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SCHOOL OF MUSIC

SCHUMANN'S *DICHTERLIEBE*: A REVELATION OF A GREAT COMPOSER'S LIFE  
AND PASSION

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## ABSTRACT

From a young age, German composer Robert Schumann's passions for music, drama, and literature were evident. Through personal tragedies and an uncertain career path, these talents guided Schumann into a successful career in composition. Childhood interests in literature and the influence of German author Jean Paul Richter had a profound effect on Schumann's compositional style. His view that music was the most effective aesthetic vehicle for expression was combined with Jean Paul's definition of Romanticism to create a philosophy of music Schumann would come to live by.

In the face of poverty, commercial failure, and artistic frustration with piano composition, Schumann took up a new compositional medium in the form of songwriting. The resulting Year of the Song in 1840 produced over 120 vocal compositions, including the *Dichterliebe* song cycle. This masterpiece of German Lieder and Romantic song cycle tradition is widely regarded as one of the greatest ever written.

*Dichterliebe*, song settings of poems by German poet Heinrich Heine, displays Schumann's distinctive ability to set text to music. His use of tonal relationships utilizes modality to guide the narrative along its trajectory. His affinity for romantic irony is evident in the creative ways in which he expresses this literary concept musically. Finally, Schumann's unique talents in creating complex piano arrangements to provide musical imagery and aesthetic atmosphere set this work apart from others of the time.

This paper will explore the life of Robert Schumann, how his passions, interests, and heartaches shaped his compositional style, examine his techniques and unique approach to text painting, and discuss considerations for the performer of *Dichterliebe*.



The *Dichterliebe* song cycle is widely regarded as one of the most prominent cycles in the German Lieder genre, as well as western music literature as a whole. The cycle by Robert Schumann is a musical setting of poetry by German poet Heinrich Heine consisting of sixteen songs, all connected with a single, overarching narrative. Countless singers, students and professionals alike, have performed this work in recitals and concerts. The influence that *Dichterliebe* has on western music has much to do with the music-text relationships that Schumann develops throughout the work. Schumann's ability to use text painting techniques to bring each poem to life and present the tale of love, grief, and heartache creates memorable individual songs that feel decidedly unified as part of the entire cycle. In order to present such an influential work effectively, the burden is on the performer to develop a deeper understanding of each of the songs, an understanding of how these songs form a connected, coherent story, and develop a consistent character in the delivery of the work.

## **The Composer: Robert Schumann**

### **The Early Years**

Robert Schumann was born in 1810, around the same period as the births of his Romantic contemporaries: Felix Mendelssohn in 1809 and Richard Wagner in 1813.<sup>1</sup> Born in the small town of Zwickau, Germany, Schumann was exposed to the arts at an early age. His father August Schumann was a bookseller, and his mother Christiane shared her husband's passion for literature. Both of Schumann's parents were singers, and Christiane was the first to suggest that

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Geck, *Robert Schumann: The Life and Work of a Romantic Composer* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 1.

Robert take piano lessons.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Robert's maternal great-grandfather and great-uncle were both career musicians, offering a possible ancestral origin to his own musical gifts.<sup>3</sup>

Schumann began his music training around the age of seven. He quickly showed proficiency as a pianist, as well as a talent delivering dramatic readings and monologues.<sup>4</sup> His interest and love of drama and literature, interests encouraged by his parents, continued to be a vehicle of creation throughout Robert's early life.

In 1825, tragedy struck the Schumann family. Robert's sister, Emilie, died in an apparent suicide.<sup>5</sup> Due to a disfiguring skin condition, Emilie had long suffered from depressive episodes and was referred to as dealing with a "quiet madness."<sup>6</sup> The death of his sister had an profound and interesting effect on Schumann. All of Schumann's writings that reference the deaths of family members or friends convey the distress these losses caused him. However, references to Emilie's death are curiously absent. One possible explanation for this is Schumann's own views on mental illness. In his time, madness was so romanticized that a tendency toward it was deemed necessary to be truly creative.<sup>7</sup> Schumann himself was fascinated with madness, specifically artists who went insane or committed suicide. The fact that he did not discuss his sister's death in his writings could indicate that this event changed the way Robert viewed

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<sup>2</sup> Eric Frederick Jensen, *Schumann* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 5.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 11.

madness and suicide. By the 1830s, he began displaying concern over his own mental health, indicating that this youthful fascination had turned to genuine fear.<sup>8</sup>

### **Music or Law?**

In 1826, just one year after the tragic loss of Emilie, August Schumann died suddenly.<sup>9</sup> This unexpected loss of his father, who fully supported his musical pursuits, had a considerable impact on Schumann. As the young man approached adulthood, he became increasingly drawn to music. His mother, however, was opposed to the idea of her son becoming a professional musician. She believed that studying law would provide Robert more financial security.<sup>10</sup> So, somewhat half-heartedly, Schumann attended the University of Leipzig to study law. Once there, he began battling fits of insomnia and panic attacks.<sup>11</sup> In order to alleviate the stress of studying far from home was to become immersed himself into the local social scene among fellow art lovers. Pianist and teacher Friedrich Wieck was one such socialite whom Schumann met his first year in Leipzig in 1828. Shortly after making his acquaintance, Schumann began studying piano with him.<sup>12</sup> Clara Wieck, Friedrich's daughter, who was nine years old in 1828, was Wieck's primary student. Schumann was fascinated by the talented Clara. He noticed that she seemed

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>10</sup> Donald C. Sanders, *Experiencing Schumann: A Listeners Companion* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 3.



more restrained and singularly focused at nine years old than he was as a young man nearing the nineteen.<sup>13</sup>

Under the pretense of focusing on his law studies, Schumann devoted most of his time to music. Few specifics are known regarding his early study with Wieck, but Schumann's technical practice was intensely focused on finger exercises, as well as expanding his piano repertoire.<sup>14</sup> Though Schumann practiced dutifully, Wieck noticed an unchecked emotional energy and lack of discipline in his young pupil, even going as far as to call Schumann "the hot-head."<sup>15</sup> Despite valuing Wieck's tutelage, Schumann felt unfulfilled in Leipzig. In 1829, Schumann made the move to Heidelberg under the guise of studying law with a famed law professor.<sup>16</sup>

Schumann's time in Heidelberg was marked by an overindulgent lifestyle. Throughout his adolescence Schumann had been attracted to various carnal pleasures. In his diary he noted how delighted he was by beautiful girls, good wine, and cigars, as well as how his lack of restraint made him feel guilty.<sup>17</sup> The Heidelberg period saw Schumann attend party after party, all the while drinking excessively to mask his chronic emotional issues.<sup>18</sup> While pretending to be focused on law, Schumann practiced the piano furiously by day and attended numerous parties by night. After attending a concert in Frankfurt by the famous virtuoso violinist, Paganini, in

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Jensen, *Schumann*, 24.

<sup>15</sup> Sanders, *Experiencing Schumann*, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Geck, *Robert Schumann*, 26.

<sup>17</sup> Jensen, *Schumann*, 13.

<sup>18</sup> Sanders, *Experiencing Schumann*, 4.

1830, Schumann wrote his mother informing her that he had resolved himself to pursuing music as a profession.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Beginning of Schumann's Music Career**

After his mother consulted with Wieck about her son's abilities, it was decided that Robert would return to Leipzig to continue his music studies.<sup>20</sup> For Schumann, whose extravagant lifestyle had incurred a considerable amount of debt, further travel was not an option. Therefore, he obliged and returned to Wieck. Shortly after his return, Schumann developed a paralysis of his right hand, effectively ending his hopes of becoming a virtuoso pianist.<sup>21</sup> Wieck attributed this injury to Schumann's use of an immobilization device intended to strengthen the fingers. However, the phenomenon of focal dystonia has been proposed as a potential diagnosis of Schumann's hand injury. Focal dystonia occurs when certain parts of the brain become hyperactive and prevent certain muscles from functioning correctly, causing coordination issues between the brain and the hand. If this is the case, Schumann's hand problems were not caused by his practice routine, but excessive or inappropriate exercises may have worsened the condition.<sup>22</sup>

Whether his hand paralysis was caused by inappropriate use of a finger strengthening device or by a pre-existing condition, the injury caused Schumann to focus his talents on composing rather than performing. This avenue was not entirely new to Schumann at this point in his life. As a child he had written various songs and simple melodies. As he developed as a

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<sup>19</sup> Geck, *Robert Schumann*, 28.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

musician, Schumann began composing more complex works. In 1829 he composed a Quartet in C Minor for piano and strings.<sup>23</sup> In addition to composing, Schumann began laying the foundations for a career in music journalism. In 1831, he wrote a review of Chopin's Variations for Piano and Orchestra on Mozart's "Là ci darem la mano" for the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, a music journal in Leipzig.<sup>24</sup> By 1834, Schumann, along with supporters in Leipzig's musical community, founded *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (New Journal for Music) in order to promote the music of young, progressive composers who were rarely featured in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*.<sup>25</sup>

