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**A comparison study of the "Thirty Two Variations, WoO 80" of Ludwig von Beethoven and the "Etudes en forme de Variations", Op. 13 of Robert Schumann.**

Kenneth Lip-Khoon Soh

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**A COMPARISON STUDY OF THE THIRTY-TWO VARIATIONS,  
WOO80 OF LUDWIG VON BEETHOVEN AND THE  
ETUDES EN FORME DE VARIATIONS, Op. 13  
OF ROBERT SCHUMANN**

**A Treatise**

**Presented to the**

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**and the**

**Faculty of the Graduate College**

**University of Nebraska**

**In Partial Fulfillment**

**Of the Requirements for the Degree**

**Master of Music**

**University of Nebraska at Omaha**

**By**

**Kenneth Soh, Lip-Khoon**

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University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Committee

Christina Garcia 3/12/99  
Dan Low 3/11/99  
Chairperson James [Signature]  
Date 3/11/99

A COMPARISON STUDY OF THE THIRTY-TWO VARIATIONS, WOO80 OF  
LUDWIG VON BEETHOVEN AND THE ETUDES EN FORME DE VARIATIONS  
OP. 13 OF ROBERT SCHUMANN

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University of Nebraska, 1999

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The Thirty-Two Variations of Beethoven and the Symphonic Etudes of Schumann are important landmarks in the piano literature. This paper shows the similarities and differences between these two works through an analysis of each work. As a byproduct of this analysis, it will also trace some of the ways in which variation form evolved from the Classical into the Romantic Era.

This paper includes a brief introduction and definition of variation form followed by the discussion and analysis of these two works. Before the discussion of each work, background information is provided as a basis to understand the context in which the works are being discussed. The discussion of the Symphonic Etudes will include the comparison and contrast to the Thirty-Two Variations. The conclusion gives a list of similarities and differences that were derived from the analyses.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter 1. Introduction.....	1
2. Ludwig von Beethoven	
a. Life and Background.....	3
b. The Thirty-Two Variations.....	7
3. Robert Schumann	
a. Life and Background.....	23
b. Etudes en Forme de Variations, Op. 13	
i. Background.....	28
ii. Comparison and Contrast.....	30
4. Conclusion.....	43
Bibliography.....	46

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

The variation is considered to be one of the oldest and most basic musical forms used in music (Stein 92). The human tendency to modify identical recurrence gave rise to the concept of the variation form. Bryant points out in his article “Variations in Miniature” that the earliest example of a theme and variation could be found as early as the fourteenth century (27).

The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians defines the term variation as:

A form in which successive statements of a theme are altered or presented in altered settings. The theme may range in length from a short melodic motif or harmonic scheme to a complete melody of one or more strains. It may be repeated more or less intact throughout the variations in the manner of an ostinato or cantus firmus, in which case it is the accompanying parts that change; or it may itself be altered in a series of varied statements. A set of variations may be continuous or sectional, a complete piece by its own right or a movement of a larger work such as a symphony or string quartet (536).

According to Dale, variation writing was one of the earliest forms in which keyboard works were composed (97). The scores found in the Fitzwilliam Virginal book, published in 1625 show that composers such as Bull and Byrd wrote keyboard music in variation form (Stein 93). As the history of the keyboard variation form progressed, other piano variation landmarks include: J.S. Bach’s Goldberg Variations, Beethoven’s Diabelli Variations, and Schumann’s Symphonic Etudes.

Both Beethoven and Schumann are regarded as great masters in composing piano variations. Palmer cited Beethoven as “the man who freed music,” who acted as the transition figure to bridge the Classical and Romantic eras (9). Beethoven was born in 1770 in Bonn. Gillespie called Beethoven “a classic composer with broad scope” because his styles were diverse (192). It was a time when the classical ideal was at its peak. The music at that time emphasized the qualities of restraint, elegance, grace, clarity, balance, contrast, and symmetry (Palmer 2).



## CHAPTER 2a

### Beethoven: Life and Background

Vincent D'Indy, the French musicologist, divided Beethoven's life into three compositional periods. According to Westerby, the works in the first period range from Opus 1 to Opus 30. The style of the first period showed that Beethoven was greatly influenced by Mozart and Haydn. Many of Beethoven's early works reflected the classical ideals such as restraint, symmetry, and balance. Beethoven's second compositional period started approximately when he composed his Opus 30 and lasted to Opus 100. This second period portrayed his individuality and independence of style from that of Haydn and Mozart. Finally, his third stylistic period was characterized by retrospective and introspective qualities (Westerby 8).

Beethoven composed twenty-one sets of piano variations. Kirby divided those variations into two types: the 'popular' type which based the theme on popular melodies such as the Variations based on Righini' Theme and also the more ambitious and serious types such as the Diabelli Variations. Fischer commented that in Beethoven's instrumental compositions, the variation form is his most important form. Dating from before 1800, about a third of his instrumental compositions were variations or contained variation movements; between 1800-1812, the number increased to half. From 1818 on, at least half or more of his works were in variations or a variations-like movement (548). Beethoven composed his first piano variations in 1782.

In this first compositional period, Beethoven still tried to model after Mozart and Haydn. Both Mozart and Haydn used tune embellishment and homophonic variation

technique in their pianoforte variations (Stein 94). Fisher states that the independent variation sets were predominant in the first period (548).

