



Yang Yang

Movimento de Amor no Concerto de Piano em Lá menor Op. 54 e nas Variações sobre a Tema de Robert Schumann Op. 20



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o júri

Presidente

Professor Doutor António Manuel Chagas Rosa
Professor Auxiliar da Universidade de Aveiro

Vogal - Arguente Principal

Professora Doutora Ana Maria Liberal da Fonseca
Assistente Convidada da ESMAE do Instituto Politécnico do Porto

Vogal - Orientador

Professora Doutora Shao Xiao Ling
Professora Auxiliar da Universidade de Aveiro

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palavras-chave

Amor em movimento; Robert e Clara Schumann; A minor Piano Concerto Op.54; Variations on a theme by Robert Shumann Op.20; Experiência interpretativa

resumo

Esta tese tem como objetivo pesquisar o papel da música como emoções expressas em movimento. Baseado nos dois objetos de estudo: *Concerto de Piano em Lá menor Op. 54* de Robert Schumann e *Variações sobre a Tema de Robert Schumann Op. 20* de Clara Schumann, exploro a emoção de amor entre Robert e Clara Schumann em suas vidas. Verifico que esta emoção de amor está sempre relacionada com as criatividades musicais dos dois.

Outro objetivo importante envolve a minha interpretação e a experiência de tocar nessas duas composições. Tento alcançar o meu entendimento sobre os espíritos e significados musicais das obras para enriquecer a minha imaginação. Esta última vem através da sensação auditiva para os movimentos cinéticos do corpo e, finalmente alcança a uma verdade sonoridade musical e a sua expressão emocional.

keywords

Love motion; Robert and Clara Schumann; A minor Piano Concerto Op.54; Variations on a theme by Robert Schumann Op. 20; Playing experience

abstract

This thesis aims to research the role of music as an emotion expressed in motion. Based on the study of two pieces: Robert Schumann's *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54* and Clara Schumann's *Variations on a theme by Robert Schumann Op. 20*, I explore the emotion of love between Robert and Clara Schumann throughout their lives, verifying the emotion of love as related to their musical creativity.

Another important aim of this thesis involves my interpretation and playing experience of these two compositions. I obtain my understanding of the musical moods and meaning enriching my imagination, which translates through the aural senses to the kinetic body movements, culminating in the real musical sound and its emotional expression.

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Introduction

As a pianist, I have known and studied several works by Robert Schumann. At first, however, I studied these compositions as independent works, not taking into consideration the composer's emotional side. When I came to Portugal and started my master's degree in piano performance, I expressed to my piano teacher the interest I had in playing the works of Schumann. As a result of these discussions with my mentor, I started to realize that what I appreciated most in Schumann was his emotional expression.

In particular, during the romantic period, composers used music as a language to express their emotions, and as Robert Schumann once stated: *Music is ability to express emotion audibly; it is the spiritual language of emotion* (Hinson, 1988:9). Therefore, as a performer, I too, focus predominantly on emotional expression in my study of romantic music, and its essence resides in two main components, composition and performance.

In my knowledge of Robert Schumann's musical works, Clara is the muse for his creative inspiration. Several musical elements reveal Clara's pictographic character, such as the five notes of Clara leitmotif and the Clara rhythmic leitmotif. For example, the five notes melodic leitmotif appears in the 2nd movement of the *F Minor Piano Sonata Op.14*. And the rhythmic leitmotif appears in *Carnaval Op.9 – Chiarina* and in the Song Cycle *Myrthen Op.25 – Widmung*. She was not only an inspiring figure for Robert but also a pianist and composer that represents the true essence of the romantic era. Robert Schumann delighted in Clara's artistic quality: *she already stands on the topmost peak of our time, at a height where nothing is hidden from her* (R. Schumann in Ritter, 1877:262). Hence, how did they create their aesthetics with technical components that are found in their compositions? Are there intimate thoughts deposited in the aural experiences found in their works? Furthermore, how did Clara challenge the stereotypes of the female gender in the 19th century, and which kind of support did she receive from her love life with her

husband? Finally, as a performer I wonder how I can interpret these subjective thoughts of emotions and create specific aural experiences through my playing of kinetic movements.

In order to answer the above questions, I did a bibliographic review. In virtue of Robert and Clara Schumann having lived in the 19th century, the most unique way to approach these questions is by reading their written documents and scores. Fortunately, the life of R. and C. Schumann is well documented. In the *The complete correspondence of Clara and Robert Schumann volume* edited by Eva Weissweiler (Schumann in Weissweiler, 1996) the letters written by Robert and Clara Schumann in 1839 can be found, documenting the major events of that year. Another document is *The Marriage Diaries of Robert & Clara: from their Wedding Day through the Russia Trip* (R. Schumann in Nauhaus, 1993). These diaries depict a vivid image of the unique, artistic and personal union amidst two famous musicians as well as detailing a fertile period in Robert Schumann's life, during which he wrote the Spring Symphony, the Piano Concerto and most of his chamber music. In the research of Schumann's musical works the affection between Robert and Clara was found in several musicological approaches, highlighted in the romanticism musical movement that reflects the social and historical context of the 19th century (Hughes, 1904), (Reich, 2001), (Boyd, 1999), (Geck 2012). Most works written about this couple and their compositions are found separately. For instance, the Mahn-Hee Kang's Ph.D thesis, where the author researched the *Piano Concert in A minor Op.54* of Robert Schumann (Kang, 1992). Moreover the dissertation of Claire Flynn, who named *The Creative Art of Clara Schumann*, which allowed Clara's compositions to be shared in the spotlight in addition to other aspects of her artistic career (Flynn, 1991). Yet, there are also a few dissertations that discuss both Robert and Clara Schumann. One such example is Renée Danielle Gaarder's thesis, named *Schumann's Op. 25: Finding*

the Narrative Within, where the love crystallization of the couple has been studied (Gaarder, 2012).

In order to offer more details about the inner emotional world of the Schumann couple, I chose two piano pieces as my study focus: the *A minor Piano Concerto Op. 54* of Robert Schumann and the *Variations on a theme by Robert Schumann Op. 20* of Clara Schumann. First of all, the choice of the *A minor Piano Concerto Op. 54* is justified because its first movement was sketched as a fantasy in 1841, soon after Robert and Clara's marriage. This time was supposedly the happiest period of Robert's life, hence his desire to create a piano concerto. Before the *A minor Piano Concerto Op. 54*, Robert made several attempts to compose a concerto for piano, but he was not able to complete it until the arrival of *A minor Piano Concerto Op. 54*. It should also be noted that the tonality of this *A minor Piano Concerto Op. 54* was the same as Clara's *A minor Piano Concerto Op. 7*. For me, this choice, of the same tonality, in both pieces, is not just a coincidence. It is stressed that Robert Schumann also participated in the creation of Clara's *A Minor Piano Concert Op. 7* in 1833.

Apart from the choice of the *A minor Piano Concerto Op. 54*, the *Variations on a theme by Robert Schumann Op. 20*, composed by Clara Schumann, is also studied in my work. This personal selection is justified by the natural compassion felt from Clara towards Robert Schumann: and because *Variations Op. 20* was the most mature of Clara's piano works. Clara dedicated this work to Robert, as a birthday gift, during the last year celebrated with his family. In this last opus, Clara made citation of her earlier piano work *Romance Variée Op. 3* in remembrance of their love life.

Other than using this manner to research the emotional world of the Schumanns, the compositional components are also carefully analyzed in my work. I explore the elements such as tempo, rhythm, melody, texture and timbre /dynamic related with their musical meaning. As a consequence, my psychic and

sensorial motor action conveyed an emotional desire, which crossed the aural sense to the kinetic body movements to achieve a unique musical performance.

According to this framework, in the first chapter I would like to approach the social context and aesthetical taste of Schumann's emotions, as this approach helps to reveal the musical intentions of R. and C. Schumann, while at the same time, through their diaries and correspondence, a correlation with the Schumann's personal life can be discovered.

In the second chapter, I would like to discuss the special features of Clara Schumann as a female pianist and composer in the 19th century while establishing the support given to her by Robert Schumann.

Consequently, the third and the fourth chapters will analyse the technical-musical components of *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54* and Clara's *Variation Op. 20*. I desire to deepen my understanding of the musical language and enrich the musical imagination in my performance. In my piano playing, I hope to express melodic voices, harmonic modulations, and changing ton-colors with my gestures of key touching and body motions.

Chapter 1: The Musical Thoughts of Robert Schumann

In the nineteenth century, Romanticism appeared as a musical style and music became one of the most fascinating arts after the prosperity of literature in romantic culture. Between 1831 and 1854, during the time of Robert Schumann's musical career and the emergence of the Romantic prototype, the perception of the role of music in society and its position amongst the arts had a significant turning point. Under the influence of literature, a number of composers emphasized the combination of music and literature. Not only did they look for inspiration in literary works, but also used words to express their musical thoughts and aesthetic ideas. Besides being a Romantic composer, Robert Schumann also played a very important role in music criticism in the nineteenth century, confronting the German general music preference of the early 1830s. He promoted high quality music, and stood against mediocrity and meretricious music. As an editor and critic, he became known as Europe's foremost spokesman for romantic music. He partnered with a group of artists and like-minded friends, and subsequently, founded the journal on 3rd April, 1834, entitled *Neue Leipziger Zeitschrift für Musik (NZfM)* (Hinson, 1988:11). Thus, showing the importance of music critics in that century, which demonstrated an unprecedented¹ development of musical criticism.