### **Relationship with Clara Wieck**

By the time Schumann returned to Leipzig, Clara Wieck had begun to blossom into a young teenager whose talents both frustrated and fascinated him. While he respected her father, Schumann believed that Wieck was exploiting her talents for his own financial gain.<sup>26</sup> Although Schumann was initially jealous of the young Clara's extraordinary accomplishments at the piano, he gradually grew more supportive and protective of her. As his ability to perform slowly diminished, Clara gradually became a vehicle to showcase his piano compositions. He even had her substitute for him in a performance of his piano composition *Papillons (Butterflies)*, op. 2 in 1832.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Sanders, *Experiencing Schumann*, 4.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

By 1834, Clara had become an attractive young woman. Therefore, her father was becoming increasingly nervous about her relationship with Robert. Despite his admiration of Schumann's musical gifts, Wieck feared that Clara's infatuation with Robert could harm her blossoming career as a virtuoso pianist. In an attempt to put an end to the budding relationship, he sent Clara to Dresden to study composition for six months.<sup>28</sup> For a time, Wieck's plan was successful. It was during this time that Schumann became infatuated with another of Wieck's students, Ernestine von Fricken. The two were engaged and Schumann even composed two major works for piano that are associated with their short engagement: *Carnaval*, op. 9, with a musical motive based upon the letters of her hometown of Asch, and *Symphonic Etudes*, op.13, a set of etudes and variations based on a theme Ernestine's father had shown him.<sup>29</sup>

Though engaged to another woman, Schumann never truly stopped caring for Clara. After ending his engagement with Ernestine, Schumann began writing to Clara in Dresden. Before long, the two were beginning to talk of marriage. Between 1834 and 1835 Schumann composed Sonata in F-sharp Minor, op. 11 for piano, dedicating the work to Clara. Wieck, however, would not allow her to acknowledge the dedication and demanded that she return all the letters that Schumann had written her. Not only was Schumann's career stagnant and unstable, but marriage would likely put an end to the career Wieck had wanted for Clara.<sup>30</sup> When her father returned to Leipzig on business, Schumann visited Clara in Dresden secretly. Wieck

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>30</sup> Jensen, *Schumann*, 117-118.

heard of this visit and promptly threatened to shoot Schumann while banning him from ever visiting his home again.<sup>31</sup>

In 1837, Clara performed three of Schumann's *Etudes symphoniques* and wrote to Robert to declare her love for him. By August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1837, the couple was engaged. With an official engagement, they hoped her father would stop trying to force them apart.<sup>32</sup> Schumann wrote to Wieck explaining his love for Clara and his intentions of commitment and marriage. Although he did not forbid the marriage, Wieck demanded that the couple wait two years so that Schumann could acquire sufficient funds to provide for Clara. This request would prove difficult, as Schumann's failure to impress music critics or make much money from his compositions left him in relative poverty.<sup>33</sup>

While Schumann struggled to earn enough to satisfy Wieck's arduous demands, Wieck was doing everything in his power to separate the couple. Because he had forbidden the couple's correspondence, Wieck frequently searched his daughter's belongings for letters from Schumann. A letter from Clara to Robert during this time mentions that her father had contacted Schumann's former fiancée with the intention of creating tension between his daughter and the composer. Furthermore, composer Louis Rakemann, who was six years younger than Schumann, was in love with Clara and visited her constantly. While Clara found these visits annoying, her

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 118.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

father encouraged Rakemann to visit often.<sup>34</sup> This ordeal put a great deal of stress on Schumann, increasing the number and severity of his panic attacks.<sup>35</sup>

In April of 1839, while Clara was on tour in Paris, Wieck saw an opportunity. He began using Clara's best friend to help him convince Clara to delay her marriage with Schumann until Robert's finances were more secure. As Clara became less resolved about their relationship, Schumann grew more anxious and angry with his future bride. In addition to this new tension with Clara, Schumann's brother Eduard died on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April, increasing the composer's anxiety even further.<sup>36</sup> Eventually, Schumann and Clara appealed to the courts to overrule her father's opposition. After a lengthy period of vicious character attacks and outrageous demands on Robert, the court ruled in favor of Schumann and Clara on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1840. The couple was finally married on September 12<sup>th</sup>, 1840, the day before Clara's twenty-first birthday.<sup>37</sup> This year was known as Schumann's Year of the Song, in which he composed over 120 songs.

### **Attempted Suicide and Death**

By the late 1840s, times were changing. For Schumann, the very romantic ideals and approaches that had served him throughout his career were beginning to fade from his life. One example is the romantic view that genius and madness could not be separated. It was not uncommon for artists to engage in mad behavior such as drinking, debauchery, and drug use, and Schumann was no stranger to this life. However, after marrying Clara, who did not approve of

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 134-135.

such behavior, it became difficult for him to conform.<sup>38</sup> In addition, as a man who struggled with anxiety and depressive episodes throughout his life, Schumann was approaching a breakdown. He began a monotonous routine as a musical director at Düsseldorf, in which he struggled mightily as a conductor.<sup>39</sup> He dealt with severe anxiety and depression symptoms for the last decade of his life. After years of battling these symptoms, Schumann attempted suicide by throwing himself into the Rhine in 1854.<sup>40</sup> After being rescued by boatmen on the river, the composer consented to be committed to Endenich Asylum. He remained there for two years, occasionally showing signs of improvement until his death. Schumann died in Endenich Asylum at 4:00pm on July 29<sup>th</sup>, 1856, his beloved Clara by his side.<sup>41</sup>

## **Schumann's Compositional Style**

### **Aestheticism in Music**

To comprehend Schumann's ability to set poetry to text with such an emotional effectiveness, it is necessary to understand his view of aestheticism in art. A concept known as "the poetic (das poetische)" is a central category in the composer's view of music.<sup>42</sup> Schumann's view of "the poetic," or aestheticism in the arts is as follows: "the aesthetic principle is the same in every art; only the material differs." In other words, since the same aesthetic principle can be

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<sup>38</sup> Peter Ostwald, "XII. Engulfing Depression, 1844-1845," in *Schumann: The Inner Voices of a Musical Genius* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1985), 191-192.

<sup>39</sup> John Alexander Fuller-Maitland, "The Shadow Of Death," in *Schumann* (Cambridge Library Collection - Music. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 40.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Hubert Moßburger, Edoardo Torbianelli, Jeanne Roudet, Jean-Pierre Bartoli, and Douglas Seaton, "Robert Schumann's Poetic Paraphrases: Analytical Implications," in *Ohne Worte: Vocality and Instrumentality in 19th-Century Music* (Leuven: Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2014), 201.

expressed by, and experienced through, music, visual art, and poetry, it must be possible to translate the same aesthetic substance from one art form to another.<sup>43</sup> Along with the shared substantive aspect of the poetic, the popular opinion of Schumann's generation that music was the highest form of art due to its ability to express and make sense of the unspoken is another aspect of his concept of *das poetische*.<sup>44</sup> In this view, music is able to take the content of written poetry and elevate certain aesthetic or emotional content within the prose, thus taking the seemingly incomprehensible essence of poetry to a new plane of existence. This transcendence takes the poetic content into a plane where the aesthetic essence can only be understood through feelings and no longer through the use of words alone. This is the plane of existence in which music has the ability to deliver emotional content and create an aesthetic atmosphere.<sup>45</sup> In Schumann's opinion, a composition's to evoke this emotional, poetic state in the performer or in the audience is what makes a composition worthy of praise.<sup>46</sup>

As previously discussed, Schumann was creative from an early age. He once recalled, "Even in my youth, I felt the urge to create, if not in music, then in poetry."<sup>47</sup> During these early years Schumann devoted himself to studying literature. Beginning in 1823 he assembled a pair of literary miscellanies which included poems, anecdotes, biographies of composers, etc. By 1825, Schumann and about a dozen school friends created a literary society that would meet with the purpose of broadening their literary knowledge.<sup>48</sup> With such an extensive background in

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid..

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Jensen, *Schumann*, 8.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 8-9.



literature nearly placing Schumann on the track of becoming a professional writer, it is clear to see how his love of literature would influence his aesthetic views of art. While music became Schumann's medium of choice, his literary background was a major reason that the concept of *das poetische* became central in his compositions.