Some of his piano variations in this period included the Nine Variations on a March by Dressler, C Minor, Wo0 63; Twenty-Four Variations on Righini's Arietta Wo0 65; Thirteen Variations on the Arietta 'Es war einmal ein alter mann', A Wo0 66; Six Variations on a Swiss Song in F Wo0 64; Twelve Variations on the Menuet a la Vigano, C major, Wo0 68; Six Variations on the Duet 'Nel Cor Piu Non Mi Sento', G major, Wo0 070; Eight Variations on the Romance 'Une Fievre Brulante', C Major, Wo0 72; and Nine Variations on the Aria 'Quant e piu bello' in A Wo0 69. Beethoven also used variations as part of a larger form such as in his piano sonatas Op. 14. No.2, first movement and Op.26, second movement.

In the second period, Beethoven began to write variations that Sisman called "the entirely new manner" (2). Beethoven produced a large output of independent sets of piano variations in the second stylistic period which included the Six Variations on an Original Theme in F, Op.34; Fifteen Variations and a Fugue on an Original Theme, E-Flat Major, Op.35; Seven Variations on 'God Save the King' in C, Wo078, Five Variations on 'Rule Britannia' in D, Wo079, and Thirty-Two Variations in C minor, Wo080.

In his third period, Beethoven began to use variations to act as a center of gravity for an entire composition (Fischer 548). Beethoven composed his great Diabelli Variations and also the variation movements in his piano sonatas Opus 109 and 111.

According to Kerman and Tyson, Beethoven studied with many great masters such as Haydn, Mozart, Neeffe, Salieri, Albrechtsberger, and Schenk. Moreover, Westerby also claimed that Beethoven's piano technical figurations were founded on Clementi, and his early piano style was more similar to that of Cramer's refined style (5). In addition to all these great influences, Beethoven also drew his variation technique from the wealth of available resources such as the compositional treatises and performance manuals (Sisman 68).

From this study it is interesting to note that Beethoven's wealth of musical imagination in treating his piano variations was actually built on his study of the past upon which he added his own innovations and synthesis.

According to Sisman, Beethoven was familiar with the treatises and manuals on how to compose variations, which were available in his day (68). From surveying the preexisting manuals and treatises, one can see that Beethoven inherited the following variation techniques:

1. Insignificant features alter such as rests or notes added, substituted, removed, or changed.
2. Figuration of the melody theme with arpeggiation, scale, and others.
3. Imitation treatment of the theme melody or fragment of the melody.
4. Exchanged of parts between treble and bass.
5. Adding or removing of ornamentation.
6. Use of inversion to turn the theme upside down.
7. Bass chords changed into figuration or the reverse.

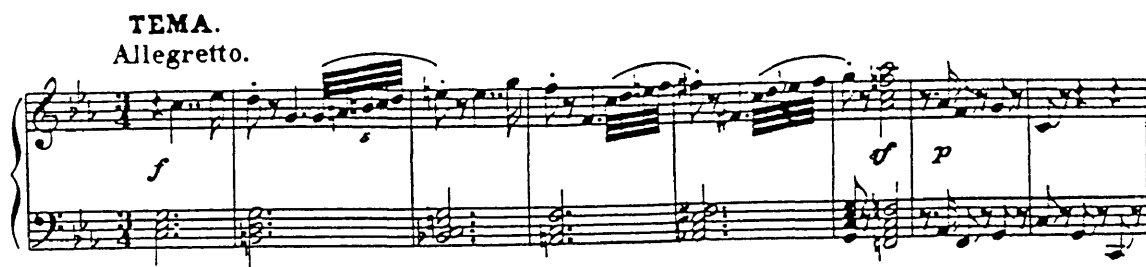
8. Use of rhythmic augmentation or diminution.
9. Use of syncopated rhythm on the theme.
10. Use of quicker notes.
11. Change of mode from major to minor or the reverse.
12. Changes of the harmony.
13. Change of register and texture.
14. Adding countermelody.
15. Change of articulations such as from legato to staccato or the reverse.
16. Adding coda or extend the theme.

## CHAPTER 2b

**Beethoven: The Thirty-two Variations**

With this in mind, we may proceed to our examination of the Thirty-two Variations of Beethoven. The theme is as follows:

*32 Variations*  
on an Original Theme, WoO 80



Ex.1

The theme is in C minor and in simple triple time; Beethoven composed it.

Kochevitsky describes the theme as “...precise, vigorous, and sharply etched” (38). The melodic contour is in ascending motion and reached the climax in measure 6, the A-flat highest voice. The theme also uses the thirty-second notes figures to create a sense of forward moving motion.

The first three variations can be classified as using the figuration of the theme melody. The ascending and descending arpeggio figurations surround and disguise the melody of the theme. The melody notes are indicated by the circled notes as shown in

Ex.2

## VAR. I.

*p leggiermente*

*p*

## VAR. II.

*leggiermente p*

## EX. 2

In variation III, the diverging arpeggios move in contrary motion and employ the inversion technique. The melody notes still present as shown by the circled notes in the

excerpt. VAR. III.

