wonderful contrast to the grounded, majestic opening. This rhythmic pattern for Theme C appears in a number of different contexts, including a leaping melody line (Example 30), a repeated note pattern (Example 31), and broken chords (Example 32).

Theme C<sup>2</sup>:

**Example 30.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, IV, mm. 86-89: Theme C<sup>2</sup>

Theme C<sup>3</sup>:

**Example 31.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, IV, mm. 96-99: Theme C<sup>3</sup>

Theme C<sup>4</sup>:

**Example 32.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, IV, mm. 108-110: Theme C<sup>4</sup>

It is important to note that the rhythmic signature for Theme C is first introduced in Theme B (Example 33).

**Example 33.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, IV, mm. 16-23: Theme B

While Theme B may be brief, it initiates the tonal departure from F-sharp minor and



A major by modulating to E-flat major. This sets up Schumann's emphasis on the tritone relationship throughout the finale as seen previously in Figure 4. In Part II, Theme B extends the modulation to C major, allowing for new tonal possibilities in subsequent themes.

Theme D always appears in conjunction with Theme C. Both Themes are expressive and lyrical. The imitative opening of Theme D reflects the influence of J. S. Bach and is slightly extended in each of its entries (Example 34).

**Example 34.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, IV, mm. 29-34: Theme D begins with circle

Themes D's character and ending contour is similar to the end of Section A in movement two (Examples 35 and 36).

**Example 35.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, IV, mm. 35-38: end is A-flat to E-flat, a Clara motif



**Example 36.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, II, mm. 11-13: end is G-sharp to C-sharp, a Clara motif

Theme A returns triumphantly in measure 381, this time signaling the beginning of the coda. Although the finale is in 3/4, Theme A has a march-like quality, and this hemiola is now enhanced by additional accents (Example 37).

**Example 37.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, IV, mm. 380-383: Theme A in F-sharp major

Schumann also composed a march in 3/4 meter in his “March des ‘Davidsbündler’ contre les Philistins” from *Carnaval*, op. 9. The ensuing coda of op. 11 is very bravura in character and very demanding for the pianist. It includes octaves, syncopations, leaps, and chords reminiscent of Schumann’s contemporary, Franz Liszt.

Rushing to the end of the finale is a feature of Schumann’s piano sonatas. In fact, this youthful urge to want to do things faster and faster is a hallmark of his

style. For the new material of the coda, Schumann begins *Più Allegro* and progressively increases in speed. The next twenty-eight measures include an *accelerando*, *sempre accelerando*, and *stringendo molto*. Schumann uses similar markings in the finale to his Piano Sonata no. 2 in G major, op. 22: *prestissimo* and *immer schneller und schneller* (“always faster and faster”). It is in the first movement of op. 22 where Schumann carries this through to its most extreme. The expression mark at the opening says *So rasch wie möglich* (“as quickly as possible”). The movement ends, however, with Schumann writing *Schneller* and then *Noch schneller* (“faster” and “still faster”). One must be careful to play the opening at a tempo from which they can still play progressively faster.

In the Sonata op. 11, another element enhances the tension of the conclusion. The final arpeggiated figure contains both melody and accompaniment, with the melody creating a hemiola to the basic rhythm (Example 38).



**Example 38.** Robert Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F-sharp minor, op. 11, IV, mm. 455-462

It is also significant that the coda is in F-sharp major. Schumann chooses to end in a major key as if he is continuing his message of hope to Clara that everything would end well. These elements alone are enough to give the end a very heroic feel, but Schumann saves the most victorious gesture for the end. The leap from the grace

note to the final chord is triumphant, the height of the finale's tension, virtuosity, and speed. It adds depth and finality, as if Schumann is communicating Clara one last time his belief that they would eventually be together.

## Conclusion

Robert Schumann's Piano Sonata in F-sharp minor, op. 11 is a synthesis of diverse elements, the most important of these being its extra-musical connection with Clara. After reading Schumann's dedication of the Sonata to her, Clara would have recognized familiar themes and quotes. The opening theme of the first movement combines a quote from Schumann's *Fandango* with a quote from Clara's *Scène fantastique* op. 5, no. 4. Schumann's interweaving of these two quotes could be seen as representative of their relationship, and both quotes contain versions of the highly debated Clara motif (See Example 8). In fact, the Clara motif is present in the main themes of each movement (See Examples 4, 8, 18, 23, 27). While we will never know if the third movement was intended to mock Wieck, the finale could be viewed as Schumann's belief that they would eventually triumph over Wieck and be married.