Many of Schumann's views on aestheticism and Romanticism were influenced by the German writer Jean Paul Richter. Jean Paul offered up the following definition for the Romantic in an 1804 novel: "The Romantic is beauty without limit, or *beautiful* infinity, just as there is a *sublime* infinity..."<sup>49</sup> This definition of the Romantic had such an influence on Schumann that he chose it as a motto for his *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* weeks after taking over as sole editor.<sup>50</sup> Most telling, Schumann wrote "Definition des Romantischen" ("Definition of the Romantic") beside this phrase in the margin of his motto book.<sup>51</sup> This definition by Jean Paul was also used to capture the aesthetic background of *Papillons*, op. 2: a piano suite composed in 1831 inspired by Jean Paul's novel, *Flegeljahre*. Schumann's own copy of this novel contains annotations associating individual movement numbers of *Papillons* with specific passages from the book.<sup>52</sup>

### **Piano Compositions**

While Schumann's affinity for the melding of words and music was remarkable, songs were not his primary compositional focus during the early part of his musical career. Until around 1840, Schumann wrote nearly exclusively for the piano. During this time his

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<sup>49</sup> Berthold Hoeckner, "Schumann and Romantic Distance," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 50, no. 1 (1997): 60.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

compositional style entered a process of development and refinement. Early piano compositions were technically difficult and featured an obvious, profound influence from Jean Paul.<sup>53</sup> Compositions by Schumann in the 1830s contain four distinctive traits that speak to this influence. First, they feature the use of brief statements of an aphoristic nature. These brief musical ideas mirror Jean Paul's use of short, pithy statements, which Schumann was rather fond of. Also, a love of mystery and concealing hidden meanings is shared between the two artists. Frequently in his novels, Jean Paul conceals the true identity of characters or uses mysterious machinations within the plot as common literary devices. In Schumann's music this trait took the form of borrowing musical ideas from various composers to serve as cryptic communication or of including musical puzzles. A third trait in common is the use of romantic irony by referencing elements of earlier works. Jean Paul tended to include offhanded references to the plots or characters from earlier works in other, completely unrelated novels. Schumann attempted to do the same musically. For example, he uses the quotation of a theme from *Papillons* in his *Carnaval*, even marking this reference in the score. Additionally, the same quotation of a folk tune can be heard in his opp. 2, 4, and 9. Finally, the inclusion of abrupt juxtapositions of humor with more dramatic elements is shared between Jean Paul and Schumann. Jean Paul was fascinated with humor and considered it a crucial aspect of the human aesthetic experience, even noting that humor could be present in music.<sup>54</sup> In many of Schumann's compositions, including *Dichterliebe*, use of humor is found in sudden, contrasting shifts in tone.

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<sup>53</sup> Jensen, *Schumann*, 82.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

Early piano compositions by Schumann were inspired by his interest in popular songs, polonaises, and waltzes for piano solo and duet.<sup>55</sup> Early on, Schumann's fascination was not swayed by the critical opinions of his day that such musical styles were of a lower art form than those of symphonies and concerti, which were seen as more highbrow.<sup>56</sup> Composer Franz Schubert's focus on dance music (otherwise known as *Trivialmusik*) fascinated a young Schumann and provided him some level of inspiration, with Schubert's *Deutsche Tänze*, op. 9 (D. 365) providing a "thematic springboard" of sorts to Schumann's *Carnival*.<sup>57</sup> In addition, Schumann's op. 3 is a set of polonaises for piano four hands that is clearly paying homage to Schubert.<sup>58</sup>

Due to his passion for literature, Schumann's compositions tend to gravitate toward descriptive, character-driven elements and structures. One of the most obvious examples of this is in *Papillons*, op. 2. The twelve piano pieces in this collection draw inspiration from the imagery of a masked ball that occurs in the final chapters of Jean Paul's novel *Die Flegeljahre*. The title of Schumann's work translates to "Butterflies" in reference to the masks worn by the revelers at the ball, as well as a descriptor of the light nature of the pieces themselves. All twelve pieces are dances (most of them waltzes) with each movement directly related to the same scene from *Die Flegeljahre*.<sup>59</sup> In addition, *Carnaval*, op. 9 is a collection of piano pieces in which each piece represents a person, either real or fictional, that holds some significance to Schumann. Moreover, each individual piece provides a character sketch for these various personages. The

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<sup>55</sup> Erika Reiman, *Schumann's Piano Cycles and the Novels of Jean Paul*, Boydell & Brewer, 2004, 35.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* 36.

<sup>59</sup> Sanders, *Experiencing Schumann: A Listeners Companion*, 31.

work as a whole places each of these characters at a ball during Carnival season.<sup>60</sup> These complex works demonstrate Schumann's utilization of music as a programmatic, narrative medium of expression, clearly effected by his fondness of literature.

### **Commercial Failure**

Despite their popularity and importance to Western music today, Schumann's early piano works were viewed by some of his contemporaries to be difficult, somewhat confused compositions. In an 1845 article surveying Schumann's compositions, Franz Brendel detailed reasons that Schumann struggled to find a broad audience. At the time, little had been written about his piano works in musical journals, and his works were not being played by virtuosi in concert settings. Both of these were two important ways in which music gained exposure to the public.<sup>61</sup> Additionally, Brendel notes that Schumann's pieces were incredibly difficult in the technical sense but offered little aural satisfaction when mastered, due in part to their harsh harmonic quality. According to Brendel, until the technical difficulties are mastered and one develops a keener understanding of the piece, the music comes off as "bewildering." In addition to Brendel's assertions of Schumann's piano music, a substantial overview of these early works published in 1850 states that they seemed to disappear from public consciousness without a trace, perhaps because of their lack of objectivity.<sup>62</sup>

In these early years of piano composition, Schumann was under tremendous pressure to obtain the financial security necessary to marry Clara. However, his compositions were not

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> R. Larry Todd, *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music*, 2nd ed., New York, NY: Routledge, 2004, 268.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

finding a commercial audience or achieving any critical acclaim. By early 1838, amidst financial hardship, the struggling to attain public approval in his piano works, and the constant hostility from Wieck, Schumann's compositional style began undergoing a change.<sup>63</sup> In letters to Clara, Schumann indicated that the piano was losing its ability to satisfy his musical expressivity: "The piano is getting too limited for me...I am paying more attention to melody now..."<sup>64</sup>

### **Year of the Song**

After about a year of experimenting with compositions for string quartet, Schumann began to shift his focus to composing German Lieder. In his letters to Clara and others during this time, he complained that the piano was beginning to become a source of frustration. In an 1839 letter to fellow composer Heinrich Dorn, Schumann wrote, "I would often like to crush my piano. It has become too confining for my thoughts."<sup>65</sup> Moreover, he wrote in an 1839 review, "He who limits himself to the same forms and situations ultimately becomes a mannerist and a Philistine...There is nothing more detrimental to an artist than to continue within a genre which has become convenient and comfortable."<sup>66</sup> His growing frustration with composing for the solo piano and his apparent detestation of becoming artistically stagnant lead Schumann to vocal composition. However, this change of medium did not occur solely out of artistic consideration, but also out of commercial opportunity.

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<sup>63</sup> Barbara Turchin, "Schumann's Conversion to Vocal Music: A Reconsideration," *The Musical Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (1981): 397.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Jensen, *Schumann*, 192.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

Although Schumann did not serve as the official song critic for *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, his role as editor did require him to select Lieder to use as a supplement in publications on occasion.<sup>67</sup> In a letter to composer Herrmann Hirschbach on May 28, 1839, Schumann requested that the composer send him some Lieder and other vocal music to consider for use in the journal. In this letter, Schumann asks if the composer is still actively composing music for voice, commenting, "...Or are you perhaps like me who, all my life, have considered vocal composition inferior to instrumental music and never regarded it as a great art? But tell no one about it!"<sup>68</sup> This clearly indicates that, at this time, Schumann did not consider vocal music to be on the same level of artistic value as instrumental composition. This echoes a belief he expressed in 1828, that "Every composer is a poet, only at a higher level," suggesting that a composer does not have a need to utilize words and that text could be a hindrance.<sup>69</sup> However, with financial pressures mounting in his legal battle to marry Clara, the popularity of songs and other vocal music as a commercial genre influenced the resistant Schumann to attempt song composition. By mid-1839, he began to fill a notebook with poetic text he thought suitable for a musical setting.<sup>70</sup>

Despite his initial resistance to song composition, Schumann entered what would become known as "the year of the song" in 1840. Unexpectedly, he discovered that composing Lieder seemed to alleviate the artistic frustration that the piano composition had brought. In an 1840 letter to Clara, he wrote, "Sometimes it is as if I have discovered completely new paths in

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<sup>67</sup> Turchin, "Schumann's Conversion to Vocal Music," 400.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 401.

<sup>69</sup> Jensen, *Schumann*, 193.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

music.”<sup>71</sup> By the end of the year, Schumann composed over 120 solo Lieder, enough for several years of gradual publication. Unlike his previous commercial struggles, with the public and contemporary critics failing to understand his style, Schumann’s Lieder found a clearly defined audience, as they were intended almost exclusively for performing at home.<sup>72</sup> Also, the process in which he composed his songs differed from that of his solo piano works. Instead of relying on his piano expertise to fuel his compositional process, Schumann created his melodies while not at the piano.<sup>73</sup> This allowed for a more singable and memorable melody to be created, leading to a more conventional composition.<sup>74</sup> Only after the melody of the song was written did Schumann turn his attention to the piano accompaniment. With his skills in piano composition, these song accompaniments that far exceeded simple harmonic support for the voice would set Schumann apart from other Lieder composers of his day.<sup>75</sup>

### **Approach to Text Settings**

Schumann’s complexities in piano compositional style combined with his new-found ability to write conventional, memorable vocal melodies allowed him to create commercially and critically successful Lieder. Schumann’s innate desire to musically express narrative ideas had so developed his compositional abilities that it propelled him to become one of the most influential German Lieder composers in history. Much of this influence is seen in his ability to set text to music. To do this, Schumann developed several creative techniques. One such technique is a

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Turchin, “Schumann’s Conversion to Vocal Music,” 403.