EX. 3

Variation IV contains the variation techniques such as change of articulation from legato to staccato in the middle voice, addition of a countermelody in the middle voice, and maintenance of the harmony. The theme is still present.

**VAR. IV.**



EX.4

Variation V involves changing of rhythmic figuration to form a consistent appearance of four sixteenth notes followed by four eighth notes. The sixteenth notes are to be played with staccato and the last three notes of the eighth notes are to be played legato.

**VAR. V.**



EX.5

Variation VI is composed of eighth-note triplets. The treble is a figuration of triplets outlining the theme. The theme is still present. The bass is a countermelody that forms an inversion toward the treble notes. It is interesting to note the use of sforzato to emphasize every beat.

**VAR. VI.** *sempre staccato e sforzato*

The image shows two systems of musical notation for Variation VI. The first system consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with a piano (p) dynamic marking. The treble staff features eighth-note triplets, some of which are circled. The bass staff has a similar triplet pattern. Dynamic markings include *ff* and *sf*. The instruction *sempre staccato e sforzato* is written above the first staff. The second system continues the piece with similar rhythmic patterns and dynamics.

EX.6

Variations VII and VIII are related. The left-hand figuration which forms alternative thirds and octaves is the same for these two variations. In variation VII, the right hand is in descending motion in octave for the first five measures. The melody notes of the theme are still present as shown by the circled notes in the excerpt. In variation VIII, the right hand is assigned figuration that resembles the left hand. Both these variations are thicker in texture than most of the preceding ones.

**VAR. VII.** *p*

**VAR. VIII.**

The image shows two excerpts of musical notation. The first excerpt, labeled 'VAR. VII.', consists of two staves. The right-hand staff has a piano (*p*) dynamic marking and circled notes. The left-hand staff has a consistent rhythmic pattern. The second excerpt, labeled 'VAR. VIII.', also consists of two staves. The right-hand staff has a more complex, dense figuration, while the left-hand staff maintains the same rhythmic pattern as in Variation VII.

EX.7

EX.8



In variation IX, there is a written out trill in the middle voice. The rhythmic pattern employed here is four against six. The theme is present and the harmony still remains the same.

**VAR. IX.**  
Espressivo.

EX.9

Variations X and XI form another set. They use a technique which involves the exchange of parts between treble and bass. In variation X, the right hand employs the descending syncopated octaves that appear before in variation VII. The left hand is simply bass chord broken into fast running thirty-second notes. Variation XI is simply the reverse of variation X.

**VAR. X.** *sf*  
*sempre forte*

EX.10

**VAR. XI.**  
*sempre forte*

EX.11

Starting with variation XII to XVI, the mode change from C minor to C major. In variation XII, the melody of the theme is clear except it is in major key. The right hand of this variation maintains the same rhythmic figure as the original theme.

**VAR. XII.**  
Maggiore.

*p semplice*

EX.12

Variations XIII and XIV form a set and both are in the major mode. Variation XIII consists of melody figuration of the theme. The melody notes are still present as indicated by the excerpt with the circled notes. At the same time, the left hand also presents the melody of the theme. The right hand is a melodic figuration of the theme, which forms a countermelody against the left-hand theme.

**VAR. XIII.**

*p*

EX.13

**VAR. XIV.** *sempre staccato*

EX.14

Variation XIV is much the same as variation XIII. The only thing that is different is that in variation XIV, a third interval is added to both the right hand and left hand to form a running third passage.

Variations XV and XVI are again related; They are also in the major mode. The left-hand triplet figuration, derived from the broken chords of the theme remains the same for both the variations. In variation XV, syncopated rhythm is introduced. In variation XVI, the right hand triplets are changed into faster moving sixteenth notes that form the rhythmic pattern of four against three with the left hand.

**VAR. XV.**

*dolce*

*cresc.* *risoluto* *dim.*

**VAR. XVI.**

*cresc.* *rit.* *dim.*

At variation XVII, the piece returns to the minor mode. In variation XVII, the melody notes of the theme are present. The right hand consists of two voices that share the notes of the theme melody as indicated by the excerpt. The left hand forms the Alberti bass figure from the harmony of the theme.

**VAR. XVII.**  
Minore.

*dolce*

*cresc.*

EX.16

In variation XVIII, the technique of using progressively quicker notes is evident here. The right hand employs ascending scale passages as figuration to alter the variation. The melody notes of the theme are present as indicated by the circled notes in the excerpt.

**VAR. XVIII.**

*f*

EX.17

Variation XIX exploits changes in dynamics. In each measure, the forte dynamic alternates with a piano dynamic. The right hand is made up of figuration that formed by sixteenth notes. The melody theme notes are intersperse between the right hand and left hand. In general, the right and left hand forms a contrary motion against each other except in the last three measures.

**VAR. XIX.**

The musical score for Variation XIX consists of two systems of piano and forte dynamics. The first system shows a right hand with a running sixteenth-note triplet pattern and a left hand with a melody. The dynamics alternate between piano (p) and forte (f) in each measure. The second system continues this pattern, with a crescendo (cresc.) marking in the first measure of the system. The right hand continues with the sixteenth-note triplet pattern, and the left hand continues with the melody. The dynamics alternate between piano (p) and forte (f) in each measure.