1.1 Music sources from inner experience and feeling

In Robert Schumann's thoughts, music created a path to inner experience, as the soul of freedom exposed great inspiration. Concerning the criticisms revealed at the Puritans Music, Robert Schumann referred to this kind of music as *a small*

¹ Hinson mentioned: *The major composers of the 19th century wrote a great deal about music. Before Schumann, there was Carl Maria von Weber who was a journalist for 40 years. The prose writings of Franz Liszt came to nine volumes in the 1880-82 German edition* (Hinson, 1988:9).

art indeed that merely possessed sounds, but no speech, no symbol fitted to express the varying movement of the soul (R. Schumann in Ritter, 1877:70). To reach the connotation of the music narrative and its representation of the varying feelings and psychological states, Robert Schumann considered that the revelation from poetry and literature was the precise way to create the high art of music. In his *Advices to Young Composer* in 1840, he wrote: *This is the quickest way to progress and to bring to blossom your inner musicality* (Jensen, 2012:180). In the same year, when he began to demonstrate interest in the writing of lyrical songs, he mentioned in a letter to Clara: *Sometimes it is as if I have discovered completely new paths in music* (Jensen, 2012:130). Therefore, when listening and playing Robert Schumann's music works, I always feel and resonate the emotions of his songs as well as of his piano pieces, which carried his personal language and soul. For example, as a way to express his praise and desire for Clara, he composed the *Myrthen op.25* and dedicated it to her. In Jon W. Finson's study, he argues that "Myrthen" is a title originated from the original word "Myrtle". It was used in traditional bridal bouquets. Finson explains that the twenty-six songs represented each flower tied in this bridal bouquet as a symbol of marriage (Finson, 2007). As well as the love theme expressed in the song cycle *Myrthen*, Robert Schumann also used his psychological transformation in other song cycles such as in *Liederkreis op.39* and *Dichtliebe op.48*. In these pieces he was inspired by poems from Eichendorff and Heine where he voiced his subjective feelings and psychological transformation of hopeless love, gloom intransigency and despondency. These subjective feelings and experiences of his daily life were expressed in his music through a very poetic singular mood, which proved that Robert Schumann was a pioneer composer of the Romantic era. This point of view was also supported by Eric Frederic Jensen as seen in his quote: *He seemed driven to express in music not merely the text of poem, but own reading of it. ...*

Schumann's goal was to immerse himself in the text and bring it to the life (Jensen, 2012:130).

As a piano performer, I truly appreciate this poetic rhetoric not only present in the *lied* that was inspired by poems and literary works, but also in Robert Schumann's instrumental works. In his piano pieces such as *Davidsbündlertänzen Op.6* and *Canaval Op.9*, there are two characters – Florestan and Eusebius – in order to express his dual personality by nature and his thoughts. In this way, Robert Schumann used a distinguished musical metaphor for each figure, signing F and E to represent their signature, and tagging them in each musical piece. Using this kind of imaginary personality, Robert Schumann created a real costumed disposition, and achieved all of the inherent sentiments with higher poems and depths. In Holly Watkins's *Metaphors of Depth in German Musical Thought*, she confirmed this subjectivity and metaphor as a base of romantic conception: *Among German-speakers, music's ties to a Romantic conception of subjectivity based on inwardness and depth proved remarkable resilient, as Schumann's reflections on music, subjectivity, and nationality demonstrate* (Watkins, 2011:89).

1.2 Poetic virtuosity in music

In Schumann's musical thoughts, expressing the human inner experience was one of the most important aspects of the Romantic aesthetic sphere. It can be seen in his own manifestations and in several argumentations from the authors that have studied Schumann. In addition to this aesthetic claim, he sought the poetic depth of music and to change the public musical atmosphere, during the 1830s. At that time, the "post-classical" style² became a popular fascination but it

² In nineteenth-century Europe, the music environment generally featured a deliberately simple harmonic and phraseological idiom, transparent textures, a melodic style derived from Italianate opera. This style sought for kind of virtuosity embraced an aesthetic that regarded virtuoso showpieces primarily as vehicles for accessible entertainment (Samson, 2004:19).

was criticized and flouted by Robert Schumann and his *NZfM* such as Joseph Mainzer wrote in June 9th, 1837 in his article to distinguish Thalberg's virtuosity as the "end" of music and Liszt's virtuosity as the "means" of music. He criticized: *Liszt knows the technical aspect of his instrument as well as Thalberg does, but nevertheless seeks to use it purely as a means, to develop his thoughts and ideas* (Mainzer, 1837:185). Another critic, Eduard Krüger, also expressed his opinion concerning "virtuosity", in *NZfM* in 1841. He mentioned that he did not oppose virtuosity but he thought that it should *renounce vanity*, and promote *poetic artworks* (Krüger, 1841:133-34). From Robert Schumann's point of view, in his previous written work in 1828, he claimed that: *Tones are words, but on a higher level... Music is the higher power of poetry* (Jensen 2012:49). Relatively to "virtuosity", Robert Schumann expressed a complex attitude. He considered virtuosity as *a potentially productive, valuable, and attractive component of the culture of serious music* (Stefaniak, 2012:15). From these comments, we can observe a strong invocation of poetic and its rhetoric in music that Robert Schumann firmly believed in. At the same time, the "poetic" and "virtuosity" can also be seen.

As is well known, in Robert Schumann's piano works, the technical skills are highly intricate coupled with complex difficulties. However, as a piano performer, when I studied them, I realized that I was more attracted by his musical lines, the deep sentiments and the symphonic meanings rather than his brilliant technical skills. At the same time, when I listened to Robert Schumann's music, I appreciated his lyrical and rhetorical music atmosphere, rather than his amazing technical show. For example, in *Symphony Etude Op.13*, I appreciated this virtuosic etude because it aided me to practice the skills of a pianist and also made me gain a deeper understanding of the symphonic texture and the significance of this brilliant virtuosity. In *Abegg Variation Op. 1* and *Canaval op. 9*, I recognized the symbolic and metaphoric primacy, which deepens the poetic

musical connotation. Just as Robert Schumann wrote: *No wonder, then, that we were charmed with the pieces at once, hearing them played by himself, and most of all with the first, in A flat minor, rather a poem than study* (R. Schumann in Ritter, 1877:199). Related to “poetic” and “virtuosity”, Watkins referred that Robert Schumann realized the poetic depth in music and promoted music virtuosity to contrast and complement this inner spiritual mood. She mentioned:

For Schumann, virtuosity, in its more banal realizations was just such an external force, one that deformed music in the interest of showing of the skills of the performer. As the antithesis of these trends, the new poetic music was lively rather than lifeless, spiritual rather than mechanical, internally rather than externally motivated, deep rather than superficial (Watkins, 2011:92).

In relation to the poetic virtuosity, I consider that one of the subjects of my research – *Piano Concerto in A minor Op. 54* is a characteristic work, which represents this musical notion. In the traditional conception, the Concerto was a virtuosic type, in which the solo instrument made all kinds of virtuosity to contrast with the orchestra; and the accompaniment and contrast functions were usually made by the orchestral. Nevertheless, in Robert Schumann’s *A Minor Piano Concerto*, besides the virtuosity, his intricate feelings of love for Clara are also featured, drawing in melodic and rhythmic motifs. These factors are presented both in piano and in orchestra. The orchestral parts are integrated with piano parts concurrently to produce an enrichment of the instrumental dialogues, enhancing more expressivity and poetic flavors in the music. Just as Robert Schumann manifested his thinking about concertos in *NZfM*, in 1830:

We must confidently await the genius who will show us a brilliant new way of combining orchestra and piano, so that the autocrat at the keyboard may reveal the richness of his instrument and of his art, while the orchestra, more than a mere

onlooker, with its many expressive capabilities adds to the artistic whole (Lindeman, 1999:152).

1.3 love motion as a symbol of Robert and Clara's union

The relationship of Robert and Clara Schumann was always marked by communication through music. Robert Schumann was highly attracted to Clara's musical talent, especially her piano performance. As a composer, Robert Schumann expressed his feelings towards Clara through his musical compositions. Moreover, Clara was not only a pianist, but also a composer, thus responding to Robert Schumann's love through her works, and even collaborated with him to co-create various musical pieces after they were married. Robert and Clara Schumann were closely united, both in the musical world and in their personal lives. In this union, love motion became a symbol, even through the difficulties they had to face and the opposition to their marriage by Clara's father, Friderich Wieck. No matter how much adversity they faced, such as the separation caused by her father, which served only to strengthen their love and to tackle the difficulties. As Clara wrote: *Posterity shall regard us completely as one heart and one soul* (C. Schumann in Nauhaus, 1993:xxv).

Clara's role was the main contributing factor that led to the success of Robert Schumann in his private life and his compositions. Firstly, we should give the highest credits to their love affair. As a main figure in Romanticism of western history, Robert Schumann himself claimed that expressing emotional feelings was essential to his composing process. Quoting him: *If you begin to compose, work it out in your head. Do not try a piece on your instrument, except when you have fully conceived it. If your music came from your heart and soul, and you did feel it yourself, —it will operate on others in the same manner* (R. Schumann in Pierson, 2009:7).

It is almost distinctly concluded that Robert's love for Clara stimulated him to conceive a lot of musical pieces. He also wrote:

Some traces of the battle I have had to fight on Clara's account may perhaps be discernible in my music, and you will not fail to comprehend them, the concerto, the sonata, the Davidsbundler dances, the Kreiskriana, and the novelettes may be said to have been almost entirely inspired by her (R. Schumann in Stork, 1907:131). This quote showed how important Clara was to him and to his music.

Their relationship started with music. They met for the first time during Robert's private lessons with Clara's father. At that time, Clara had already become a famous and publicly acclaimed pianist, under the guidance of her father. Robert Schumann once wrote to Wieck after a very successful concert Clara performed in Weimar in 1832.

First let me congratulate you warmly on Clara's success. Indeed, the public, which forgets so easily, seldom overlooks anything really remarkable, though I am sometimes tempted to compare it to a herd of cattle momentarily distracted by the lightning from its peaceful grazing. Schubert, Paganini, and Chopin have flashed across the horizon, and now comes — Clara (Ibid., 1907:70-71). From this letter, we could see Robert Schumann admired Clara for her musical talent and regarded Clara as a musician comparable to Schubert, Paganini, and Chopin. Obviously Clara's aptitude for the piano had attracted Robert Schumann. He wrote to Clara on 11th January, 1832 :*I often think of you, not as a brother thinks of a sister, nor as boyfriend thinks of girlfriend, but as a pilgrim before a distance shrine* (Jensen, 2012:49). After that, Robert and Clara, both being musicians, studied scores together and read poetry for possible settings. Robert and Clara were passionate about Chopin's Opus 2, thus giving it in an important position in Clara's repertoire.