<sup>74</sup> Jensen, *Schumann*, 194.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

practice that would later be utilized by composer Richard Wagner commonly: the use of heterophony to leave vocal lines unresolved, only to have them completed by instrumental accompaniment, or vice-versa.<sup>76</sup> Both composers tended to compose certain melodies in which both the voice and accompaniment would realize the melody. Sometimes one is superimposed over the other, while other times one is left incomplete to be finished by the other. One excellent example of this is seen in the second song of the *Dichterliebe* cycle, “Aus meinen Tränen spriessen,” in which the vocal line never completes the melody, arriving at the penultimate note of the key on three separate occasions only to leave the piano to resolve the phrase, as seen in Figure 1.<sup>77</sup>

The image shows a musical score for the second song of Schumann's *Dichterliebe* cycle, "Aus meinen Tränen spriessen." It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (D major). The piano accompaniment is in bass clef. The lyrics are "all' und vor deinem Fenster soll klin-gen das Lied der Nachti-gall." The score includes dynamic markings like "pp" and "ritard." and a "Ped." marking for the piano.

Figure 1, “2. Aus meinen Tränen spriessen”<sup>78</sup>

The use of key changes as an expressive device is another characteristic of Schumann’s song style. For example, Schumann’s “Widmung,” from op. 25 features a drastic modulation

<sup>76</sup> Charles Rosen, "Robert Schumann, a Vision of the Future," in *Freedom and the Arts: Essays on Music and Literature* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2012), 198.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Robert Schumann, and Heinrich Heine, *Dichterliebe* [C.F. Peters, Leipzig, ?, monographic, 1844].



from A flat major to E major, a diminished fourth below, to provide a highly expressive depiction of peace brought on through his relationship with his love.<sup>79</sup>

Figure 2, Modulation in “Widmung” used to enhance text expression<sup>80</sup>

Schumann uses this technique throughout many of his vocal compositions, commonly utilizing tonal shifts from major to minor keys. In “Roselein, Roselein”, from op. 89, for example, Schumann alternates between A minor, to represent the poet sleeping, to the relative major to illustrate the poet awaking from his sleep, as seen in Figure 3.<sup>81</sup> Occasionally, he utilizes momentary changes in key without altering the key signature in order to provide a detailed text

<sup>79</sup> Kathryn Obenshain, "Robert Schumann: Songwriter," *American Music Teacher* 23, no. 4 (1974): 6.

<sup>80</sup> Robert Schumann, *Myrthen*, Op. 25, no. 1 “Widmung,” 1840.

<sup>81</sup> Obenshain, “Robert Schumann: Songwriter,” 6.

painting, as seen in “Nun hast du mir,” from op. 42 in the use of chromaticism to alter the harmonization of the vocal line as to illustrate the mood of emptiness and despair, shown in Figure 4.<sup>82</sup>

pp  
 pflicht' es anch und küsst' es fein: „dorn - lo - ses Rö - se - lein!“  
 pp  
 R. S. 141.

196

15

Ich er - wacht' und schau - te drein: „batt' ich's doch! wo mag es  
 sein?“ Rings im wei - ten Sonnen - schein stan - den nur Dorn - rö - se - lein!  
 Mit Pedal  
 ritard.  
 ritard.

Figure 3, “Roselein, Roselein” from Gesänge, op. 89.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

still zurück, der Schleier fällt, da hab' ich dich und mein verlorenes Glück, du meine Welt!

*pp*

ritardando.

Welt!

ADAGIO. Tempo wie das erste Lied.

*pp*

*Ped.*

*p*

Figure 4, "Nun hast du mir," from *Frauen-Liebe und Leben*, op. 42.<sup>84</sup>

A common characteristic in all of Schumann's vocal compositions is the role of the piano accompaniment. While not a specific text painting technique, his use of the piano in vocal works has a profound effect on the expression of the text. In many song compositions, Schumann sought to increase the piano's role in delivering the poetry, creating a level of interdependence between the voice and piano.<sup>85</sup> In many accompaniments, the piano and voice are so integrated that neither part can exist without the other, creating a relationship in which both forces are

<sup>83</sup> Robert Schumann, *Gesänge*, op.89, 1850.

<sup>84</sup> Robert Schumann, *Frauen-Liebe und Leben*, op. 42, 1840.

<sup>85</sup> Jürgen Thymel, "Schumann: Reconfiguring the Lied," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Lied*, edited by James Parsons, Cambridge Companions to Music (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 127.

totally dependent on each other.<sup>86</sup> While this does not occur in every setting, it is a predominant characteristic of his compositional style.

In addition to the interdependence of the voice and piano, Schumann utilizes the piano accompaniment to do more than simply provide harmonic support. The piano becomes the vehicle used to create an atmospheric tone or provide a voice to the environmental settings of song. In his cycles he reuses exact harmonic ideas, or at least similar ones, to call into reference a previous song, many times in an ironic manner. This characteristic of Schumann's song cycles can be found throughout *Dichterliebe* as he expresses musically the irony of Heine's poetry.

## **DICHTERLIEBE, OP. 48**

### **Historical Positioning—Why this Setting?**

It was during the explosive “Year of the Song” that Schumann would compose the *Dichterliebe* song cycle. While this is now recognized as one of the most celebrated Lieder cycles of all time, the timing of this composition is intriguing. It was during this compositional outburst in the 1840's that Schumann was finally able to marry Clara. As mentioned earlier, the longstanding battle with Clara's father over the right to marry her was a constant stress factor in Schumann's life that, at least in part, led him to composing Lieder. By the time he had composed well over 100 songs in 1840, discovered his passion for writing vocal music, and finally married Clara, Schumann had finally tasted success. Why, then, during this time of great personal breakthrough, did Schumann compose *Dichterliebe*? This poetry dealt with rejected love and obsession and how the poet finds himself in an unhappy emotional state.

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

One way in which to approach this question is to consider Schumann's mental state at the time of the composition. After five long years of legal battles and financial difficulty, Robert and Clara were married in September of 1840.<sup>87</sup> However, *Dichterliebe* was composed in about one week during May of the same year, during the middle of the legal proceedings and Wieck's vicious character attacks.<sup>88</sup> One could make the argument that the melancholy topic of Heine's *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, the lost, unrequited love of the poet, resonated with Schumann due to the hardships surrounding his relationship with Clara. After all, Schumann experienced various manic-depressive episodes throughout his life, many brought on from the deaths of loved ones. Could this song cycle be a way of expressing the pain and stress of being separated from his love? Could the cycle be an outpouring of the emotional pain and anxiety over the constantly delayed wedding? Perhaps it could. However, Schumann's connection with literature provides a far more likely alternative.

Schumann's knowledge and appreciation for poetic literature provided a rich selection from which to choose his texts. Schumann selected poems that he were rich in opportunities for character development, as well as texts that he could psychologically represent and express via music.<sup>89</sup> As a result, he was attracted to gloomy, melancholy, and dramatic themes, a literary taste that is not uncommon for the time.<sup>90</sup> What set Schumann's settings apart from other Lieder was his determination to musically expressing *his* reading of the poetry, not simply what the text

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<sup>87</sup> Jensen, *Schumann*, 140.

<sup>88</sup> Sanders, *Experiencing Schumann*, 64.

<sup>89</sup> Jensen, *Schumann*, 194.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

of the poem reads. This meant he would not hesitate to alter the text to suit his expressive goals.<sup>91</sup>

Along with his taste in melancholy poetry, Schumann was fascinated with the concept of romantic irony, in which an author creates an illusion of reality, specifically a beautiful reality, only to shatter this illusion with a sudden shift in tone, a personal comment, or a drastic statement of contradiction.<sup>92</sup> Much of this fascination can be traced to his earlier influence by the writing of Jean Paul, who commonly used romantic irony and juxtaposition in tone in his novels. Heine's *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, the text from which *Dichterliebe* is based, are poems filled with examples of romantic irony that attracted Schumann's interest. One example is found in the fourth song of Heine's *Lyrisches Intermezzo* as well as *Dichterliebe*, "Wenn ich in deine Augen seh." In the song, seen in Figure 5, the poet notes that, "when I look into your eyes, my suffering and pain all vanish..." and "...when I kiss your lips, my very being is restored..." However, the final lines of the song state, "yet, when you say, 'I love you!' I must weep most bitterly."<sup>93</sup> The ironic shift in mood from loving to weeping bitterly represents a common theme throughout the *Lyrisches Intermezzo*. Schumann likely selected this text for its exquisite use of romantic irony.

Interestingly, Schumann had set Heine's poetry in his *Liederkreis*, op. 24 just three months before composing *Dichterliebe*.<sup>94</sup> These settings, though similar in overall tone and

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>92</sup> Heinz J. Dill, and Robert Schumann, "Romantic Irony in the Works of Robert Schumann," *The Musical Quarterly* 73, no. 2 (1989): 173.

