

## ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: THE SURVEY OF ROBERT SCHUMANN:  
HIS ARTISTRY IN THE CONTEXT OF  
19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY MUSIC

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Despite the controversies over the criticisms of his works, Robert Schumann (1810-1856) continues to be held universally in high esteem, possessing a distinctive, appealing, and unique artistic voice. This trait of Schumann led me to study and perform his works, including his three violin sonatas and fantasy. For my research I studied Schumann's life and works especially in the context of 19<sup>th</sup> century music. I also researched the impact his wife Clara Schumann had on Schumann as a composer, as well as sound recordings and the various criticisms over his works.

For my first recital, I performed the sonatas of Carl Maria von Weber and Franz Schubert and the "Kreutzer" sonata by Ludwig van Beethoven. The 1<sup>st</sup> recital was planned with the deliberate intention to introduce the setting of the 19<sup>th</sup> century of which Schumann was a contemporary, and therefore chose composers by whom Schumann was deeply affected, namely Schubert and Beethoven. My second and the third recital were wholly devoted to Robert Schumann including his violin sonatas

and fantasy, surveying his unique artistry. Idiosyncratic or even quirky compositional attributes, which some critics describe as flaws, can also be viewed as essential to Schumann's music, but at the same time, pose surmountable challenge for today's performers.

Following my preparation for this dissertation, I concluded that the strangeness in Schumann's music is an asset, not a liability. His impulsive and sometimes obsessive elements in his music do not overwhelm his soul-touching romanticism, with their poignant expression of emotion, beauty and excitement. One must admit that it is a challenge to comprehend Schumann's works to its finest details. Unlike Beethoven's or Mozart's music in which everything appears to be laid out on the table for performers to comprehend, Schumann's music does not seem to provide that much information on the surface. However, learning and performing his works promise to be an arduous, yet worthy treasure-hunting experience.

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by

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