During Robert and Clara Schumann's earlier courtship period, the two young artists shared musical ideas and influenced each other in their compositions. Sometimes "Clara" appeared in Robert Schumann's pieces because of direct quotations from her music. This "Clara" quotation was: made of descending five-

note leitmotif, which can be found in several of Clara's works, as well as Robert Schumann's, even if less often. As Robert Schumann wrote to Clara: *Your theme appears in every possible form* (R. Schumann in Litzmann, 1913:102). Besides the leitmotif of "Clara", I also found many images of Clara in Robert Schumann's works, such as in Robert Schumann's *Carnaval Op.9*, where Clara's character was embodied in "Chiarina". Moreover, they also started their pieces of music from each other's compositions. In August of 1833, Clara composed her *Romance Variée Op.3* with the guidance of Robert Schumann. It was also the first work that Clara dedicated to Robert Schumann. I believe that in this specific musical piece Clara must have injected her emotions towards Robert Schumann. In response, Robert Schumann similarly composed *Impromptus Op.5*, which was based on Clara's *Romance Variée Op.3*. Overall, Clara and Robert Schumann expressed their love and desire for one another, using music as a means to communicate with each other. In Robert Schumann's letter that he wrote to Clara, on August 2nd, 1833, his strong desire and love for Clara is shown and his wish to become united with her in name and in mind is also expressed: *I would like speak to you of the hope I have that the union of our names on the title page, may become a union of our views and ideas at a later time, this is all a bagger can do* (Jensen, 2012:48). Thus, besides variations, the famous *Davidsbündlertänze Op.6* of Robert Schumann started with a mazurka that was composed by Clara. Later, Clara composed another piece: *Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann Op.20* for Robert's birthday, in which Robert Schumann celebrated with his family. However, their life together was not easy any more.

In 1836, Clara had to separate from Robert Schumann because of pressure from her father. Robert Schumann composed *C Major Fantasie Op.17* to express his pain. He once wrote to Clara: *The first movement may well be the most passionate I have ever composed – a deep lament for you* (Ostwald, 1987:126).

Besides sharing musical ideas, Robert Schumann always encouraged Clara to become an independent musician. As discussed earlier, he not only encouraged her to compose but also guided her through some compositions. When Clara composed *A minor Piano Concerto Op. 7*, Robert wrote the orchestral parts for her. Clara wrote in her diary, on November 22nd, 1833: *I have finished my concerto, and Schumann will orchestrate it now so that I can play it at my concert* (Reich, 2001:296). Robert helped Clara write the orchestral part, and he also willingly composed a concerto. After many attempts, he began to compose *A minor Piano Fantasie with orchestra*, in 1841. This *Fantasie* later became the first movement of Schumann's *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54*. I would say, if the *C minor Fantasie Op.17* described Robert's "lament", then the *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54* was the embodiment of Robert's love towards Clara. As mentioned by Robert, "entirely inspired by her", he chose the same key of Clara's *A minor Piano Concerto Op.17* and used Clara's leitmotif in his own Concerto. The musical details of this work will be presented in Chapter III.

As for Clara's piano performances, Robert never held back his compliments in his critic writings. In fact, he once called Clara "*the first German Artist*". Below is a citation from Robert praising Clara's *Soirees Op.6*:

How can I better celebrate today-- the eve of that which gave birth to an admired artist-- than by dedicating a part of it to the consideration of one of her creations? These 'Soirees' are the outgrowth of so rich a fancy, that mere practice will not suffice to follow their deftly-woven arabesques; They are the fruit of a so profound spirit, that the merely formal in them fades into the background, while their dreamy character, the essence of an inwardly reflective nature, will render them at the first difficulty of comprehension. ... We must remember that, as an artist, she already stands on the topmost of peak of our time, at a height where nothing is hidden from her (R. Schumann in Ritter, 1877:262).

This letter shows Robert Schumann's support for Clara without any reservation during their courtship. I would say, Robert and Clara Schumann were a couple of young lovebirds, but more importantly, they were soul mates. In 1840, Robert Schumann composed his most renowned art song cycle *Frauenliebe und – leben Op.42*. He finished the whole cycle in two days soon after he learnt that he had won the legal battle to wed Clara without her father's permission. In this piece, Robert Schumann chose eight poems from Adelbert von Chamisso's *Frauenliebe und –leben*, which, was dedicated to Chamisso's wife. It was likely that Robert was touched and even inspired by this set of poems due to his memories with Clara and their love life (Jensen, 2012:182). It is reasonable to suggest that when Robert Schumann composed this work, he imagined himself as a woman, evoking an imaginary life experience of a woman, starting with the protagonist first encounter of love, through marriage, until death. During the composing process, Robert Schumann became Clara. He hoped that Clara would love him as he had expected. By embodying a woman in his compositions, Robert hoped to depict the emotions of the opposite sex, describing a life of an imaginary marriage to Clara.

However, at that time, conservative public opinion favoured the idea that women should stay home and raise children. After their marriage, Robert Schumann's attitude showed its ambivalence. Between 1841 and 1854, they had eight children who survived to adulthood. Robert Schumann began to push Clara towards a domestic life. According to their journals and biographies, Clara was able to tour as a pianist only when the family's shaky finances required her to do so. Even to compose Clara was also limited due to domestic and social problems. Although Robert Schumann never stopped encouraging Clara to compose and contacting publishers for publishing her musical piece, his creative work took priority over hers. The Schumanns' household had two grand pianos, but soundproofing was unheard of at the time. During their marriage, so as not to

disturb Robert Schumann from his own creative works, Clara had to avoid composing and practicing when her husband was working.

In spite of this, the way this couple inspired each other and enhanced each other's creative work was indeed a miracle in the history of music. Compared to most of Robert Schumann's contemporaries, as a husband, he was far more open-minded in supporting his wife as an independent artist. Nevertheless, Clara sacrificed a lot in order to hold her family together, especially after Robert Schumann's death, raising all the children on her own. As a professional artist and a woman in the nineteenth century, Clara had an independent spirit and her own career. Her social position and reputation was uncommon at that time. This situation, especially her love and the support from Robert Schumann will be discussed in chapter II .

Chapter 2: Clara Schumann: An Independent and Capable Woman of the 19th Century

Clara Schumann was surely one of the most important classical musicians among both men and women of the nineteenth century. Apart from her role as the wife of Robert Schumann, her own accomplishments, as a pianist and as a composer, were quite remarkable even compared to major male musicians of her time. As a professional pianist, she performed for the public to support both herself and her family. As a composer, she expressed her love for her husband through her compositions, which were mostly published with the help of Robert Schumann. After Robert Schumann's death, she stopped composing, but worked on the editing of Robert Schumann's works. Without doubt, Clara was an independent and exceptional figure compared with other women of the 19th Century. In this chapter, I strive to examine Clara's role as a professional pianist; a successful composer; an editor and finally, from Clara's point of view, provide an overview of the couple's relationship.

2.1 An accomplished pianist's career

Clara Schumann was one of the most famous pianists of the 19th Century. She gave numerous solo recitals and played based on her memory. *Along with Liszt, Clara was one of only a few pianists to perform from memory and pioneered the now standard tradition of performing a solo piano recital without the aid of assisting artists.* (Smith 2009:33). As Robert Schumann wrote in his article in 1833: *Clara Wieck is the first German artist* (R. Schumann in Ritter, 1877:68). Clara's performances also gained the respect and approval amongst music critics of her time. Furthermore, performing on the piano had a profound meaning to Clara, as it was her way of expressing her deepest love for life and for her beloved husband, Robert Schumann. He appreciated her talent and similarly to his wife, expressed, through music, feelings of love for her as well. The love they shared is apparent in his letter of September 9th, 1838:

You played magnificently. The people don't deserve your [playing]... You are too dear, too lofty for the kind of life your father holds up as a worthy goal; he thinks it will bring true happiness. What difficulties, what a long way, how many days—and just for a few hours! . . . No, my Clara will be a happy wife, a contented, beloved wife. I consider your art great and holy. I hardly dare think of the happiness you will give me with it; but if we don't consider it necessary, you won't lift a finger if you don't want to, for people who aren't even worth playing scales for, isn't that so, my girl? Don't misunderstand me: you know I am an artist who believes you can preserve art without our having to make long concert tours, indeed you will find in me a truly ardent musician, to whom it is all the same if you rush a little or hold back or play a little more elegantly—as long as it always comes from within—and it does with you (R. Schumann in Weissweiler, 1984:111).

Upon reading this letter it is unquestionable that, when Robert Schumann listened to Clara's playing he was profoundly moved by her. Considered by many to be one of the greatest pianists of her time, to Robert Schumann she was the one and only pianist.

In the early 19th Century, female musicians such as Fanny Mendelssohn and Henriette Voigt were present on the musical scene, yet none were as apparently talented or achieved as much as Clara ever did. In fact, Clara was the very first professional female pianist to perform at concerts to make a living. Yet, although Fanny was also very talented and dedicated to her craft professionally, and some may have said she was as talented as her famous brother Felix Mendelssohn, her musical talent was hindered by the social attitudes towards women of that time. Similarly to Fanny, Henriette Voigt was also an exceptional player and often gave concerts at her house. As a wife of a rich businessman, she helped many musicians, including Robert Schumann. Despite both being music-lovers, however, neither Henriette nor Fanny performed as professional concert pianists. At that

time, many believed that training in music, as a hobby, was suitable to women, but *viewed professional occupation less favorably* (Smith, 2009:14). The social norm was that a female pianist was either treated as an amateur musician, who played only on occasion at popular upper-class salons or got married to someone who would allow them to hold musical events, without any financial pressure. With Clara, however, this was not the case, as she was brought up by her father who trained her as a professional pianist. Her career as a pianist lasted for approximately 63 years where she first performed at the age of nine in 1828 in Leipzig and gave her last concert in 1891 in Frankfurt. (Reich, 2001:249). There were no other pianists, regardless of gender, who achieved such a high status on stage and who maintained this position for such a long period of time. Throughout her life as a concert pianist, she performed in several concert tours in Germany and other European countries.