<sup>93</sup> Lois Phillips, *Lieder Line by Line, and Word for Word* (New York, NY: Scribner's Sons, 1980), 164.

<sup>94</sup> Rufus Hallmark, "Why *Dichterliebe* Twice? The Case of Schumann's Opus 24 and Opus 48," in *Of Poetry and Song*, by Ann C. Fehn, Rufus Hallmark, Harry E. Seelig, and Jürgen Thym, ed. Jürgen Thym (New York, NY: Boydell & Brewer, University of Rochester Press., 2010), accessed April 3, 2019, 391.

theme, distinctly different from each other. Both are settings of Heine's *Buch der Lieder* ("Book of Songs"), which was a book made up of multiple cycles written by Heine.<sup>95</sup> The *Liederkreis* is based upon the "Junge Leiden" ("Young Suffering") cycle of the *Buch der Lieder*, while *Dichterliebe* is based upon the *Lyrisches Intermezzo*. One of the primary differences between the settings is Schumann's selective and organizational approach to the poems themselves. In the case of *Liederkreis*, Schumann sets all nine of the Heine's poems in order, making him the only composer to have set all nine of the cycle. For *Dichterliebe*, however, Schumann begins by composing for the first seven poems before choosing the final thirteen songs from the remaining fifty-nine poems.<sup>96</sup> Schumann also found it necessary to edit the text of certain poems, as well as adjusting the order in the cycle to suit his compositional desires—something not uncommon in Schumann's approach to songwriting.

### **Analyzing *Dichterliebe***

One of the most prominent features of *Dichterliebe* is the thematic cohesiveness in which Schumann sets the poetry so that tells a cohesive story. Early piano works of the programmatic vein show his experience in composing music from a narrative approach. In the case of *Dichterliebe*, a connection to a singular story is certainly present. However, before one can discuss exactly how Schumann sets a narrative vocal work in *Dichterliebe*, the view of unity in song cycles as a genre must be discussed.

In the nineteenth century as the new genre of the song cycle was making its appearance, unity in a song cycle was based almost entirely on the poetic factors of the setting. Alternatively,

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 399.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

by Schumann's day unity had much more to do with musical coherence and tonal relationships.<sup>97</sup> Despite this, some scholars assert that *Dichterliebe* is not a narrative, but rather a collection of fragments making up a whole. Those in this camp such as Beate Perrey suggest that neither Heine, nor Schumann aimed at completing a singular, complete story. Instead, they sought to create "Romantic fragments" that merely point to a larger reality.<sup>98</sup> Those who support this view assert that the individual songs of the cycle are linked by this larger reality, but not in a way that creates a coherent narrative. Others, such as Berthold Hoeckner, find close correlation between the harmonic structures and key relationships of each song, as well as in the poem's narrative trajectory.<sup>99</sup> Hoeckner and those who agree with him suggest that these correlations are evidence that Schumann composed the work to represent a specific story. The truth may actually fall somewhere between the two opinions. Perrey asserts that fragments in Romantic era works of literature and music were common, especially in correspondence with romantic irony. Schumann and Heine both shared a love of romantic irony and may have approached the poetry and music as fragments pointing to a larger reality. However, as Hoeckner discussed, the tonal relationship and the narrative trajectory suggest *Dichterliebe* exists as a whole work. In fact, Hoeckner also suggests that Schumann may have composed the work to serve as something suspended between both views, serving as an ironic paradox of wholeness and fragmentation.<sup>100</sup>

Regardless of Schumann's paradoxical intent musically or the potential of a fragmented intent on behalf of Heine, the work of *Dichterliebe* seems to serve a narrative trajectory. As

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<sup>97</sup> Lauri, Suurpää, "The Song Cycle as a Genre: Some Recent Views," in *Death in Winterreise: Musico-Poetic Associations in Schubert's Song Cycle* (Indiana University Press, 2014), 159

<sup>98</sup> Hallmark, "Why Dichterliebe Twice?," 399.

<sup>99</sup> Suurpää, "The Song Cycle as a Genre," 161.

<sup>100</sup> Berthold Hoeckner, "Paths through Dichterliebe," *19th-Century Music* 30, no. 1 (2006): 80.



noted before, the tonal relationships between keys and the order in which the poems are presented conveys an easily understood, overarching tale of unrequited love. Moreover, many of the individual songs feature cross-references of material (which will be discussed in further depth below). As a result, the performer should approach the work as a narrative with the individual songs telling an interconnected story across time.

The text-to-music relationships Schumann creates in *Dichterliebe* utilize many previously discussed techniques in unique and complex ways. Consequently, *Dichterliebe* is one of the most unique Schumann compositions. Unlike in previous works, Schumann does not feature quotations of other composer's work.<sup>101</sup>

### **Narrative Coherence**

In *Dichterliebe*, the narrative relationships between songs mark the complexity of the arrangement, leading many scholars to debate whether the narrative is linear or if the storyteller is experiencing the events as emotional memories which are not experienced in a linear fashion. While either view could be argued, the most likely is a complex melding of both views. From the narrative relationships between the individual songs, it is apparent that the poet is both remembering (and in some cases reliving) some events in a non-linear way. At the same time, the poet is telling the story as it unfolds. In other words, some of the songs in the cycle are memories of things which occurred in the past, while others are the thoughts and emotions of the poet as they occur in chronological order.

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<sup>101</sup> Jonathan Dunsby, "Why Sing? Lieder and Song Cycles," in *The Cambridge Companion to Schumann*, edited by Beate Perrey (Cambridge Companions to Music. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 107.

Following the mixed linear viewpoint laid out above, the first three songs in the cycle occur in the past when the poet and his love were together. The tonal ambiguity of A major versus F# minor set the stage emotionally for the member of a new romantic relationship: giddy hope offset by fear of rejection or abandonment. In the opening song, “Im wunderschönen Monat Mai,” the couple is happy in the “wondrously beautiful month of May,” with “love springing up in (the poet’s) heart.” “Birds sing” as the poet confesses his “longing and desire.”<sup>102</sup> In “Aus meinen Tränen spriessen”, the poet longs for his love to be reciprocated. By “Die Rose, die Lilie, di Taube,” all is happy and the couple is in love, with the poet declaring the purity of his love for her. When the fourth song, “Wenn ich in deine Augen seh” arrives, all has been happy. The poet says that looking into his love’s eyes removes all pain and lying on her breast overcomes him with “heaven’s delight.” However, when she says ‘I love you’, he must “weep most bitterly.”<sup>103</sup> At this line in the song it is apparent that the previous three songs have been a memory. Moreover, the fourth song, up until the words “doch wenn du sprichst,” occurs as part of the past in the poet’s memory. At this moment, however, the poet in the present makes the comment that “yet when you say, ‘I love you,’ I must weep most bitterly,” as the memory of her profession of love causes him to weep.<sup>104</sup> As shown in Figure 5, the G# on the word “sprichst” (“says”) along with the piano’s sudden half-diminished chord breaks the pleasantness of the memory, turning it sour.

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<sup>102</sup> Phillips, *Lieder Line by Line*, 163.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

Brust, kommts über mich wie Himmelslast, doch wenn du  
 sprichst: ich liebe dich, so muss ich weinen bitterlich.

Figure 5, “Wenn ich in deine Augen seh”<sup>105</sup>

Until the eleventh song, “Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen,” the poet tells his story in chronological order, including his heartbreak to watching his beloved dance a wedding dance with her new husband. In this song, the narrative takes a bit of a twist. Instead of singing in the first person, the poet takes a step back to tell the fable of “a lad” who “loves a girl, who has chosen another,” yet this “other loves another and has married her.” The girl “out of anger, takes the first man who comes along.” The poet says that this is an “old, old story, but stays forever new,” and breaks the heart of whomever it happens to.<sup>106</sup> The bouncy song sounds like a folk tune accompanying a simple folk tale. One may consider that the poet has left the linear story

<sup>105</sup> Schumann and Heine, *Dichterliebe*.

<sup>106</sup> Phillips, *Lieder Line by Line*, 167.

and tells this tale while out of the flow of time. However, the tone of the previous songs dealing with the heartbreak of the poet's love marrying another suggests another explanation. Instead of leaving the linear timeline, the poet himself is desperately attempting to console himself with the reminder that his situation is one that has happened to countless men before him. The bouncy tune of this song, contrasted the pure sorrow of the previous song, may then be seen as an attempt by the poet to force himself to move on from heartbreak and seek happiness elsewhere. The closing lines of the text stating "he to whom it happens—it breaks his heart in two" are sung on a high Db, moving up to a D natural, and finally reaching its close on an Eb, as shown in Figure 6 below.<sup>107</sup> This is in contrast to the previous line, in which the singer has Bbs below the staff. By shifting the tessitura up, gradually raising by half-steps on this phrase, the singer's true sorrow seeps through into his attempt to move on. Also, the Db notes are the only accidentals the singer has the entire song and they begin on this telling phrase. The events at this line of text are significant; they characterize the true emotional pain coming through the feeble attempt to force happiness into the situation.