EX.18

Variations XX and XXI are a set. They are related by the “exchange-of- part” technique. They also employ syncopated rhythm respectively in the chordal passage. The running triplet sixteenth figuration permeates these two variations but the notes from the melody of the theme are not clear.

**VAR. XX.**

The musical score for Variation XX is marked *sempre forte*. It shows a right hand with a running sixteenth-note triplet pattern and a left hand with a melody. The dynamics are marked *sf* (sforzando) in the first measure of the system.

EX.19

**VAR. XXI.**

The musical score for Variation XXI is marked *sempre forte*. It shows a right hand with a running sixteenth-note triplet pattern and a left hand with a melody. The dynamics are marked *sf* (sforzando) in the first measure of the system.

EX.20

Variation XXII is a canon at the octave. Fragments from the theme are used to

form this variation.

**VAR. XXII.**

ten. ten. ten. ten.

p

EX.21

In variation XXIII, the right hand is assigned the tremolo-effect broken chords that form two-tone phrases. Despite the seemingly great change of the theme, the theme notes are still present as indicated by the circled notes in the excerpt.

**VAR. XXIII.**

pp

p

pp

EX.22

Variation XXIV is built of melodic figuration in eighth-note triplets. The notes of the theme are present but are scattered as shown in the excerpt. There are grace notes added from the last five measures of variation XXIV.

**VAR. XXIV.**

The musical score for Variation XXIV is presented in two systems. The first system includes the instruction *staccato sempre pp*. The notation consists of a treble and bass staff. The treble staff features eighth-note triplets with grace notes, while the bass staff provides a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth-note triplets. The piece concludes with a final flourish in the treble staff.

EX.23

Variation XXV is built of melodic figuration of sixteenth-notes. Grace-notes are found in the sixteenth-note figuration. The melody notes from the theme are present but reflect a change of register.

**VAR. XXV.**  
*Leggiermente.*

The musical score for Variation XXV is presented in two systems. The first system includes the instruction *Leggiermente.* and the dynamic marking *p*. The notation consists of a treble and bass staff. The treble staff features sixteenth-note figuration with grace notes, while the bass staff provides a rhythmic accompaniment of sixteenth notes. The piece concludes with a final flourish in the treble staff.

EX.24

Variation XXVI consists of passages of inverted thirds assigned to both the right and left hands. The staccato articulation is used throughout. The texture is thickened by the addition of more parts. The theme is present as shown in the excerpt.

VAR. XXVI



The musical score for Variation XXVI consists of four staves. The top two staves are in treble clef, and the bottom two are in bass clef. The music features a complex texture of inverted thirds, with staccato articulation throughout. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The notation includes various rhythmic values and dynamic markings, such as a forte 'f' dynamic.

## EX.25

Variation XXVII exhibits imitation technique. The left hand imitates the right hand to form a run. The harmonic progression of the theme is predisposed to the preservation of the theme in this imitative variation.

VAR. XXVII.



The musical score for Variation XXVII consists of four staves. The top two staves are in treble clef, and the bottom two are in bass clef. The music illustrates imitation technique, where the left hand imitates the right hand to form a run. The harmonic progression of the theme is predisposed to the preservation of the theme in this imitative variation. The notation includes various rhythmic values and dynamic markings, such as a forte 'f' dynamic.

## EX.26



In variation XXVIII, the left-hand chords are broken into figuration that form the Alberti bass. In right hand, a countermelody is added within the context of the harmony of the theme. A pure legato articulation is required for the right hand.

VAR. XXVIII.

*p semplice*

EX.27

Variation XXIX is a mirror passage. The fast moving running sixteenth triplets are derived from the harmonic structure of the theme. The occasional appearance of the descending octave of the left hand reminds one of the descending octaves in variations VII, X, and XI. The left hand is the inversion of the right hand. This variation also uses the technique of increasingly faster passage work.

VAR. XXIX.

*ff*

EX.28

VAR. X.

*sempre forte*

EX.29

VAR. XI.

At variation XXX, there is a striking change of mood. The theme is here presented as in a chorale-like setting.

VAR. XXX.

EX.30

Variation XXXI begins with the theme in octaves. The left-hand arpeggiated figuration reflects an increase in the intensity of the passage that ultimately leads to the finale. The progressively faster notes that appear in the last measure of this variation lead into the running passage of the opening of the Finale.

VAR. XXXI.

EX.31

The Finale ends with an extended theme and an added coda. The beginning seven measures reflect the increasing tightening of tempo. In the analysis of this writer, there appear to be many variation techniques in the Finale which Beethoven employed in prior variations. For example, from measures 29 to 32, the passage reminds one of variation IX as shown in the excerpt.

Finale

EX.32

VAR. IX

EX.33

From measures 41 to 46, the left hand's figures remind one of the left hand's figures found in variation VII and VIII.

EX.34

VAR. VII.

VAR. VIII.

EX.35

EX.36

Measures 12 to 16 of the Finale remind one of the figures in variation XIX.

A musical score for measures 12 to 16 of the Finale. The score is written for piano and consists of two staves. Measures 12, 13, and 14 are circled in the original image. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many beamed notes and rests.