Robert Schumann's solo works for the piano and chamber music on the piano occupied a large portion of Clara's repertoire. Due to a hand injury suffered by Robert, he was not able to perform his own works, resulting in Clara becoming his "right hand". In the letter, which Robert Schumann wrote from Vienna to Clara, he expressed:

I am sometimes unhappy, particularly here, because I have an injured hand. And I want to tell you it is getting worse. I have often cried to heaven and asked, "God, why did you do this to me – of all people?" It would have stood me in such good stead, especially here; music is so complete and alive within me that I ought to be able to exhale it like a whispered breath. But now I can scarcely play at all and one finger stumbles over the other. It is really terrible and has already given me so much pain. Now, you are my right hand and you, you must take care of yourself so that nothing happens to you, I often think of the happy hours you will give me through your art (R. Schumann in Weissweiler, 1984:307).

Clara served as the main interpreter of Robert's piano works. However, during her early years, she did not have many opportunities to present Robert's works because her father controlled her concerts for marketing purposes. Despite this, Clara told Robert Schumann that her father objected to her taking his music with her to Paris but she packed it nonetheless (Reich, 2001:261). After 1839, when Clara took away her father's control over her tours, she began to perform more and more of Robert Schumann's works in her program. Clearly, she greatly admired Robert Schumann's works. She premiered most of Robert Schumann's piano pieces and played these pieces in public, until the end of her life. She wrote from Vienna in 1838:

I am looking forward to your Second [G Minor] Sonata; it reminds me of so many happy as well as painful hours. I love it, as I love you. Your whole being is expressed so clearly in it, and besides, it is not too obscure (C. Schumann in Weissweiler, 1984:108).

Besides being the main interpreter of Robert Schumann's piano works, one of Clara's greatest achievements was bringing Robert Schumann's work to European audiences, through her concert tours. Especially in 1839, Clara gave several concerts throughout Europe. At first, audiences outside Germany found it difficult to accept Robert Schumann's music and Clara wrote about this in a letter to Robert on 21st March 1839, in Paris:

My great admiration for your compositions doesn't allow me to play them for people who don't understand them and who are not worthy of hearing them: it may be true that my feeling doesn't serve me well in this case, but that's the way it is. By the way, I recently played your Symphonic Etudes and Carnaval for Messrs. Zimmermann and Artôt and they were delighted, but the audience here understands much less than a German audience (C. Schumann in Weissweiler, 1994:123).

As well as the letter mentioned above, I also found evidence of Clara's anxiety owing to the fact that Robert's music was not widely accepted by the French at the time. She even approached Robert and asked him to compose something "popular" that would suit the French audience. She made this request to Robert in the same year she wrote:

Listen, Robert, won't you for once compose something brilliant and easy to understand, something that has no titles, but hangs together as a whole, not too long and not too short? I want so much to have something of yours to play publicly, something that suits the audience. It is indeed humiliating for a genius, but policy demands it for once (C. Schumann in Weissweiler, 1987:469).

This letter showed Clara's frustration when she brought Robert Schumann's pieces outside Germany. However, another letter of Clara's that was written on May 10th 1839, proved that Clara had never doubted the value of Robert's pieces:

I played your Symphonic Etudes again and reveled in them. They are absolutely beautiful; I can't tell you how much I like them. I am looking forward to the Kinderszennen very much and the Fantasy, too. Tell me, is that the piece that has a section in D minor and a middle movement in which the first section is in F and the second is in A minor? I play it often; the melody is so wonderful and the first one, too; it sounds so chivalrous. If only I had the Kinderszenen (C. Schumann in Weissweiler, 1994:100).

Clara was very confident of the beauty of Robert Schumann's works and determined to promote them. In her diary from 1839, I learnt not only about their love in daily life, but also understood their musical preferences. Robert's "*Intellect, soul, humor, the greatest tenderness*" penetrated into her heart and soul. As she wrote in her diary, in September, when she returned from Paris:

I am often pained that Robert's compositions are not recognized as they deserve to be. I would gladly play them but the public doesn't understand them. I'm so afraid that someday Robert will have to witness the fact that his compositions arouse little interest in comparison with other works that are dull and insipid. I think this will be dreadful for him. He has much too deep an intellect for the world and because of this must he be misunderstood? I believe that the best thing is for him to compose for the orchestra; his fantasy is limited by the piano. The piano doesn't have enough scope; his pieces are all in orchestral style, and I think that is why they are so inaccessible to the public: the melodies and figures cross so much that it takes a great deal to discover all their beauty. I myself always find new beauty each time I play one of his works (I'm finding this to be the case with the Novelletten now). The Novelletten are really beautiful works. Intellect, soul, humor, the greatest tenderness, everything is united in it—there is no end to the most delicate features (Reich, 2001:263).

Clara was always clearly a promoter of Robert Schumann's works and even after his death, she continued to play his piano pieces for the audience, her efforts contributing to a new outlook on his works. On March 19th, 1862, Clara wrote to her friend Ernst Rudorff:

I received such pressing invitations to come here and they wanted so much to hear me, especially to hear my husband's works, which are becoming widely known here, that I decided to come, partly because I regarded it as a duty to my husband. I wouldn't have thought of coming for that reason alone—to popularize his music among the French—because I never would have believed that such a thorough German nature as his could become so greatly appreciated in another country. I still don't believe it, but considering the heartfelt reception that I have had for his works here, it would have been wrong to say no (Reich, 2001:266).

Besides promoting Robert Schumann's musical works, Clara also absorbed Robert Schumann's aesthetic thoughts into her performing style. In their shared diary, in which Robert Schumann wrote on 27th September 1840, he had a discussion with Clara. In particular passage of the diary, he expressed his belief that the original interpretation of the composer, as opposed to the interpretation of the performer, was the best way to present it to the audience:

We had an argument about your interpretation of my pieces. But Klarchen, you are not right. The composer and he alone, knows how his compositions should be performed. If you thought you could do it better, it would be as if a painter, for instance, imagined he could make a better tree than the Almighty. He can paint a more beautiful one, no doubt, but then it would simply not be the one he wanted to reproduce. That is the long and the short of it. I don't say that in certain isolated cases, where the performer is an eminent artist, exceptions to this rule may not be of interest; but it is always better for the executant to give us the composer, and not himself (R. Schumann in Nauhaus, 1993:12).

Clara's attitude towards pianism had a great influence on many pianists of the future. This attitude, that influenced pianists to come, most probably stemmed from Robert's help and opinions, when she began to play Schumann's pieces. As for Clara's interpretation of his works, he praised her without any reservation in many cases. In one of his many letters, he wrote:

I have heard you play only twice in two years. ... It seemed to me, however, as though it were the most perfect playing one could imagine; I will not forget how you played my [Symphonic] Etudes [August 1837]. The way you portrayed them, they were absolute masterpieces—the public cannot possibly understand how to value them—but there was one person sitting in the audience—and though his heart was pounding with other feelings, at that moment his whole being paid homage to you as an artist (R. Schumann in Weissweiler, 1984:98–99).

As mentioned before, most female musicians of her period didn't perform for a fee but Clara was an exception. As a professional pianist, Clara made a living by playing concerts and gained financial independence. However, during Clara's earlier years, her father not only planned all of her concerts but also collected all the money she made from them. After her father had declined to return the money to her she decided to prepare her own dowry by she decided to prepare her own dowry by holding and performing in concerts

I will tell you, though I don't like to speak about it, that I earned 970 taler, of which some went to travel expenses, purchases for me and Mother and the household, so that I now have 490 taler left. Are you satisfied? I am very happy about it and realize that in five weeks one could hardly ask for more (Reich, 2001:75).

It was uncommon in the nineteenth century that a woman could satisfy her financial needs through her own ability, especially against her father's will. Using her musical talent, Clara became an independent professional concert pianist, providing the financial means necessary to support herself.

During her marriage to Robert Schumann, she was often the one who earned money through concert tours, to support the whole family, becoming most evident when Robert's mental health became unstable. In 1844, Clara took a concert tour with Robert Schumann to Russia. She gave several brilliant concerts and earned *close to 6,000 taler, of which almost 3,000 was clear profit—and was much acclaimed on the Russian tour* (R. Schumann in Nauhaus 1982:268). After the Russian tour, they moved to Dresden, and as Robert Schumann's health condition worsened, Clara's concerts became an important way to earn money to support their family. *She earned 120 taler from the Norderney and Leipzig concerts in 1846, 320 taler (after travel costs) from the Vienna-Brünn-Prague tour in 1846–47, and 482 taler from two Berlin concerts in 1847* (Reich, 2001:103).

As a woman, Clara took up far more responsibility with her family than most woman of her time. She was hard-working and modern, and seemed to be more of a twentieth century woman, proven by the fact that she not only performed but also taught piano. In 1879, Clara became a full-time teacher in Hochschule für Musik Frankfurt. Due to her high position in the German music world, she was the only woman in the school when it first opened. After Clara Schumann, there were other women who desired a position in the school, but the director at that time responded: *With the exception of Madame Schumann there is no woman and there will not be any women employed in the Conservatory. As for Madame Schumann, I count her as a man* (Reich, 2011:285).

2.2 A special female composer

As a professional musician, Clara Schumann not only displayed her talent for piano performance in the concert halls, but also left a legacy of impressive compositions for future generations. Her works were frequently performed by her because she was one of the most famous pianists of that time. At the same time, with the help of Robert Schumann, most of her works were published by the main publishers of Europe. Robert Schumann encouraged Clara to compose at the very beginning of their relationship and never ceased to do so until the end of his life. Therefore, according to me, Clara's compositions were inspired by Robert Schumann's guidance. Additionally, Clara also used her compositions as presents for Robert Schumann, especially during their marriage. Such as Reich said: *After her marriage, almost of her compositions were written for Christmas or birthdays or at her husband's special request* (Reich, 2001:219). In my mind, for Clara, composing was the form she found that communicated her love for Robert.

Before Clara met Robert Schumann, she was already well trained as a composer. Clara's earliest composing activity was a result of the superior education she had received under the careful planning of her father. Besides receiving regular piano lessons, from her father, Clara also took theoretical

lessons such as harmony, counterpoint and composition.