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

The image displays two systems of a musical score. The first system features a vocal line in G major with lyrics: "bleibt sie immer neu, und wenn sie just pas - si - ret, dem bricht das Herz ent." The piano accompaniment consists of a treble and bass line. The second system begins with the word "zwei." in the vocal line, followed by further piano accompaniment. The tempo is indicated as "a tempo".

Figure 6, “Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen”<sup>108</sup>

As discussed in the previous section, the twelfth song of the cycle, “Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen” exists as the first and false ending in which the poet tries to forgive and let go. Starting with the thirteenth song, “Ich hab’ im Traum geweinet,” the dreams of his lost love begin. The first dream deals with the sorrow over the loss of his love, as the poet dreams of her in a grave, abandoning him, and, finally, that she still cared for him. “Allnächtlich im Traume” states that the poet dreams of his love every night, and she looked on him with pity as she wept. After she tells him a quiet, secret word, the poet wakes to realize he has forgotten it. Finally, in “Aus Alten Märchen,” the poet dreams of a beautiful fairy tale land with lovely colors and sounds all around. He closes by longing for the dream to be true, but the land vanishes with the coming morning. The final song, “Die alten, bösen Lieder,” finds the poet finally ready to let go of his torment and pain. While he tried to stave off the anguish of truly giving up on the

<sup>108</sup> Schumann and Heine, *Dichterliebe*.

memories and hopes of reconciliation with dreams of his love, he discusses the weight and size of his pain being too much to bear. In fact, giants are needed to carry the weight of the huge coffin filled with his despair and love. When the coffin is cast into the sea, the poet can finally end his obsession and move on.

### **Romantic Irony**

As discussed earlier, one of Schumann's primary attractions to Heine's poetry is his use of romantic irony. One example of irony in *Dichterliebe* is in the ninth song of the cycle, "Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen." In this song, the poet's relationship with his love has ended. The poet hears "flutes and fiddles" and the "resounding trumpets" as he sees his beloved dancing "her wedding round" with her bridegroom. He also hears "a thudding and piping on drums and shawms" as he hears the sobs of "sweet little angels."<sup>109</sup> Heine's text juxtaposes the happiness of the revelers at a wedding party with the sobs of the angels as they presumably weep for the poet's lost love as he watches her dance with her bridegroom. Schumann approaches this juxtaposition musically. The song is in 3/8 time with the overall feel of a waltz. The left hand accompaniment provides a bouncing rhythm of a strong down beat followed by chord structures providing the basis for the dance, while the right hand embellishes a fiddle-like melody. Throughout the dance, however, the minor tonality consistently creates a feeling of apprehension.

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<sup>109</sup> Phillips, *Lieder Line by Line*, 166.

Singstimme. *mf* Das ist ein Flöten und

Pianoforte. *p* Ped. *p*

Geigen, Trompeten schmettern da rein, Trompeten

schmettern da rein. Da

Figure 7, “9. Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen”<sup>110</sup>

In this way, Schumann captures Heine’s ironic tendencies by contrasting the joy of a wedding dance alongside the sorrow of the poet.

“Ich grolle nicht,” one of the most well-known songs of the cycle, provides yet another example of Schumann’s musical use of irony. The poet in this song is declaring to his former love that he bears no grudge against her, at the same time complaining about how she broke his heart. He states that “no ray pierces the darkness of your heart” and in a dream he sees a “serpent eating at your heart. I saw, my love, your wretchedness.” He concludes with the reminder that he

<sup>110</sup> Schumann and Heine, *Dichterliebe*.

bears no grudge.<sup>111</sup> Schumann approaches his accompaniment of this ironic poem in a rather literal way. The German verb, *grollen*, means “to grumble”, “rumble”, “be grudge”, and “be angry with.” The piano accompaniment represents this verb by the rumbling of constant eighth notes throughout the song.<sup>112</sup>

*Nicht zu schnell.*  
*mf*  
 Ich grolle nicht und wenn das Herz auch bricht.

Figure 8, “Ich grolle nicht.” Note the melody and accompanied harmony on the word “Herz” in the third measure.<sup>113</sup>

Additionally, the major tonality and rumbling eighth notes seem to express the apparent attitude of the poet: determined to take the honorable high road despite being tormented by the pain of rejection. The eighth notes provide a harmonic support and aesthetic representation that may cause the listener to assume it is a theme of heroic pride in the face of grave obstacle. The façade

<sup>111</sup> Phillips, *Lieder Line by Line*, 165.

<sup>112</sup> Albright, “Heine and the Composers,” 26.

<sup>113</sup> Schumann and Heine, *Dichterliebe*.



is broken with the second vocal phrase, “und wenn das Herz auch bricht,” shown in Figure 8 above. In saying “even though my heart is breaking,” the word “Herz” (“heart”) is the one “wrong note” out of the key on an A $\flat$ , with a support from a “wrong” F minor chord.<sup>114</sup> The second verse’s building intensity characterizes the true emotion of the poet before returning to the initial rumbling accompaniment alongside the assertion that the poet actually bears no grudge.

Another song filled with ironic interpretation is the fourteenth song of the cycle, “Allnächtlich im Traume.” The song is the second of three dreams in which the poet dreams about his former love. In this particular dream, the poet shares that “every night” he dreams of his beloved, in which he “loudly bursting into tears” throws himself at her feet. She looks at him sadly, gives him a “bunch of cypress” and says to him “secretly a gentle word,” but when the poet wakes, the cypress is gone and “the word I have forgotten.”<sup>115</sup> Instead of a minor setting to reiterate the poet’s melancholy dream, Schumann opts instead for a cheerful tune in B major in 2/4 meter throughout the majority of the setting. When the poet tells of his beloved speaking the secret, gentle word, the singer is given a pianissimo marking to reiterate a soft-spoken quality. The most interesting moment occurs when the poet awakens to find the bouquet of cypress gone and realizes he has forgotten the word she spoke to him. The rising intensity toward the revelation of this secret word is then unceremoniously forgotten. This idea is incredibly ironic on its own. However, Schumann represents this musically through a sudden increase in the tempo of the melodic line with sudden 32<sup>nd</sup> note rhythms. After the poet is given the secret word and bouquet, the steady rhythm of the piano suddenly drops out in favor of sustaining a chord. The

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 26-27.

<sup>115</sup> Phillips, *Lieder Line by Line*, 169.

singer suddenly sings “Ich wache auf” (“I wake up”) on unaccompanied 32<sup>nd</sup> notes, completing the final line about forgetting the word in an abrupt manner. Unlike the ending of the previous two verses, in which the meter changes to 3/4 for a measure for a similar 32<sup>nd</sup> note rhythm in the melody, Schumann ends the song in 2/4, while the melody fails to cadence to the tonic. Instead the singer ends abruptly on the dominant of the key, completing the ironic, anti-climactic end to the dream.

The image shows a musical score for the song "Allnächtlich im Traume" by Robert Schumann. It consists of two systems of music. Each system has a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 2/4. The lyrics are: "Wort, und giebst mir den Strauss, den Strauss von Cy - pressen, ich wa - che auf, und der Strauss ist fort und's Wort hab ich vergessen." The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand. The vocal line ends with a half note G4, which is the dominant of the key, instead of a full cadence to the tonic.

Figure 9, “Allnächtlich im Traume. Schumann’s treatment of the ending highlights its irony.<sup>116</sup>

### Tonal Relationships

One crucial aspect in the coherence of Romantic song cycles is the tonal relationships between the keys of the individual songs that make up the cycle as a whole. These relationships

<sup>116</sup> Schumann and Heine, *Dichterliebe*.

connect the songs together, while they also set the emotional atmosphere in a way that enhances the effectiveness of each setting. This is immediately evident in the opening song of the cycle, “Im wunderschönen Monat Mai,” shown in Figure 10. Schumann sets this initial movement in a way that reflects both the poet’s hope in love (reflected by the text) as well as his fear of rejection. This is done via the competing tonality of F# minor and A major occurring simultaneously throughout the song.<sup>117</sup> The song ends with a major chord in the accompaniment, and the next two songs, each with text dealing with the outpouring of the love for the poet’s beloved, are both in major keys.

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<sup>117</sup> Hoeckner, “Paths Through Dichterliebe,” 72.

*Langsam, zart.* R. Schumann, Op. 48, Heft 1.

Singstimme.

Pianoforte.

Ped.