Musical score for Variation XIX, labeled "VAR. XIX". It consists of two staves. The first staff has a treble clef and the second has a bass clef. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many beamed notes and rests. There are triplets indicated by a "3" above the notes.

EX.37

Measures 17 to 18 remind one of the figures in variations XX and XXI.

Musical score for measures 17 and 18 of the Finale. The score is written for piano and consists of two staves. Measure 17 is circled in the original image. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many beamed notes and rests.

EX.38

Musical score for Variation XX, labeled "VAR. XX". It consists of two staves. The first staff has a treble clef and the second has a bass clef. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many beamed notes and rests. The instruction "sempre forte" is written below the first staff. There are triplets indicated by a "3" above the notes.

EX.39

Musical score for Variation XXI, labeled "VAR. XXI". It consists of two staves. The first staff has a treble clef and the second has a bass clef. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many beamed notes and rests. The instruction "sempre forte" is written below the first staff. There are triplets indicated by a "3" above the notes.

EX.40

The image displays a musical score for piano, consisting of three systems of music. The first system (measures 19-20) shows a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with a supporting line, both marked *pp*. The second system (measures 21-24) continues the melodic line in the treble clef and the supporting line in the bass clef. The third system (measures 25-28) features a more complex melodic line in the treble clef and a supporting line in the bass clef, with the treble clef marked *pp*.

## EX.41

From measure 19 to 28, there is a variation in which the melody notes from the theme are present. With these many examples, one might conclude that there is a high possibility that Beethoven planned this Finale as a review of the variation techniques he used throughout the rest of the piece.

## CHAPTER 3a

### Robert Schumann: Life and Background

Robert Schumann was born in 1810, when Beethoven was already in his forties. Schumann was considered as “the most romantic of the romantics” (Dubal 59). Only a few years before Schumann was born, Beethoven had finished composing his Thirty-Two Variations.

The Romantic Era saw the growth of large industrial cities, which attracted audiences, publishers, and performers to promote the spread of music. Moreover, music was taught in the public schools (Moore 164).

Schumann and his contemporaries were influenced by romantic poetry in the course of their musical development (24). From the Romantic literature, Schumann was influenced by the idea of the *doppelgänger*, or dual personality (Lawson 8). The concept of two conflicting personalities within one person was also portrayed in the works of Schumann’s favorite authors, Jean Paul Richter and E.T.A. Hoffman. The combination of these two ideas was reflected in Schumann’s piano music.

The piano at this time had come to its full development; it was considered unrivaled by other solo instruments because of its self-sufficiency, responsiveness, and dynamic range. As a result, Moore said, “...the most unpretentious music can be made to sound impressive upon it” (171). Composers such as Schubert, Chopin, Mendelssohn, and Schumann began to compose short piano pieces in simple song form. These short piano pieces which emphasized the melodic and descriptive elements began to replace

the Classical symphonic style of writing. This new style showed less concentration on thematic material and less clarity of development. Emphasis on polyphony shifted to emphasis on harmony. The melody and harmony of this new style was influenced by the chromatic scale. The melody began to underline emotionalism rather than being simply objective (Moore 165).

It was in such a context that Schumann composed his piano works. Schumann composed his Symphonic Etudes in 1834; later he revised and finally republished it in 1852. Maxwell described this set of etudes which are in the variation form as “the greatest set of variations in the Romantic era” (86).

Weingarten in his article “Interpreting Schumann’s Piano Music” stresses the importance of understanding Schumann’s intimate world in order to understand his music better (103). He also states that Schumann retreated to his inner world to escape the harsh reality of everyday life. Thus, his inner world was full of contrasting pent-up passions and emotions. According to Brion, “Schumann’s music is often the expression of the pain he experienced in struggling to escape from the ‘self’ which he was imprisoned, to espouse the whole creation” (38). In one of Schumann’s letters to Clara Wieck, he wrote, “Everything that happens in the worlds affects me: politics, literature, people. I think it all over in my own way, and then it has to make room for itself and find an outlet in music” (Weingarten 62). Schumann also said that everything affected him and everything seeped into his music (Dubal 59).

In Schumann's formative years, virtuoso variations of Hummel, Moscheles, Czerny, Marshner, Ries, Herz, Hunten, and Wieck greatly influenced him. In addition, Schumann also considered Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert his "Musical gods" (Chissell 6). The piano was Schumann's natural mode of expression (Dubal 59). Similarly, Chissell also said that Schumann found it easier to express himself through piano more than any other medium (5).

Even though Schumann showed exceptional musical talent, in his young age he was forced to take up law at the University of Leipzig in 1828. However, he managed to convince his family to let him study with Friedrich Wieck for six months. At the age of twenty, Schumann found it difficult to follow Wieck's systematic training which included exercises in harmony, counterpoint, and keyboard technique. Finally, Schumann was impatient with what he had learned; he decided just to use Bach's Well Tempered Clavier and Marpurg's treatise as his guides. With these sources and his ten fingers, Schumann composed most of his early piano works (Chissell 6).

According to the New Grove: Early Romantic Masters 1, as early as 1828-31, Schumann already indicated his fear for insanity (105). Later in his life, he began to show symptoms of schizophrenia. Sometimes he called himself Florestan, "the quick, impetuous, impatient, bouncing extrovert" and sometimes Eusebius, "the melancholic, shy, rather timid dreamer..." (Walker 104). These dual-self characters were implied in most of his piano music.