Clara was well educated in composing skills, and she composed many works, which were appreciated by several musicians of her time, such as Chopin and Mendelssohn. However, she still had an ambivalent attitude towards her composition and although she stated: *There is nothing that surpasses the joy of creative activity, even if only for those hours of self-forgetfulness in which one breathes solely in the realm of tones* (Reich, 2001:215). Furthermore, after the conclusion of the *Trio Op.17*, she wrote in her diary to express her confidence about composing: *There is really no greater pleasure than having composed something and then to hear it* (Ibid., 216).

Nevertheless, while on one hand, Clara did enjoy composing and it gave her tremendous satisfaction, on the other hand, due to the social pressure, Clara was uncertain of her role as a composer. During the 19th Century, there was a social prejudice towards female composers, as Clara wrote in her diary in 1839:

I once believed that I had creative talent, but I have given up this idea; a woman must not wish to compose—there never was one able to do it. Am I intended to be the one? It would be arrogant to believe that. That was something with which only my father tempted me in former days. But I soon gave up believing this. May Robert always create; that must always make me happy (Ibid.).

From Robert Schumann's perspective, as discussed previously in the first chapter, he was greatly impressed by Clara's talent. Accordingly, and although Clara held an ambivalent attitude towards her composing, Robert Schumann still supported her musical career. In March 1840, before their marriage, Robert Schumann wrote to Clara: *Clärchen, do you perhaps have something for my supplement. Do compose a song! Once you begin, you cannot leave it. It is far too seductive* (Ibid., 219).

Nonetheless, at the same time, Robert Schumann's thinking was inevitably constrained by the walls of social norms towards women of that time. In spite of

actively encouraging Clara to compose, he also held a contradictory attitude towards Clara's compositions as well. He wrote the following in their marriage diary in 1843:

Clara has written a number of small pieces that show a musical and tender invention that she has never attained before. But to have children and a husband who is always living in the realms of imagination do not go together with composing. She cannot work at it regularly and I am often disturbed to think how many profound ideas are lost because she cannot work them out. But Clara herself knows her main occupation is as a mother and I believe she is happy in the circumstances and would not want them changed (Ibid., 244).

As mentioned before, during their marriage, most of Clara's compositions were composed as gifts requested by Robert Schumann. Perhaps due to the social attitude of that time, and the ambivalence of her composing, Clara completely stopped composing after Robert Schumann's death. There could be three possible reasons for this fact. Firstly, it was clear that since Robert Schumann started to help Clara with her compositions, at a very young age, he had always been there for her when she was composing. For her, to compose was beyond mental creativity as she linked their intimate interaction to her beloved Robert Schumann. After Robert Schumann's death, no one could ever replace his position as mentor and partner, providing Clara with the psychological needs she required. Secondly, Clara had to support herself and her children on her own. This meant that she was forced to perform in more concert tours. She also took on the job of editing and publishing Robert Schumann's complete works and all of these activities occupied most of her time. Lastly, Clara herself, possessed an ambivalent attitude towards her own composing ability. She never felt truly confident enough to publish her works without Robert Schumann's encouragement. In fact, it was Robert Schumann who consistently sent her works to publishers and critics. After Robert Schumann's death, she took over the interaction with the publishers, which Robert

Schumann once had had, yet she only coped with them for the sake of Robert Schumann.

Moreover, it was Robert Schumann's influence on Clara that played a dominant role on her entire composing career. Apparently, the style of Clara's compositions got more and more similar to the works of Robert Schumann. This is because at the very beginning of their relationship, Robert Schumann served as Clara's mentor and partner in composing. He did not only encourage and motivate her to compose, but also guided her through many of her works. One of the biggest influences from Robert Schumann was the romantic approach, which placed her personal inner emotional experience at a very important place of her composing process. In Clara's diary of October 24th, 1840, she stated her opinion that inner emotion should be expressed through music after hearing one of their friends sing:

Robert thinks the only thing Elise's singing lacks is heart and emotion. That has already occurred to me many times, since her singing has never moved me as much as, e.g., a lied sung by Devrient or Pauline Garcia, but it always seemed as though she had emotion in her everyday life; why should she not be able to express this in singing as well? I don't understand it! – I believe that once she falls in love, she will also sing with more soul. It's certain that love has much to do with it, I discovered this in myself. When I began to love my Robert really intimately, then for the first time I felt what I was playing, and people said it must be a deeper impulse that made me play soulfully. Music is, after all, a goodly portion of my life, and when it is missing, it seems to me that all my physical and spiritual elasticity is gone (C. Schumann in Nauhaus, 1993:24).

This point of view, concerning Clara's inner emotional expression, was harmonious with Robert Schumann's musical train of thought. Therefore, under Robert Schumann's encouragement and guidance, they shared their musical ideas and musical quotations, dedicating their works to each other. When I

explored their works, I found much evidence of their influence on each other. One of the main characteristics was their sharing of motifs and quotations. The most famous motif in their works is the Clara theme, featuring a descending fifth. This was used in many works of Robert's like the slow movement of his *F minor Piano Sonata, Op.14*.



Example 1: *F Minor Piano Sonata Op.14*, 2nd movement, MM.1-9, Robert Schuman, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1887.

Another clear example of them sharing music ideas is the relation of Clara's *Romance Variée Op.3* and Robert Schumann's *Impromptus Op.5*. Most of Robert Schumann's scholars often supposed that his *Impromptus Op.5* was based on the theme of Clara's *Romance Variée Op.3*, but some scholars have pointed out that this theme was Robert Schumann's rather than Clara's *Romance Variée Op.3*³ (Reich, 2001:223). Reich supposed that Clara heard this melody from Robert, and then incorporated it into her own daily improvisations and used it in her *Romance Variée Op.3*. When Robert Schumann heard Clara's *Romance Variée Op.3*, perhaps he forgot the source and considered it to be Clara's ideas (Ibid.). Although I did not find the evidence to prove Reich's supposition, this situation confirmed that these two young musicians shared musical ideas and deeply influenced each

³ In Reich's book, she said two scholars found the first appearance of this theme through researching Robert's diary of September 28/29, 1830.

other.



Example 2: *Romance Variée Op.3*, MM.1-6, Clara Schumann, Hofmeister 1897.



Example 3: *Impromptus Op.5*, MM.14-24, Robert Schumann, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1885.

Apart from Clara's *Romance Variée Op.3* and Robert Schumann's *Impromptus Op.5*, there were also many other examples of quotations in their compositions. Such as Robert used the opening theme of Clara's *G Major Mazurka Op.6* as the motif of his *Davidsbündlertänze Op6* and wrote on the score as *motto v. C.W.*



Example 4: *Davidsbündlertänze Op.6*, MM.1-5, Robert Schumann, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1887.

Moreover, Clara's *Variation on a Theme by Robert Schumann Op.20* also proved the relation in their compositions. This was considered to be one of Clara's most mature pieces. It was composed in May and June of 1853, which was Clara's last creative period. The original theme was from the first *Albumblatt* in Robert

Schumann's *Bunte Blätter* Op.99, which used the "Clara" leitmotif – the descending five-note (Reich, 2001:232). As mentioned before, Clara presented this work as a birthday gift to Robert Schumann, which would be the last one he spent with his family. Robert Schumann appreciated this this piece profoundly. When he received this published work in Eindhoven, he wrote on October 12th, 1854: *Now I must tell you how your variations enchant me more and more and remind me of your magnificent playing of this and of my work* (R.Schumann in Jansen,1904:401).



Example 5: *Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann* Op.20, MM.1-8, Clara Schumann, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1887.

As previously said, Robert Schumann hoped that in future both their names could be signed on the compositions, to represent their musical thoughts. In 1841, after their marriage, this hope became a reality. They chose twelve poems from Rückert's *Liebsfrühling* to make a song cycle as *Liebsfrühling* Op.37/12. In this collaborative process, Clara was no longer the inspiration of Robert's works and in this song cycle, Clara contributed three songs "Er is gekommen in Sturm und Regen" "Liebst du um Schönheit " and "Warum willst du and're Fragen". Robert Schumann appreciated these songs very much. This satisfaction was visible in their shared marriage diary, on 20th December, 1841:

Specifically 3 lieder pleased me, in which she is still as enthusiastic as a young girl, and in addition a much clearer musician than before. We have the cute idea of weaving them in with some of my own and then having them in print. That will result in a booklet truly warmed by love (R. Schumann in Nauhaus, 1993:45).

In addition to encouraging Clara to compose and collaborating with her, Robert

Schumann also negotiated in person with the publisher so that Clara's work could be published. This situation was very unique at that time. As I previously noted about the inequality that female musicians encountered in that period, although they were talented, well educated musically and even highly skilled, they "*neither performed in public, nor published their work* (Reich, 1993:126). It is my belief that helping to publish Clara's compositions was one of many ways for Robert to express his love for Clara. It also showed Robert's progressive attitude towards the female position in society. Moreover, composing together served as more than just musical creativity but as a unique way to express their love for each other.

2.3 A source of great contribution as an editor

In the second half of the 19th century, Clara was one of the only women music composer's who would publish dozens of works and served as a musical editor for many of her husband's compositions. At that time, female musicians were mostly considered as amateurs who were not treated seriously when compared to fellow male musicians, yet, Clara was an exception. Among the published music works, I verified two periods of Clara's piano publishing. The first parts of her early piano works were published in several publishing houses, such as Hofmeister and F. W. Whistling in Leipzig, Haslinger and Diabelli in Vienna and Richault in Paris (Reich, 2001:290-316). From the time she lived with Robert, they created and published *Liberfrühling Op.12* together; the mature part of Clara's piano works were published by Breitkopf & Härtel. This was possible because Robert maintained a good relationship with the publisher. Hence, it is suggested that her works were published with the help of her husband. It was noted that after Schumann's death, she never composed or published a work for herself. However, it was observed that her role as a publisher and editor could not be neglected. In order to maintain the "legitimacy" of Schumann's works, she took over a lot of editing works and published one set of complete compositions by Robert. Besides the music works, she also published Robert's correspondence from his youth. On one hand, this

could be seen as her way to express her eternal love for her husband, and on the other hand, it signified the pioneering achievements of Clara as a female editor, initiating the feminist movement of the late 19th century, since at that time, it was impossible for a woman to be regarded in society as an editor.

