

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: THE PIANO MUSIC OF ROBERT SCHUMANN
(1810-1856) AND JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-
1897): A SURVEY OF CONCERTI, VARIATIONS,
AND CHARACTER PIECES

Jin Kyung Park, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2009

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Robert Schumann (1810-1856) and Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), in some ways Robert Schumann's artistic descendant, are the most important and representative German piano composers during the Romantic period. Schumann was already a mature and established musician in 1853 when he first met the young Brahms and recognized his talents, an encounter that had a long-lasting affect on the lives and careers of both men. After Schumann's mental breakdown and death, Brahms maintained his admiration of Schumann's music and preserved an intimate relationship with Clara Schumann. In spite of the personal and musical closeness of the two men, Schumann's music is stylistically distinct from that of Brahms. Brahms followed traditions from Baroque and Classical music, and avoided using images and expressive titles in his music. Brahms extraordinarily intermingled earlier musical forms with multicolored tones of German Romanticism. In contrast, Schumann saw

himself as a radical composer devoted to personal emotionalism and spontaneity. He favored programmatic titles for his character pieces and extra-musical references in his music. While developing their own musical styles as German Romantic composers, Schumann and Brahms both utilized the piano as a resourceful tool for self-realization and compositional development.

To investigate and compare the main characteristics of Schumann and Brahms's piano music, I looked at three genres. First, in the category of the piano concerto, I chose two major Romantic works, Schumann's A minor concerto and Brahms's B-flat major concerto. Second, for the category of piano variations I included two sets by Brahms because the variation framework was such an important vehicle for him to express his musical thoughts. Schumann's unique motivic approach to variation is displayed vividly in his character-piece cycle *Carnaval*. Third, the category of the character piece, perhaps the favorite medium of Romantic expression at the piano, is shown by Schumann's *Papillons* and Brahms's sets of pieces Op.118 and Op.119.

This performance dissertation consists of three recitals performed in the Gildenhorn Recital Hall at the University of Maryland, College Park. These recitals are documented on compact disc recordings that are housed within the University of Maryland Library System.

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by

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Klavierstücke, Op.118

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Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

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Gildenhorn Recital Hall, Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center

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