The piano style of Schumann is unique. This style is characterized by features such as syncopation, misplaced accents, deliberate confusion of duple and triple, startling



changes of keys, enharmonic switches to unrelated key (major 3rd apart), and use of expressive markings. All these features reflect Schumann's mercurial temperament and also indicated his urgent wish to communicate his inner feelings. The melodies of his pieces are usually woven into an active and arpeggio-based kind of figuration. His counterpoint shows influence from Jean Paul Richter and his melodies also uses the imitation technique (Chissell 8).

Weigarten mentioned that Schumann also likes to use half-pedaling to produce misty and shimmer sounds (98). Furthermore, Dubal said, "Schumann's music was spiced with programmatic implications, undertow of autobiographical content...a dense tapestry with interlaced and fragmented melody" (59). Maxwell also added that Schumann's penchant for programmatic titles also revealed his constant allusion to literary and imaginary personalities (vii). In the course of his musical development, Schumann also discovered that the variation form could be the tool used to substitute the development to achieve unity for a sizable piece (Chissell 111). Thus, he used this tool to achieve unity for his larger pieces such as the Symphonic Etudes and Carnaval. It is interesting to note that some of these features such as syncopation and dreamy wayward manners, already appeared in Beethoven's Piano Sonata in A major, Opus 101, the first movement. When Beethoven composed this piece, Schumann was only six or seven years old (Westerby 267).

## CHAPTER 3bi

### Schumann: Etudes En Forme de Variations, Op. 13--Background

The theme for the Symphonic Etudes was taken from the theme of Baron Von Fricken. Schumann was in love with his daughter at that time (Hinson 3). In 1834, Baron sent his variations based on this theme to Schumann for a critique. In Schumann's critique, he wrote, "No doubt the subject ought always to be kept well in view, but it ought to be shown through different coloured glasses...I have endeavored to portray it in different colours" (Chissell 23). Later Schumann took Baron's theme and composed a set of etudes in variation form. Schumann made several revisions and changes before he arrived at today's version, the Symphonic Etudes (Hinson 3).

Schumann also tried to prove in this piece that without an orchestra the piano can also reproduce an orchestral polyphony and vast range of tonal effect (Hinson 4). Thus, one could hear some orchestral diction in this piece. For examples, in the first variation of the Symphonic Etudes, one could hear drumbeats; one could also hear horns and trombones in the second variation; and in the second etude, one could hear the violin-like arpeggios (Hinson 5). From the sketch books of Beethoven such as the Landsberg Sketchbook, Wittgenstein Sketches, and Hinson's Schumann: Etudes en Forme de Variations, one can see that when both Schumann and Beethoven composed their monumental piano variation sets, they usually put the piece away for sometime and took it out to revise when they had new ideas.

The final version of Symphonic Etudes is composed of nine variations, two etudes, and a finale. Chissell said that each of the nine variations is separated and self-contained, yet they are linked by contrast in key, pace, and texture. The theme is in minor mode. The third and fifth variations gravitate toward the relative major, with textures that evoked orchestra timbre (24). Schumann seldom used the popular note-spinning technique of his predecessors such as Herz, Hummel, and Czerny. Instead, Schumann revealed in this set the techniques for showing the outline of the theme and for generating new ideas from the theme's fragments. For example, the initial falling fourth interval of the theme was developed into a fugal-like figure in the first etude (Chissell 24).

In the following discussion of each variation of the Symphonic Etudes, the writer will compare and contrast each of the variation of the Symphonic Etudes to the Thirty-Two Variations of Beethoven.

The theme is in C-sharp minor. Hinson describes the theme as having a "... grave, tragic quality permeate..."(5). In terms of differences, first, Schumann's theme is twice as long: a total of sixteen measures versus Beethoven's theme, which is only eight measures. Second, the texture of Schumann's theme contains more widely spread open chords than Beethoven's. Third, Schumann's theme starts with a slower tempo and in a somber mood while Beethoven's theme starts off in a more vibrant and vigorous spirit. Fourth, Schumann provided pedal marks but Beethoven did not. In term of similarity, both Beethoven and Schumann's theme are in minor modes.

CHAPTER 3bii

Schumann: Symphonic Etudes-Comparison and Contrast

Etudes en forme de Variations

("Symphonic Etudes")

Theme

Op. 13

1852 Edition

Andante  $\text{♩} = 52$   
(*legatissimo*)

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a *legatissimo* instruction. A circled 'a' is placed above the first measure, and a circled 'b' with the word 'Pedal' is placed below the first measure. The second system features a forte (*f*) dynamic. The third system includes a 'RH' (Right Hand) marking above the staff. The fourth system concludes with a *ritardando* instruction and an *attacca* marking at the bottom right. Various fingerings (1-5) and articulation marks (accents, slurs) are used throughout the piece.