Concretely speaking, I researched a statement, which Robert wrote in 1851, where he claimed that Clara would be the one to make all final decisions in his musical works after his death.⁴

Five years later, when Robert passed away, Clara took more responsibility than Robert would have ever expected. She served as the chief editor for his unpublished manuscripts and later, she also edited two collections of Robert's published works. The collection entitled *Klavier-Werke von Robert Schumann* (Piano Works of Robert Schumann) was an edition based on the manuscripts and the earliest edition published during Schumann's lifetime.

In the other collection, which was entitled *Erste mit Fingersatz und Vortragsbezeichnung versehene Instructive Ausgabe* (First Instructive Edition with Fingerings and Performance Markings), Clara added her own interpretation. This instructive edition only included collected piano solo pieces. It showed Clara's interpretation of these pieces as an authority on playing Schumann's music.

As for the unpublished work of Robert Schumann during his lifetime, Clara took it upon herself to publish what she believed was his most noteworthy work, but chose not to publish all of it. Included are pieces from his late works, which were not published before Robert's death, such as the 1853 piano accompaniments for the Bach cello suites, the *Mass* (published in 1862), and the *Requiem* (published in 1864). We can easily witness Clara's motivation to publish her husband's works after his death – to protect him and his works and to retain

⁴ Robert wrote: *Since all of us are mortal, I would like to arrange things –as regards the compositions that I leave behind –so that Gade or –in case he should be prevented – J. Rietz should decide on works possible still to be published; this should, of course, be done with the consent of my dear Clara, and please, only after most severe critical evaluation* (Reich, 2001:241).

his reputation. She was eager to provide authentic editions of these compositions. At the same time, she was afraid that some of Robert's works displayed his mental confusion. She confessed in her writings:

My husband is too dear to me to permit me to have something of his published that is trivial (Reich, 2001:242). For example, Clara decided not to publish the piano accompaniments for the Paganini Caprices that Schumann wrote in 1853. She also hid five of his Romances and destroyed them in 1893. This clearly showed that Clara herself had doubts about her husband's compositional ability during his later years when he found himself mentally unstable especially when he was forced to live in the hospital. It was her devotion that pushed her to protect her husband in this way.

In the case of the publication of Robert Schumann's musical collections, the first collection was prepared during 1877. At that time, Breitkopf & Härtel offered Clara another opportunity to revise and edit a critical edition of all Robert's works. This is because different versions of Robert's works appeared published in many countries by various publishers. These editions were often carelessly edited, which made Clara very angry. She wrote to discuss the offer from Breitkopf & Härtel with Brahms and began to work on the project soon afterwards. Both the publisher and Clara agreed that it was her who was best suited for this job and only her name would be printed on the covers. Nevertheless, during the whole process, Clara and Brahms were actually assisted by a number of renowned musicians of that time in editing Robert's works. Still, only Clara's name was printed on the cover while other musicians were only mentioned in the preface as contributors. Clearly, Clara had to bear an enormous amount of work, as well as responsibility, which she was willing to endure because of her love for Robert. The whole editing process was completed around 1890.

After the publication of the *Klavier-Werke von Robert Schumann*, Clara agreed that Breitkopf & Härtel collaborate to work on an instructive edition of Schumann's

piano solo pieces. At that time, Schumann's solo piano works had already been published in many countries. Additionally, many editors like von Bulow produced many instructive editions with many different personal interpretations on Schumann's pieces, which Clara and Brahms were not fond of. Clara indicated clearly, in her diary, that she felt obliged to make one authentic instructive edition of Schumann's solo pieces since she was still regarded as the most authentic performer of his works. Clara wrote: *it is clear to me that I must do it, so that at least one correct edition will be available for the students* (Reich, 2001:246).

In one of the two pieces we are discussing in this thesis, Clara also edited the *A minor Piano Concerto* while she was working on Schumann's *Werke*. It was included in the third book of *Werke: Concerte und Concertstücke für Orchester* published in 1883. Nevertheless, this was not the first time that this composition had gotten published. It was actually the autograph on Schumann's hands; the first edition of the solo part was prepared by Breitkopf & Härtel in 1846 while the first edition of the orchestral part was also prepared in 1846. The first edition of the score prepared in 1862 is considered to be the most authentic source today, given that scholars believe this source was closer to Robert Schumann's original creation. Aside from editing Robert's musical works, in 1874, Clara reread Robert's letters and had the idea to edit them. She began to read, select and edit the letters from Robert's youth, which were entitled *Jugendbriefe*. This set of correspondence was very popular and was printed four times. Very soon, this correspondence was also translated into English, known as *Early Letters* (Reich, 2001:248). Clara finished this project very promptly, as Reich stated that this project was her recollection of her early years and *the happiness for which the two young artists had hoped* (Ibid).

Today, Clara is most remembered for her talent as a concert pianist and for being the wife of the renowned composer, Robert Schumann. However, it is quite relevant to point out that she was more than a mere wife, especially during the

period of her life after Robert's death. As Robert's widow, the best way for Clara to conserve Schumann's works was perhaps to edit her husband's compositions and other writings. Clara's continuous work as an editor was always motivated by her love and self-conceived duty, to make an authoritative edition, which would remain throughout time, as a pure representation of Robert's works and continue to uphold his reputation. It seemed that it was the best way to express her love for him. She put much of her energy into editing Schumann's works and the result is uplifting given that she succeeded in immortalizing Robert Schumann's artistic life with her enthusiastic and ever lasting love.

Chapter 3: The Interpretation of A minor Piano Concerto Op.54

As discussed in previous chapters, Clara Schumann was the main inspiration for Robert Schumann's creative works and the main interpreter of his music. Thus, it is obvious that this Concerto must be closely connected to Clara. In this piece, which was surely intended for Clara to play for Robert Schumann, he clearly demonstrates his love for her. I believe that in *A minor Concerto Op.54*, Robert's musical moods are a reflection of Clara's character, where the enthusiasm, love dialogues of the couple and Schumann's perplexed psychological emotions can concurrently be heard. In this chapter, evidence will be provided to prove that Clara was the source of imagination and creation for this Concerto, and how Robert Schumann connected this music with his inner feelings for Clara will be discussed. Furthermore, my own interpretation of the piece, based on my personal understanding of the narrative, moods and atmosphere will also be provided.

3.1 Clara's feature as the source of creation

The *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54* of Robert Schumann was the most unique and only piano concerto he published during his lifetime. In the beginning, the first movement was a one-movement fantasy for piano and orchestra, which Robert composed in 1841. Four years later, he edited his fantasy and added the *intermezzo* and *finale* to complete the entire piece. After their wedding, however, Robert almost stopped writing solo pieces for piano and dedicated his time to lieder and chamber music. Nevertheless, he had shown interest in composing a piano concerto for a long time and as Robert was composing it, he was certain that Clara would be the soloist for this concerto.

Between 1827 and 1829, before they got married, Robert attempted to compose a piano concerto three times. The results were three unpublished works in E minor, E flat major and F major. Yet he gave up on all of them eventually. Until 1833, when Clara composed her *A minor Piano Concerto Op.7*, Robert helped her finish the orchestra part of this concerto (Kang, 1992:6-7). In my

opinion, Clara's *A minor Concerto Op. 7* had a great influence on Robert Schumann. Hence, it was not surprising when he started to try again for his own concerto, he chose the same key as Clara had chosen for her concerto and it became the only Piano Concerto that Schumann finished and published during his lifetime.

Besides sharing the same key in both works, another important connection to Clara was the main theme in Robert Schumann's *A minor Concerto Op.54*, as he did not use the traditional sonata form. In his *A minor Concerto* he only included a theme, which depicted Clara's image from the very beginning until the end. In this theme, we can see a specific rhythmic pattern that clearly brought the image of Clara into light.



Example 6: *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54*, 1st Movement, MM. 12-18, Robert Schumann, Muzyka, 1985.

The dotted rhythm of this main theme seems like a rhythmic leitmotif, which leads us to two other great pieces composed by Robert. The first one is *Chiarina*, in Schumann's *Carnaval Op.9*. In this piece, the character of Clara was embodied in *Chiarina*, often said to be a spoof of Clara Wieck (Ostwald, 1985:115).



Example 7: *Chiarina* in *Carnaval Op.9*, MM. 1-5, Robert Schumann, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1879.

Another work that Robert created out of love for Clara is his Song Cycle *Myrthen Op.25*. It was a gift to Clara for their wedding and in this sense it brought a very personal emotion when it was played (Geck, 2012:110). In the first song *Widmung*, I can sense the inner emotion of Robert Schumann in the music and the poem. It represented his love for Clara and this love vibration was carried by the dotted rhythm in the texture of the piano line. At the same time, the lyric⁵ soprano melody was also drawn with the dotted rhythm to describe Clara's features.

Widmung.
F.Rückert.

Nº 1. **Innig, lebhaft.** Componirt 1840.

Du meine See - le, du mein Herz, du meine Wonn', - - o du mein
Schmerz, du meine Welt, in der ich le - be, mein Himmel du, da - rein ich schwe - be, o du mein

Example 8: *Widmung* in *Myrthen Op.25*, MM. 1-4, Robert Schumann, Breitkopf& Härtel, 1879-1912.

As illustrated above, this work is almost *monothematic* (Niemen in Walker, 1976:246). Robert Schumann develops and alters this theme of Clara's a rhythmic leitmotif in many different ways that lets the listener experience the theme in a different tonality, tempo or mood. The first variation of the main theme appears at the end of the transition section where a fraction of the theme is only played by the

⁵ Du meine Seele du mein Herz. Du meine Wonn', O du mein Schumerz. Du mein Welt, in der ich lebe, mein Himmel du, darein ich Schwebbe, O du mein Grab, in das hinab Ich ewig meine Kummer gab, Du bist Ruhe, du bist de Frieden, du bist vom Himmel mir beschiden, Dass du mich liebst, macht mich mir wert, Dein Blick hat mich vor mir verklärt, Du hebst mich liebend über mich, Mein Guter Geist, mein bess'eres Ich.

piano in C major. Here, the strings warm the entrance with a single eighth note then connecting to a faster passage with the marking of *Animato*.