The second movement *Aria* is pivotal in understanding the emotional significance of the Sonata, because it shows that the Sonata cannot be viewed solely from a musical perspective. The movement is a transcription of Schumann's Lied, "An Anna II," and its text is about love, hope, and the eventual future together for Andreas and Anna. Schumann used the text about Andreas and Anna to reflect his thoughts about his relationship with Clara. He first quotes the Lied's melody in the Introduction of the Sonata (Compare Examples 4 and 18), and its presentation in the key of A major foreshadows the key of the second movement. The entire Lied is transcribed in the second movement.

Ironically, Clara may have quoted Schumann's Lied in one of her

compositions before Schumann used it in his Sonata. The second movement of Clara's Piano Concerto in A minor, op. 7 is based on the melody from Schumann's Lied (Example 39).



**Example 39.** Clara Schumann, Piano Concerto in A minor, op. 7: melody from Schumann's Lied "An Anna II"<sup>69</sup>; Clara motif E-flat to B-flat

Clara was working on her Concerto (composed 1832-1835)<sup>70</sup> at the same time Schumann was working on his Piano Sonata in F-sharp minor, op. 11 (composed 1832-1836). Schumann even helped Clara with the orchestration of her Concerto's final movement.<sup>71</sup> Both Clara's op. 7 and Schumann's op. 11 were published in 1836, and it seems more than coincidental that they would both publish works in the same year using the same melody in their second movements (Compare Example 18 with Example 40). Clara performed the premier of her Concerto on November 11, 1835,<sup>72</sup> and they were separated just over a month later. The Clara motif and the poem of

<sup>69</sup> Clara Schumann, *Piano Concerto in A minor, op. 7*, (Leipzig: Freiderich Hofmeister, n.d.).

<sup>70</sup> Nancy B. Reich, "Schumann, Clara," Accessed 29 Jun. 2013.

<sup>71</sup> Peter Ostwald, *Schumann: the Inner Voices of a Musical Genius*, 124.

<sup>72</sup> Nancy B. Reich, "Schumann, Clara," (*Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/25152>, Accessed 29 Jun. 2013.

Schumann's Lied appear to hold special significance for the both of them. As soon as Robert published his Sonata op. 11 in 1836, he sent Clara a copy. In defiance of her father's wishes, Clara then put Robert's Sonata on her August 1837 concert program. There can be little doubt that their decision to use the Lied was something they decided to do together.

This type of musical communication was not unusual for Schumann. He included references to people and places in previous works, such as the reference to Ernestine von Fricken in *Carnaval*, op. 9. Even as a married couple, Schumann and Clara often communicated, not by direct discussion, but by composing together and writing messages to each other in their marriage diary.<sup>73</sup> While it is unfortunate that neither Schumann nor Clara made any direct reference to a Clara motif in their writings, there are oblique references to extra-musical connotations. For example, Schumann began the Fantasy in C major, op. 17 immediately after finishing the Sonata op. 11 and spent three years perfecting it. Ostwald's biography relates that Schumann told Clara its first movement in particular "may well be the most passionate I have ever composed – a deep lament for you."<sup>74</sup> The first movement quotes Beethoven's "An die Ferne Geliebte," a song for the distant beloved,<sup>75</sup> and Rosen believes Beethoven's references to his distant beloved parallels Schumann's distant beloved Clara.<sup>76</sup> Schumann prefaces the Fantasy with a mystical statement by Friedrich Schlegel, which in English reads, "Through all of the tones that sound in this colorful earth-dream, there emerges one ethereal tone for him who listens in

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<sup>73</sup> Ostwald, *Schumann: the Inner Voices of a Musical Genius*, 166-169.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>76</sup> Rosen, *The Romantic Generation*, 103.

secret.”<sup>77</sup> The opening theme of the Fantasy begins with a step-wise descending fifth that is often used as a good example of the Clara motif (Example 40).