EX.42

Pedal

attacca

The first variation of the Symphonic Etudes is in a March form with drum-like martial figuration. Schumann preserved the harmonic structure of this second variation; however, he added a newly composed melody against the preserved harmonic progression (Moore 177). Schumann used imitation as a variation technique in this variation. As compared to the theme, the first variation is energetic, active, and crisp rather than somber and melancholic. The fugal writing technique employed in this variation reminds one of Beethoven's variations XXVII where imitation technique is used. The melody contour of Schumann's variation I is in ascending motion; it is an inversion of the theme's melody. The use of inversion also reminds one of Beethoven's treatment of his variation VII and X where the inverted motives are being used.

#### Variation I

Un poco più vivo ♩ = 72 *poco a poco cresc.*

EX.43

VAR. XXVII.

EX.44

Regarding the second variation, Hinson wrote, “Throughout this haunting variation a passionately lyrical melody is displayed against a brooding repeated chord background” (6). The second variation is like a nocturne where the theme appears in augmentation in the bass. The variation also contains the inverted form of the theme. A countermelody is created in right hand of this variation against the descending theme in the left hand. The use of the theme in the left hand reminds one about the variation XIII and XIV of Beethoven’s Thirty-Two Variations. Schumann parts voicing of this variation and his extension of the Variation II are different from Beethoven’s Thirty-Two Variation. In term of texture, Beethoven’s variation is thinner and there is no extension of section of variation except in the Finale.

Variation II

EX.45 *marcato il thema semper col Ped.*

VAR. XIII. *etc.*

VAR. XIV. *sempre staccato etc.*

EX.46

EX.47

The next section is called etude III instead of variation III. Hinson explained that it is because this section only has a tenuous relationship with the theme (7). Etude III is in ABA form with arpeggiated figuration in the right hand. This reminiscent Beethoven's variations I where the right hand is also consist of arpeggiated figuration.

Etude III ③

arpeggiato

Pedal

3

etc

EX.48

VAR. I.

*p leggiermente*

EX.49

The countermelody of the left hand reminds one of the variation XVII of Beethoven's Thirty-Two Variations where the countermelody form a compound melody of two voices.

VAR. XVII.  
Minore.

*dolce*

EX.50

In terms of differences, Beethoven never used the title “etude” to designate sections in his variation.

Variation III is also a canon at octave. This variation reminds one of the variation XXII of Beethoven’s Thirty-Two Variations. The differences are; first, the texture of Schumann’s is thicker than Beethoven’s variation XXII. Second, the section of Schumann’s is longer than that of Beethoven’s. Third, the figuration of Schumann’s is in descending motion but it is in ascending motion for Beethoven’s.

Pedal

Variation III

4

8

EX.51

VAR. XXII

EX.52



The fourth variation is in canonic imitation, which pervaded by a single rhythm.

The right hand motives are followed by the left hand's motives. This reminds one of Beethoven's variation XVII, in which the same technique applied. **Variation IV**

EX.53

EX.54

The fifth variation uses syncopated displacement of the theme. As a result, this variation produces an agitated mood. The syncopated displacement of the theme is reminiscent to Beethoven's variation X and XI. **Variation V**

EX.55

EX.56

The use of the two-notes-slur also reminds one of the figures found in the finale, measure 19 to 23 of Beethoven's Thirty-Two Variations.

EX.57

Two-notes slur

The image shows a musical score for Example 57. It consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). A slur is drawn over a pair of notes in the first measure, which are circled in red. A handwritten label "Two-notes slur" with an arrow points to this circled pair. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a complex rhythmic accompaniment. The piece ends with a first ending bracket and a forte (f) dynamic marking.

EX.58

Finale

Two-notes slur

19 20 21 22

The image shows a musical score for Example 58, labeled "Finale". It consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps. It features a complex melodic line with many slurs and ornaments. A handwritten label "Two-notes slur" with an arrow points to a specific pair of notes in measure 19. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a rhythmic accompaniment. Measure numbers 19, 20, 21, and 22 are clearly marked below the staves.

In terms of differences, this variation is technically more demanding than any of Beethoven's variations found in the Thirty-Two Variations.

Variation VI of the Symphonic Etudes contains a written out mordent figure. The mode is changed from major to minor. The fragments of the theme enter in measure 13. This variation contains some of the same techniques that Beethoven used in variation XII to XVI. Beethoven changed the mode to major.

EX.59

EX.60

The rhythmic motives of Variation VII of the Symphonic Etudes resemble the rhythmic figures found in the theme of the Thirty-Two Variations. This probably happens by coincidence.

EX.61

EX.62

The imitative technique that used here also reminds one about the variations

XXVII of Beethoven's Thirty-Two Variations.

VAR. XXVII.

EX.63

In terms of differences, variation VII of Symphonic Etudes has a complex rhythm.

In general, all the variations found in the Thirty-Two Variations are relatively less complex than this variation.

The next section is called Etude IX. Hinson describes this section as

"...effervescent Mendelssohn like scherzo..." (8). The texture of this section is relatively thick as compared to Beethoven. Fragments of the theme appears either in the original contour or in inverted form.

EX.64

From measure 34 to 41, the contrary motion reminds one of the contrary motion found in variation XXIX of Beethoven's Thirty-Two Variations.

34

EX.65

VAR. XXIX.

EX.66

Variation VIII is composed of fragments of the theme in both normal and inverted motion. The touch is also varied. The countermelody of the left hand carries figuration that is derived from fragments of the theme.