The image shows a musical score for Example 9. It consists of three staves. The top staff is the piano part, and the middle and bottom staves are the string parts. The piano part begins with a series of eighth notes, followed by a phrase marked 'a tempo'. The string parts provide accompaniment with chords and single notes. The key signature is C major, and the time signature is 4/4.

Example 9: *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54*, 1st Movement, MM. 57-62, Robert Schumann, Muzyka, 1985.

The image shows a musical score for Example 10. It consists of three staves. The top staff is the piano part, and the middle and bottom staves are the string parts. The piano part features a 'ritard.' (ritardando) marking followed by an 'Animato' section. The string parts provide accompaniment with chords and single notes. The key signature is C major, and the time signature is 4/4.

Example 10: *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54*, 1st Movement, MM. 63-71, Robert Schumann, Muzyka, 1985.

Another variation of the main theme is shown in A-flat major in the first part of the development section. A dialogue between the piano and clarinet begins.

The image shows a musical score for Example 11. It consists of four staves. The top two staves are the piano part, and the bottom two staves are the clarinet part. The piano part is marked 'Andante espressivo' with a tempo of quarter note = 72. The clarinet part is marked 'sempre pp' (pianissimo). The key signature is A-flat major, and the time signature is 4/4.

Example 11: *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54*, 1st Movement, MM.156-159, Robert Schumann, Muzyka, 1985.

This section reminds me of the third *lied* in Schumann's *Myrthen*, the *Der Nussbaum*. The texture and rhythmic structure show the similarity quite well.

The lyric of *Der Nussbaum* portrays an innocent girl who is thinking of her fiancé⁶. It is most certainly safe to assume that the girl he refers to is Clara, since in Schumann's mind, was written as a wedding gift to her.

The image shows the first four measures of the piece 'Der Nussbaum'. The top staff is the vocal line, starting with a rest followed by the lyrics 'Es grü - net ein Nuss - baum vor dem Haus,'. The piano accompaniment is in the lower staves, featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The tempo is 'Allegretto.' and the dynamics include 'p' and 'Pedale'.

Example 12: *Der Nussbaum* in *Myrthen* Op. 25, MM. 1-4, Robert Schumann, Breitkopf&Härtel, 1879-1912.

The theme appears once more in the development section where Robert Schumann gives it a new character: *Passionato*.

The image shows the development section of the first movement of the A minor Piano Concerto. The tempo is marked 'Passionato' and the dynamics include 'p' and 'poco a poco cresc.'. The score features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes.

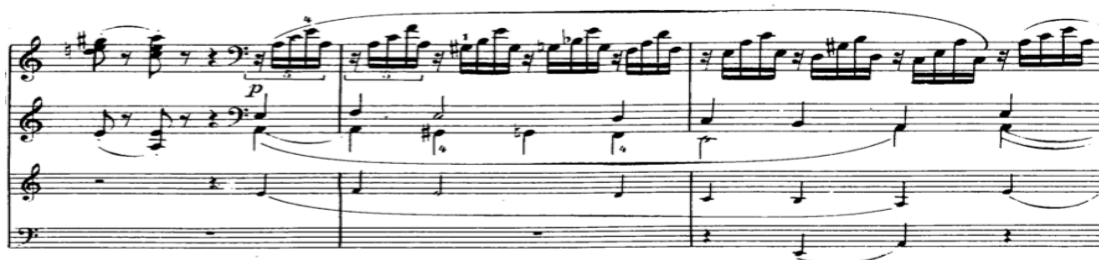
Example 13: *A minor Piano Concerto* Op. 54, 1st Movement, MM. 205-208, Robert Schumann, Muzyka, 1985.

After the development, the recapitulation follows the classical sonata rules with all the necessary alternations in the harmonies. After the recapitulation, the main theme appears again in the *cadenza* and the *coda*. The *coda* again starts with a

⁶ Es grünet ein Nußbaum vor dem Haus, Duftig, Luftig Breitet er blättrig die Äste aus. Viel liebliche Blüten stehen dran; Linde Winde Kommen, sie herzlich zu umfahn. Es flüstern je zwei zu zwei gepaart, Neigend, Beugend Zierlich zum Kusse die Häuptchen zart. Sie flüstern von einem Mägdlein, Dächte Nächte, Tagelang, wüsste, ach! Selbe rnicht was. Sie flüstern - wer mag verstehn so gar Leise Weise? - Flüstern von Bräut'gam und nächstem Jahr. Das Mägdlein horchet, es rauscht im Baum; Sehndend, Wähnend Sinkt es lächelnd in Schlaf und Traum.

variation of the main theme. This time, the character of the theme becomes more delightful and celebrating.

Besides the dotted rhythm that relates this piece to Clara, further proof is the Clara five-note leitmotif at the beginning section of the transition part of the first movement. The “E-F-E-D-C-B-A” could be seen as a variation or expansion of Clara’s descending five-note leitmotif, which are quoted in many of Robert Schumann’s previous piano works.



Example 14: *A Minor Piano Concerto Op.54*, 1st Movement, MM.19-21, Robert Schumann, *Muzyka*, 1985.

This Clara leitmotif appears one more time in the third movement as an accompanying figure in the left hand.



Example 15: *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54*, 3rd Movement, MM.38-45, Robert Schumann, *Muzyka*, 1985.

In terms of the second and the third movement, Schumann did not compose them until 1845. It is my belief that Robert composed both second and third movements after receiving encouragement from Clara. I found two diary entries that showed her excitement when Robert finished the second and the third movement of the Concerto. The first one was written on June 27th, 1845:

Robert has added a beautiful last movement to his *Fantasie in A minor for piano and orchestra*, so that it has now become a concerto, which I mean to play next winter. I am very glad about it, for I always wanted a great bravura piece by him (Kang, 1992:16).

Nearly one month later, when the second and third movements were finished, Clara wrote on July 21st: *Robert has finished his concerto, and has handed it over to the copyist. I am as happy as a king at the thought of playing it with orchestra* (Ibid.,17). These writings also proved that it was Clara's eagerness to perform bravura work with the orchestra that encouraged and motivated Robert to finish the second and the third movements.

The second movement *Andantino grazioso* is in simple ternary form (ABA') with a transition section to connect with the third movement. The musical character of the second movement presents a naive and childlike aural sensation, which might be a manifestation of Robert Schumann's memory of a younger Clara when he yearned and was eager for her love. Meanwhile, the main theme in the first movement appears in the transition that leads us to the third movement. The main theme of the first movement appears not only in the transition, which connects the second movement to the third movement, but also becomes the main theme of the third movement. This time, the theme is altered and presented in A major but the outline and shape of the theme can be easily identified.

Example 16: *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54*, 3rd Movement, MM.1-8, Robert Schumann, Muzyka, 1985.

To summarize, through my research and comparison with other of Robert Schumann's works, it is believed that in his *Concerto* we can see the image of Clara being reflected in the music. Simultaneously, the performer and the audience can experience Robert Schumann's love for Clara, by following the musical narrative and moods.

In the next section, Robert Schumann's different psychological gestures, seen through the different stages of mood and feelings in this piece will be discussed.

3.2 Schumann's inner emotion in A minor Piano Concerto Op.54

As mentioned in the first chapter, Robert Schumann's creative work was deeply influenced by the romantic literature of his time. In his works, his musical language, often serves as a romantic poem to convey his inner feelings. In this section, the topic of how Schumann expressed his feelings and moods towards Clara through his *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54*, through the delicate manipulation of musical elements such as tonality, tempo, rhythm, dynamic/timbre and texture will be discussed.

The first movement starts with an introduction, which consists of a loud and violent E played in different registers by the *tutti* of the orchestra and the following descending chords played on the piano.

The image shows a musical score for the first movement of Robert Schumann's A minor Piano Concerto, Op. 54, measures 1-3. The score is written for piano and orchestra. The tempo is marked 'Allegro affettuoso' with a metronome marking of quarter note = 84. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor). The score consists of three systems. The first system shows the piano part with a forte (f) dynamic and the orchestra part with a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The second system continues the piano part with a fortissimo (ff) dynamic and the orchestra part with a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The third system shows the piano part with a forte (f) dynamic and the orchestra part with a forte (f) dynamic. The score is attributed to P. ШИМАН R. SCHUMANN (1810-1856).

Example 17: *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54*, 1st Movement, MM. 1-3, Robert Schumann, *Muzyka*, 1985.

This introduction is marked by the tempo *Allegro* and given the expressive term *Affettuoso*. All of Schumann's passionate emotions are expressed by a cascade of moving chords with dynamic *f and sf*, the impulse of love jumps on the dotted rhythm, while passing the irregular modulation. Finally the force of love can be felt in Clara's theme. It seems to represent Robert Schumann's self-revealing gesture of love and passion for Clara. After the opening introduction, the theme is presented. Robert Schumann does not write the theme for the whole orchestra as is done in most classical Concertos. Instead, the oboe plays the theme with the rhythm of Clara in a gentle and gloomy A minor. After the woodwind presentation of the theme, the piano directly takes over and repeats the theme once more. This is quite unusual for the first movement in a piano concerto. Normally according to the Classical double exposition principle, we have a whole orchestral exposition section in which the theme and the closing are presented by the orchestra before the solo takes over. Both Beethoven and Chopin, to great composers before Robert Schumann's time, followed this tradition, yet he decided to break this tradition. This meant that the role of the piano solo in the concerto genre had been raised to a new level. Clearly, Robert Schumann wanted Clara, the pianist of this piece, to be in the spotlight from the beginning of the performance.

The theme here seems to indicate a sincere gesture of courtship. A colourful bass progression suggests a complicated yet enthusiastic mood. The ending phrase is gentle and heart-warming, showing the lover's patience to receive the girl's consent of his courtship and acceptance of his love.