Im wun - der - schö - nen Monat Mai, als al - le Knos - pen

Figure 10, “Im wunderschönen Monat Mai”<sup>118</sup>

“Wenn ich in deine Augen seh” is in G major, a major fourth above the previous song. Here the poet continues describing his love for his beloved, though the closing lines of text illustrating that something is wrong. The B minor tonality of “Ich will meine Seele tauchen” gives the text a melancholy reading, hinting further at a lost love. In “Im Rhine, im heiligen Strome”, set in E minor, all pretense of a happy tale is gone. “Ich grolle nicht” brings the tonality back to a defiantly proud C major, followed by another decent into A minor in the next song. Schumann continues in like manner, moving along in movements of thirds, fifths, and relative minor keys. Most notable is the tone set by the multiple crossings of major and minor tonality between each

<sup>118</sup> Schumann and Heine, *Dichterliebe*.

song. In this way, Schumann reflects the emotional crisis of the poet's inner struggle surrounding the end of his relationship with his beloved.<sup>119</sup>

By the twelfth song in the cycle, "Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen," the singer is back in a major key and singing of forgiveness. The flowers urge him to forgive, while the phrasing of the melody line hints at reluctance from the poet. Nevertheless, the tonal shift up the circle of fifths, from E $\flat$  major to B $\flat$  major, indicates a positive direction for the poet in coping with his heartache. It is at this point, however, that Schumann takes a considerable turn in tonality. Suddenly in the thirteenth song, "Ich hab' im Traum geweinet," he shifts the key to E $\flat$  minor, a drastic change from the previous B $\flat$  major. There is also an obvious shift in the musical atmosphere, as the singer begins the song unaccompanied, almost resembling a recitative, with the piano answering in staccato chords for the first two verses. Interestingly, this song begins a section of three separate songs whose texts deal with the poet's dreams. The shift out of the tonal norm with the seemingly random key and contrasting song structure brings scholar Berthold Hoeckner to an intriguing theory. He believes that not only does this change set up the three dream songs, but also effectively acts as a first ending to the cycle. He supports this theory by pointing to the lengthy postlude's ambivalent nature which provides a sense of closure not quite matched in the postludes of the first eleven songs. Additionally, the nature of weaving a melody into arpeggios in the right hand of the piano accompaniment seems to harken back to the opening of the first song in the cycle, further advancing the sense of closure.<sup>120</sup> These postludes are

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<sup>119</sup> Hoeckner, "Paths Through Dichterliebe," 73.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 74.

compared in Figures 11 and 12. The drastic shift in tonality, structure, and narrative in “Ich hab’ im Traum geweinet,” representing the beginning of a new idea, support this view.

“Allnächtlich im Traume” and “Aus alten Märchen” feature a return to the major key, each offering different dreams the poet has concerning his love. By the sixteenth and final song, “Die alten, bösen Lieder”, the poet’s final sadness and pain over the end of the relationship brings the tonality to C# minor. However, once the final lines are sung and the coffin containing the poet’s love is cast into the sea, Schumann modulates to D $\flat$  major. He then recapitulates the twelfth song’s postlude, as seen in Figure 12 below, thus harkening back to the first ending, finally laying the cycle to rest.

*ritard.*  
trau - riger blas - ser Mann!

Figure 11, postlude for “Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen”<sup>121</sup>

<sup>121</sup> Schumann and Heine, *Dichterliebe*.

Figure 12, postlude from “Die alten, bösen Lieder”<sup>122</sup>

### Accompaniment

As seen in some of the previous examples, Schumann utilizes the piano accompaniment to direct the narrative along its trajectory. The use of accompaniment to create an emotional response is one way Schumann accomplishes this. For example, in the third song, “Die Rose, die Lilie, die Taube,” the accompaniment portrays the emotional atmosphere of the poet’s state of mind. In the narrative, the poet is in love and happy with his lover. The major tonality of the

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.



song echoes this. The poet tells his love that he once loved “the rose, the lily, the dove, the sun” but that he “loves them no more.” Instead, the poet loves only his lover, “the fine one, the pure one, the only one!”<sup>123</sup> Schumann treats the overjoyed love of the text by making the conversation a fast, rambling, out-pouring of emotion. Just as one may expect a love-sick young man to do, the singer hurriedly and excitedly heaps this affection on the young lady. The quick 2/4 tempo has the singer swiftly moving along, primarily on eighth notes and sixteenth notes. In the accompaniment, featured below in Figure 13, Schumann provides an accompaniment that echoes the singer’s excitement while pushing the feel of the tempo forward. He does this by creating a broken chord accompaniment on sixteenth notes. When this choppy piano accompaniment is coupled with the smoother vocal line, an effect is created in which the pianist sounds as if he or she is trying to keep up with the excited singer’s passionate outburst. If approached correctly, the accompaniment effectively characterizes the desperate zeal displayed in Schumann’s interpretation of the text.

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 164.

*Munter.*

Singstimme. *mf*

Die Ro - se, die Li - lie, die Tau - be, die Sou - ne, die

Pianoforte. *mf*

liebt' ich einst al - le in Lie - bes - woa - ne, ich lieb' sie nicht mehr, ich

Figure 13, “Die Rose, die Lilie, die Taube”<sup>124</sup>

Another way in which Schumann musically enhances the poetry is through the use of musical imagery. In “Im Rhine, im heiligen Strome,” for example, the poet stands in front a great cathedral on the Rhine. The accompaniment of this song is driven by octave structures in the left hand, usually emphasizing beats one and two in cut time. The right hand, commonly emphasizing the and-of one, repeats variations on a dotted rhythm. The created effect simulates the poet’s steps as he slowly approaches, first the cathedral. In this cathedral is a painting of

<sup>124</sup> Schumann and Heine, *Dichterliebe*.

Mother Mary, which the poet says has the “eyes, lips, and cheeks” of his love.<sup>125</sup> The steady walking rhythm effectively captures the trance-like state that the painting has captured the poet in. When the singer has concluded, the accompaniment simulates the poet slowly exiting the cathedral in sorrow.

*Ziemlich langsam.*

Singsstimme.  
Im Rhein, im heiligen Stro - me, da spie - gelt

Pianoforte.  
sich in den Welln mit sei - nem gros - sen Do - -

Figure 14, “walking” accompaniment in “Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome.”<sup>126</sup>

Schumann effectively utilizes dynamic shifts to accurately express the changes in the singer’s mind. In Figure 14, the octave figures in the left hand provide the heavy walking quality to accompany the text, as well as characterize the large size of the cathedral located along the Rhine. However, after the opening lines in which the poet sees the cathedral come into view, he begins describing the picture of Mary located inside the cathedral “painted on golden leather.”<sup>127</sup>

<sup>125</sup> Phillips, *Lieder Line by Line*, 165.

<sup>126</sup> Schumann and Heine, *Dichterliebe*.

<sup>127</sup> Phillips, *Lieder Line by Line*, 165

At this moment, Schumann abandons the octave doubling in the left hand, allowing the dynamic to soften (Figure 15). This changes the characterization from the piano of heavy footsteps approaching a huge cathedral to that of the beautiful painting coming into view, thus creating a change in the timbre for a short time before the octave doubling returns in the next phrase.

me das gros - se hei - li - ge . Cöln. In Dom, da  
steht ein Bild - niss auf gol - denem Le - der ge - mahlt. In  
mei - - nes Le - - bens Wild - niss hats freundlich hin - ein - ge - strahlt.

19

Figure 15, Softer dynamics in the sixth song.<sup>128</sup>

Another important use of musical imagery occurs in the tenth song, “Hör’ ich das Liedchen klingen.” In this sorrowful song, the poet states his “heart would be torn by the wild violence of grief” should he hear “the melody that once my dearest sang.” He says that “a dark

<sup>128</sup> Schumann and Heine, *Dichterliebe*.

longing” drives him to the “wooded heights” where his great sorrow “overflows in tears.”<sup>129</sup>

Throughout the accompaniment, Schumann uses a dotted rhythm in the right hand with a root movement in the left to create the sound of the poet’s tears falling, shown below in Figure 16.



Figure 16, “tears” in “Hör’ ich das Liedchen klingen.”<sup>130</sup>

Schumann also utilizes the piano accompaniment to connect the songs together by calling back specific harmonic or melodic ideas from a previous song. The transition from the seventh song, “Ich grolle nicht” to the eighth song, “Und wüssten’s die Blumen” as an obvious example of this. In the *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, these two poems occur in the same order as they are in *Dichterliebe*. Therefore, the text of the two poems read almost as if the two are actually one large poem. The poet goes from claiming he holds no grudge despite having his heart broken to claiming that the only one in the world who knows of his pain is the same one who broke his heart. Schumann approaches the two settings in a way that highlights the seamless narrative flow between the two texts. As the defiant “Ich grolle nicht” ends on the down beat of a measure in the key of C major, “Und wüssten’s die Blumen” begins on the and-of-two in the relative minor

<sup>129</sup> Phillips, *Lieder Line by Line*, 167.

<sup>130</sup> Schumann and Heine, *Dichterliebe*.

of the previous song. This links the two songs together both rhythmically and tonally. “Ich grolle nicht”, as discussed earlier, features a rumbling accompaniment. This accompaniment rumbles on eighth notes, primarily within the structure of a triad in the right hand with octaves in the left. Paired with the major tonality, this provides an atmosphere of calm confidence. When the next song starts, however, the minor tonality is the first cue that this air of confidence has faded. The rumbling accompaniment, as seen in Figure 17 below, does not feature structured roots and chords. Instead, the right hand alternates thirds on a 32<sup>nd</sup> note rhythm, while the left hand similarly alternates various intervals including thirds, fourths, fifths, and sixths. This gives the impression that the solid confidence of the previous song has devolved into shaky insecurity, almost akin to emotional panic in “Und wüssten’s die Blumen.” Schumann’s choice to carry the rumbling accompaniment over into this song connects the narrative further.