Durchaus phantastisch und leidenschaftlich vorzutragen. M.M. ♩ = 80. Composé 1836.

*sp*

*ff*

*Pedal.*

**Example 40.** Schumann: Fantasy in C major, op. 17, mm. 1-7: Clara motif A to D<sup>78</sup>

Techniques from earlier composers, such as Ludwig van Beethoven, Franz Schubert, and J. S. Bach, helped Schumann convey this extra-musical significance. These techniques include using short motives that build larger sections, extreme juxtaposed contrasts, polyphony, and longer, lyrical melodies. Gerald Abraham summarizes the compositional style of Schumann’s early works in his first book about the early Romantic masters:

Rapidly changing, often boldly chromatic harmony; pedal effects novel in the 1830s and passages impossible without pedal; cross-rhythms and syncopation; endless variety of accompaniment figures – chordal, arpeggiated, broken-chordal, counter-melodic, broken-chord figures suggesting counter-melodies that are never explicit – all help to envelop essentially clear and simple melodic ideas in a rich, diffused, Romantic

<sup>77</sup> Stewart Gordon, *A History of Keyboard Literature* (Belmont, CA: Cengage Learning, 1996), 271.

<sup>78</sup> Robert Schumann, *Fantasy in C major, op. 17*, ed. Clara Wieck Schumann (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1879).



light.<sup>79</sup>

Each movement of the Sonata has aspects of these techniques. The first movement includes syncopation, hemiola, a variety of rhythms, and countermelodies. The second movement has lyrical melodies reminiscent of Lieder. The Scherzo movement has suddenly contrasting themes and a wide variety of articulations, dynamic markings, tempi, dance rhythms, and accents. The finale is a patchwork of nine short themes, and it is important to note its harmonic basis is the tritone relationship. This more original and free approach to form is similar to the literary styles of Richter and Hoffmann.

Schumann's synthesis of these diverse elements reflects the literary techniques of his favorite German Romantic authors, Jean Paul Richter and E. T. A. Hoffmann. Their literary techniques include hyper-expressivity, use of short clauses to build longer sections, humor, juxtaposed moods, and an integration of diverse extremes. These techniques are a part of the eighteenth century trend toward the miniature, the "poetic depth of meaning"<sup>80</sup> Holly Watkins refers to in her book. In music, musicologists call this concept the Romantic Fragment,<sup>81</sup> a complete piece of music that has additional layers of extra-musical significance. Schumann's musical techniques reflect these literary techniques, and the extra-musical association with Clara adds yet another level of meaning.

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<sup>79</sup> Gerald Abraham, *The New Grove Early Romantic Masters I* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1985), 179.

<sup>80</sup> Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth in German Musical Thought*, 86-94.

<sup>81</sup> Rosen, *The Romantic Generation*, 50.

Schumann's resulting style is often difficult to understand. Even Clara wrote, "Listen Robert, won't you for once compose something brilliant, easily understandable, and something without titles, something that is a complete, coherent piece, not too long and not too short?...I would play [your compositions] gladly, but the public doesn't understand them."<sup>82</sup> Using a literary example, Rosen underscores some of the challenges in understanding Romantic Fragments. "Apparently simple, this Fragment is symmetrical, well balanced, and closed in expression – but it invites and even forces the reader to crack it open by speculation and interpretation."<sup>83</sup> This same statement also holds true for Schumann's op. 11. The Sonata is itself a complete whole, and each individual movement is also complete. A full understanding of the Sonata, however, requires more than viewing it from a purely musical perspective. Schumann translates literary characteristics of German Romantic authors into music. The musical techniques used to do this help imbue Schumann's Sonata with extra-musical significance, especially in relation to Clara, and understanding this diverse spectrum of elements can be invaluable to anyone attempting to interpret this Sonata.

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<sup>82</sup> Anthony Newcomb, "Schumann and the Marketplace: from butterflies to Hausmusik," *Nineteenth Century Piano Music*, Edited by R. Larry Todd (New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1990), 266.

<sup>83</sup> Rosen is referring to the following quote by Schlegel: "You can only become a philosopher, not be one. As soon as you think you are one, you stop becoming one." From *The Romantic Generation*, 96.

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