Variation VIII

EX.67

This variation has some similarity to Beethoven's variation X, in which the chordal right hand is accompany by the fast moving rapid left hand.

EX.68

Variation IX is in g-sharp minor. In Beethoven's variations, all are in the same keys except with the change of mode from major to minor. Nevertheless, in Schumann's, this particular variation is modulate to the closely related key of c-sharp minor, i.e. g-sharp minor. The theme is found in the right hand and is slightly altered. The left hand's murmur quality of the accompanying left hand reminds one of Beethoven's variation VII and VIII.

EX.69

EX.70

The style of this variation is a little similar to Beethoven's variation XVIII.  
**VAR. XXVIII.**

EX. 71

Variation IX is like a nocturne, which contains contrapuntal textures. It is a long variation as compared to all of Beethoven's variations, which have the same length as the theme, eight measures.

The Finale is in D-Flat major modified sonata rondo form. Schumann quoted the melody from the theme "Proud England" in the opera Der Templer und die Judin by Heinrich Marschner and juxtaposed it with the Baron theme. The whole Finale is unified by a single rhythmic figure (Maxwell 94). Hinson wrote that this particular finale is intended to dedicate to William Sterndale Bennett (9). Schumann also employed a single rhythmic figure as factor for unifying the whole finale.

### Finale

EX. 72

In terms of similarity, both Schumann and Beethoven extend their Finales to make them longer by comparison to prior variations. They each use fragments from the theme as material for their finales.

In terms of differences, Schumann used another clearly identifiable theme in his finale but Beethoven did not. Schumann also used the modified sonata-allegro form in as finale but Beethoven did not. Schumann also used the modified sonata-allegro form in as structure for the Finale but Beethoven did not do this in his Thirty-Two Variations. The structure of Schumann's finale is also thicker than that of Beethoven's. In the finale, Schumann also modulates the passage from D-flat major to A-flat major.

EX.73

EX.74

(preciso)



## CHAPTER 4

### Conclusion

From the previous analysis by comparing and contrasting Beethoven's Thirty-Two Variations and Schumann's Symphonic Etudes, the following list of conclusions can be made about their differences.

1. Beethoven's theme is shorter than that of Schumann's but is more vigorous and active.
2. Beethoven used simple triple time but Schumann used the common time.
3. Beethoven wrote 32 variations out of the theme; Schumann only wrote 17, which include the five that are not included as the set by Schumann.
4. Beethoven did not use the title "etude", whereas Schumann did.
5. Beethoven's variations are quite consistent in terms of length but Schumann's variations vary in length, as they relate to the theme.
6. Beethoven's variations stay in the same key with exception of mode change, but Schumann's variations modulate to closely related keys.
7. Beethoven's theme could be heard and found most of the time in the variations, but Schumann only used fragments of the theme most of the time.
8. Beethoven also divided his variations into sets such as variation I, II, III, and variations VII and VIII. Each of Schumann's variation is quite independent and self-contained.
9. Beethoven's harmonic idiom is closer to the classical aesthetic, but Schumann's is closer to the Romantic aesthetic.

10. Beethoven's Thirty-Two Variations is technically less demanding than that of Schumann's Symphonic Etudes.
11. Beethoven did not appear to have in mind, as did Schumann, to portray his variations in different colors as sounded by different instruments.
12. Beethoven did not provide any pedal marks but Schumann did.
13. Beethoven was more objective in the treatment of these piano variations than was Schumann. Schumann's Symphonic Etudes exhibit more emotionalism than Beethoven's.
14. In Schumann's Symphonic Etudes, the dual self characters of Eusebius and Florestan came into play; in Beethoven's Thirty-Two Variations, there is no suggestion of any self-character.
15. Beethoven composed the theme of his Thirty-Two Variations but Schumann used other's theme for his Symphonic Etudes.

In addition to the similarities discussed in the analysis section, the following list provides additional similarities of both the composers:

1. Both of them use figurations such as arpeggios, scales, and syncopated rhythms as elements in their piano variations.
2. Both of them composed finales that are longer than their previous variation sections.
3. Both of them revised their piano variations before they came up with the final versions.
4. Both of them were familiar with past musical ideas and used them as ideas for their piano variations.

5. Both of them used variation form as a tool to achieve unity in their compositional process.
6. Both of them used imitation as variation technique in their piano variations.
7. Both of their piano variations are landmarks in piano literature.
8. Both of them used their piano variations as pieces to teach piano technique.

The Thirty-Two Variations and Symphonic Etudes are indeed interesting and important. Both variations show the composers' multi-faceted keyboard styles and creativity. From the analyses, one can see that both Beethoven and Schumann were skillful in using different elements of music as variances in their variations. From the way both composers composed their variations, one also gains better understanding of how musical ideas are being developed and expanded. Beethoven preserved the theme of the Thirty-Two Variations in his variation set. On the other hand, Schumann used only fragments of the theme in his variation set rather than the complete theme. Thus, one may conclude that as the variation form evolved, it became no longer necessary to preserve the whole theme in the writing of variations. Fragments of the theme may be used as motives in the variations. Finally, through the analyses, one will gain a more thorough understanding of the similarities and differences of the Thirty-Two Variations and the Symphonic Etudes. This understanding could be helpful in the process of interpreting these two works.

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