The image shows a musical score for a song. The top system is labeled 'Singstimme.' (Singer) and features a single melodic line in 2/4 time with a dynamic marking of *p* (piano). The lyrics are: 'Und wüs - sten's die Blu - men, die klei - - - nen, wie'. The bottom system is labeled 'Pianoforte.' (Piano) and features a piano accompaniment in 2/4 time with a dynamic marking of *p*. The piano part consists of a right-hand melody of sixteenth notes and a left-hand accompaniment of eighth notes. The lyrics for the piano part are: 'tief ver - wun - det mein Herz, sie wür - - den mit mir'. The score is divided into two systems, each with a large brace under the piano accompaniment.

Figure 17, “Und wüssten’s die Blumen”<sup>131</sup>

In another example, the ninth song, “Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen” is in 3/8 time. The accompaniment provides the imagery of a wedding dance juxtaposed with the poet’s sorrow. “Hör ich das Liedchen klingen,” in which the poet is heading into the forest to grieve his heartache and cry, features a callback to this wedding dance accompaniment. As the song ends and the singer concludes, the postlude features a variation of the sixteenth note “fiddle” line in the right hand of the piano as the song reaches its conclusion, shown in Figure 18. This sets the

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

song chronologically, as the poet can still hear the soft music of the wedding dance in the air as he weeps.



Figure 18, Postlude to “Hor’ ich das Liedchen klingen”<sup>132</sup>

The fifteenth song, “Aus alten Märchen” is the final dream song of the cycle. In E major and 6/8 time, the lively song tells of the poet’s dream of a fantasy land. This dream represents the happiness felt when he was with his love. He wishes this dreamland was real and he could be happy and free, but when he wakes the dream melts away like foam. The 6/8 tempo of the accompaniment with the happy-sounding melody drives throughout the first two-thirds of the song. When the poet states that he wishes he could visit this dreamland, Schumann changes the rhythm to a half-time feel, shown below in Figure 19, creating a bittersweet and self-reflecting

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.



aesthetic for the remainder of the song. In the postlude (Figure 20), he revisits the initial tempo, only to slow to simple dotted half note chords to conclude the song, as the dream melts away with the morning sun.

Mit innigster Empfindung.

Ach! Ach, könnt'ich dort: hin-kom-men und dort mein Herz er-

Figure 19, “Aus alten Märchen” half-time section<sup>133</sup>

pp Ped.

Figure 20, “Aus alten Märchen” post-lude.<sup>134</sup>

Finally, in the last song of the cycle, Schumann uses the left hand of the accompaniment in a “quarter note – eighth note pair – quarter note – eighth note pair” pattern to simulate marching giants carrying a massive coffin. As the giants get closer to the sea, this pattern extends

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

to both hands in the form of a “left hand octave – both hands chord” accompaniment, illustrating the giants slowing as seen below in Figure 21.

The image shows a musical score for the song "Die alten, bösen Lieder" by Robert Schumann. It consists of two systems of music. The first system includes a vocal line (Singstimme) and a piano accompaniment (Pianoforte). The tempo is marked "Ziemlich langsam." and the dynamics include "f". The lyrics for the first system are "Die al - ten bö - sen Lie - der, die". The second system continues the piano accompaniment and the vocal line with the lyrics "Träu - me bö - s und arg, die las - st uns jet - zt be - gra - ben, holt einen gros - sen". The piano accompaniment features a heavy walking pattern in the left hand, often moving in octaves, and a chordal accompaniment in the right hand.

Figure 21, “Die alten, bösen Lieder”<sup>135</sup>

The heavy walking pattern used in this final song is an indirect reference to the similar pattern in “Im Rhine, im heiligen Strome,” shown in Figure 14. Although Schumann characterizes the walking in the sixth song differently than he does in the final song, he creates a similar aesthetic and emotional atmosphere. Not only is he referencing a previous walking rhythm, Schumann is also referring back to the characterization of the cathedral from this sixth song. The atmosphere he created in this characterization is brought back due to the imagery of the final song. The marching giants are acting as pallbearers for the poet’s coffin. The poet directly references the same cathedral on the Rhine that he visited in “Im Rhine, im heiligen Strome.” Thus,

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

Schumann's use of a similar walking rhythm is a clear musical reference to the sixth song in the cycle. The marching of the giants finally slows to half notes, emphasizing the great weight of the coffin (Figure 22). This aesthetic lightens up as the poet explains it is his lost love and pain weighing down the coffin. At this point, the singer is not permitted cadence, as the piano makes its D $\flat$  modulation for the postlude (Figure 23). As mentioned earlier, this is a direct callback to the postlude and false ending in "Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen," as the weight of the poet's agony and fixation is finally gone. This contrasting postlude in the new major key serves another purpose in its imagery. The final chords of the C# minor key, with the unresolved melody line, represent the final, unbearable, and unresolvable weight of grief and heartache. When this is tossed into the sea, this weight is lifted, allowing the poet to finally let his resentment, pain, and obsession go, allowing it to sink to the bottom of the sea, demonstrated by the postlude shown in Figure 12.

sol - chem gros - sea Sar - ge ge - bührt ein gros - ses Grab.

Wisst ihr warum der Sarg wohl so gross und schwer mag sein? Ich

Figure 22, Half-note pattern appears as the giants slow their march<sup>136</sup>

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

Wisst ihr warum der Sarg wohl so gross und schwer mag sein? Ich

*Adagio.*

seht auch meine Liebe und keinen Schmerz hinein!

Figure 23, Dynamic softens and texture thins as the postlude modulation approaches<sup>137</sup>

### Considerations for the Performer

The sheer romanticism of this masterpiece can be daunting to the vocalist who chooses to perform it. Thus, there must be several considerations on the part of the vocalist in the performance of *Dichterliebe*. First, an understanding of Schumann's life, or at least the Year of the Song is relevant for a faithful performance of the work. One need not be an expert on all things Schumann, but being knowledgeable of Schumann's life can enhance an interpretive performance. The attraction to dramatic irony is one that drove Schumann to select Heine's poetry in the first place, so a basic understanding of this concept is crucial. The singer must

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

studies the translations in order to accurately relate the narrative. These moments of irony, such as in the fragile, take-the-high-road stance in “Ich grolle nicht” or the sorrowful juxtaposition of the wedding dance in “Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen,” must come through for a successful performance. Understanding relationships between the songs, the changes in tonality and the emotions Schumann is trying to convey are extremely important. Not only must the singer study the vocal melodies, but the accompaniment as well. The performance of the grief-filled poet must carry the correct emotional weight throughout each postlude, most all of which include callbacks to previous songs or imagery that can be personified in the singer’s silent expression.

When *Dichterliebe* was published in 1844, Schumann included a dedication to operatic soprano Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient.<sup>138</sup> This dedication is one to note for singers, as Schröder-Devrient is said to have had a big, beautiful operatic soprano voice. Such a dedication signifies that Schumann appreciated beauty of tone, as well as expected the cycle to be sung by a professional. This is also supported by the fact that the broad range covered in the tessitura of the work is outside of the capabilities of most untrained singers.<sup>139</sup> Schumann prioritized beautiful singing. The emotional story told by the text must not take precedence over beautiful vocal tone. Additionally, since the cycle is dedicated to a soprano, female singers should not be excluded from performing *Dichterliebe* despite the fact that it is historically performed mainly by men.<sup>140</sup>

Finally, it is absolutely necessary that the performer present a consistent character throughout the duration of the song cycle. Each song in the cycle provides a piece to the puzzle that creates a final picture. Understanding the elements of romantic irony utilized in Heine’s text

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<sup>138</sup> Richard Miller, *Singing Schumann: An Interpretive Guide for Performers* (Cary: Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 1999), 98.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

and how these elements are brought about in *Dichterliebe* allows the performer to develop a character that remains true to the work throughout each song and postlude. One must be aware of traps in which the appropriate character can be skewed or fade from focus. For example, if not careful, “Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen” may be sung with a positive nature equal to the wedding dance rhythm instead of with the heartbreak of watching your love dance with her new husband. Or, one may view “Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen” as being sung by an outside narrator to provide a break in the action, rather than the poet trying to find a way to cope with heartache. As a performance takes the audience through the *Dichterliebe* journey, the maintaining of the same character is vital to an effective performance.

### **In Conclusion**

Robert Schumann is one of the most unique composers of the Romantic era. From his struggle with mental health, the incredible fight to marry his love, or his career failures, his is a story of resilience. This fight would reward him with an unbelievable year of composition in 1840 and the creation of one of the greatest vocal works in the Western art tradition. *Dichterliebe* remains one of the most popular song cycles for singers-in-training and professionals alike, mostly due to Schumann’s unique ability combine text and music in amazing ways. Those who study and perform this song cycle have a responsibility to deliver a faithful performance of the cycle. The narrative work of Schumann’s *Dichterliebe* can be brought to life by a knowledgeable and artfully interpretive performance, fulfilling both the performer and audience.

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