After the presentation of the theme comes the transition section. In this section, the upper voice of the pianist's left hand and the string group play the melody together. Robert Schumann uses the running arpeggio in the right hand to embellish the co-played melody. It is not my belief that at this point in the concerto, the running sixteenth notes are for virtuosity and showing off. Rather, they actually add another layer of texture to the whole sonority. They also create a gentle

floating aural sensation and the background colour for the melody. At the same time, the melody also suggests a pleading gesture. The “E-F-E-D-C-B-A” could be seen as a variation or expansion of the famous Clara’s descending five-note theme, which were quoted in many of Robert Schumann’s piano works. It may therefore be argued that this melody is like Robert Schumann’s inner calling to Clara, and his imagination of a dialogue with her. Using this emotion, the relationship between the solo instrument (piano) and the orchestra changes. The piano and the orchestra are often intimately combined together instead of confronting with each other as in the classical form.

After the transition, we get to the *Animato* section, as the first variation of the main theme. At the beginning of this section, the clarinet plays a variation of the first theme in C major. Structurally speaking, this part serves as the substitution of the second theme in the classical sonata form. The piano plays some rapid arpeggio figures at the end of the musical idea where the clarinet cuts the original theme with a big leap from F4 to A5 flat. Here, the altered theme sounds like a question. The big leap of the tenth interval at the ending also indicates a tone of sarcasm. And the piano descending running notes sound like a heartless wave, which sweeps away all efforts that have been made so far. The frustration that Robert experienced when Clara’s father objected to their courtship, is felt, by the audience, at this point in the concerto.

Then the theme is carried by the endless music flow, which depicts a despairing mood. After several repetitions are shared by both the clarinet and the piano, the motif previously used in the transition section appears twice in d minor (M.104-106) and c minor (M.108-110), which leads to a transition to the orchestral closing theme in C major starting from the upbeat to M.134. Accordingly the strings chromatically modulate into A flat major, the 6/4 time signature and the tempo *andante espressivo* begin to welcome the development section. The first part of the development section starts with another variation of the main theme

and, based on a different texture, compares with the previous one. The clarinet always repeats the melody one note higher than the piano. The accompanying figures of the pianist's left hand also create a nocturne-like aural sensation. Robert Schumann chose the warmer A-flat Major to create a dreamy mood, which reminds me of his romantic love stories with Clara and his desire of a future with her as his wife.

When this dream-like phrase reaches its cadence point in A flat major, the piano brings back the opening call from the introduction, like a sudden awakening from a dream.



Example 18: *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54*, 1st Movement, MM. 185-187, Robert Schumann, Muzyka, 1985.

Here once more, the *tutti* of the orchestra answers the piano in the same rhythmic figure. Robert engages a shortening structure, which emphasizes an urgent and more passionate mood. After this section, the music finally reaches the piano solo descending figures with octaves, bringing us the third section in the development of *Piu animato* and *Passionato*. In this part, Robert Schumann first introduces a triplet accompanying texture and he uses the flute to double the melody. From this point, the music intensifies to its maximum, giving the audience the feeling of his determination and belief. Most certainly, it can be argued that this passage shows his victory over a long struggle with the lawsuit. It further shows his excitement upon winning and his burning desire to be forever more with Clara. As Robert Schumann indicates, this part should sound *Piu animato*. From M.389, Schumann begins a new *accelerando poco a poco* section which leads to the

cadenza. The *Cadenza* starts at half the tempo of the piece and gradually brings out a polyphonic texture and fore-shortening path, which leads to the appearance of the main theme in M.434 under a long trill.

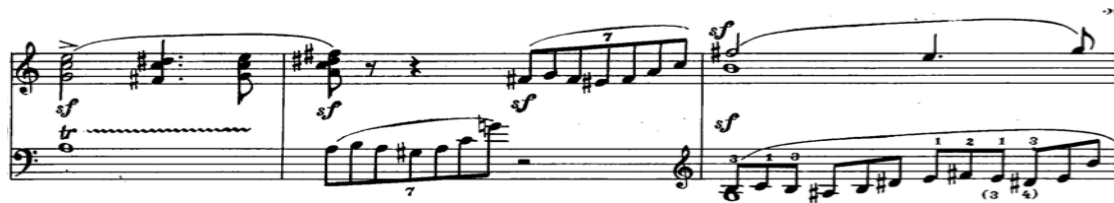


Example 19: *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54*, 1st Movement, MM. 402-405, Robert Schumann, *Muzyka*, 1985.



Example 20: *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54*, 1st Movement, MM. 431-435, Robert Schumann, *Muzyka*, 1985.

At the beginning of this *Cadenza* section, Robert Schumann takes us through several keys with complicating modulations until returning to the A minor section. In this section, the unstable and constant shifting harmonies show the psychological conflicts Robert Schumann was dealing with when writing this concerto. It further expresses the complex feelings of Robert Schumann when he finally was able to marry Clara. He was not sure if he deserved Clara's love but still he longed for his love to be reciprocated. This conflicting feeling could also be seen in the tragic love stories of his *Frauenliebe und leben*. Here, Schumann engages more polyphonic texture than before. It is safe to say that the sounds of these voices are the conflictions in his mind, reflecting his most intimate feelings for Clara and the doubts that he questioned himself with.



Example 21: *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54*, 1st Movement, MM. 444-446, Robert Schumann, Muzyka, 1985.

After the *cadenza* comes the *coda*. The *coda* again starts with a variation of the main theme. The expression marking this passage is *Allegro molto*. It keeps Clara's rhythmic leitmotif but arranges the music in a march-like manner with the feeling of joy, which indicates that Robert's efforts of pursuit are reached in the end.

The second movement is a ternary form (ABA'). In this section, Schumann chose F major to create a feeling of being in nature, as shown in Beethoven's sixth symphony. Accordingly, I feel this section also has a pastoral aural sensation. This passage may be considered as an idyll or pastoral poem in which Robert expresses his most honest feelings as well as his most precious memories.

The A section starts with an intimate dialogue between the piano and the orchestra, just as an intimate dialogue between two lovers would be.



Example 22: *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54*, 2nd Movement, MM. 1-4, Robert Schumann, Muzyka, 1985.

At the same time, the expression of *Andantino grazioso* sounds like a portrait of the innocent image of young Clara in Schumann's mind. Section A itself is in a smaller a-b-a' (8+8+8+4) form with an extension to the second A'. In this extension both the piano and orchestra play sighing figures. According to Dame Mitsuko

Uchida, in an interview, the tune of this figure actually sounds like a gentle calling of the word “Clara” in German (YouTube, 2009).



Example 23: *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54*, 2nd Movement, MM. 20-26, Robert Schumann, *Muzyka*, 1985.

Then comes the section B, starts with a dialogue (or more specifically, questions and answers) between the cello and the piano in C major.

Example 24: *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54*, 2nd Movement, MM. 27-31, Robert Schumann, *Muzyka*, 1985.

The cello sounds like the gentle man making a serious proposal to his beloved lady. The piano-answering phrase sounds a little bit shy and elusive. Then the violin joins the dialogue in M.37, which makes the music sound thicker and thicker. The atmosphere of love gets stronger and more intense. We get to G minor from M.53. After that, the viola and cello bring the melody back to C major. This part could be seen as Robert Schumann’s calling and eager for the love of Clara. Then the A section returns on the original F major which leads to the transition to the third movement that brings the music into A major.

The overall character of the third movement is quite brilliant with renewed vigour as Schumann wrote the term *Allegro Vivace*. It could be seen as a

celebration of his marriage with Clara after all those years of adversity. The form appears as a *Rondo*. In this movement, three themes carried by different characters can be found. The first theme is a transformation of the main theme of the first movement. It brings celebrating aura and almost fanfare-like character. For the theme, Robert Schumann used the ascending five note motive “A-B-C-D-E” which could be seen as the inversion of the “E-(F-E)-D-C-B-A”, the pleading gesture from the first movement. Here, in this movement, it sounds like a celebrating gesture consisting of immense pride and joy. After this motive, the piano plays two big octave leaps, both answered by the orchestra. This almost creates a laughter effect, which adds to the brilliance of the piece. One important character of this theme is that the rhythm between the orchestra and the piano is different. The orchestra plays a stable “long-short” rhythm in each measure while the piano has a much more complicated rhythmic pattern.

The image displays a musical score for the first system of Example 25. It consists of two systems of staves. The top system features a piano part (treble and bass clefs) and an orchestra part (treble and bass clefs). The piano part includes complex rhythmic patterns with triplets and sixteenth notes, and dynamic markings such as *mf* and *f*. The orchestra part features a steady "long-short" rhythm. The bottom system shows a piano part with a more regular rhythmic pattern and dynamic markings like *p* and *f*. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time.

Example 25: *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54*, 3rd Movement, MM. 9-18, Robert Schumann, Muzyka, 1985.

When we get to the second theme, the orchestra presents a highly complicated rhythmic displacement that has always been a big challenge for the conductor and the orchestra. Yet, this cross rhythm is one of the most creative and exciting ideas of the whole piece. Firstly, in terms of auditory effect, we can be easily tricked into hearing a two-beat dance instead of the previous three-beat dance. Furthermore, because of the different presentation of rhythm, the piano

and the orchestra start a new contradicting relationship. This contrasting effect between the piano and orchestra is a new feature in the concerto.

The image shows a musical score for Example 26, consisting of four staves. The top two staves are for the piano, with the right hand in treble clef and the left hand in bass clef. The bottom two staves are for the orchestra, with the right hand in treble clef and the left hand in bass clef. The piano part features a melodic line with various ornaments and fingerings (e.g., 4, 5, 4, 2, 1, 2, 5, 3). The orchestra part provides harmonic support with chords and some melodic fragments. Dynamic markings include 'p' (piano) and 'pp' (pianissimo). A 'segue' instruction is visible at the bottom of the score.

Example 26: *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54*, 3rd Movement, MM. 106-111, Robert Schumann, Muzyka, 1985.

Secondly, later, together with the off-rhythm piano section, we get a new display in the music, sounding like two elements playing, teasing and flirting with each other.

The image shows a musical score for Example 27, consisting of four staves. The top two staves are for the piano, with the right hand in treble clef and the left hand in bass clef. The bottom two staves are for the orchestra, with the right hand in treble clef and the left hand in bass clef. The piano part features a melodic line with various ornaments and fingerings (e.g., 2, 2, 1, 5, 2, 4, 1, 2, 1, 2, 4). The orchestra part provides harmonic support with chords and some melodic fragments. Dynamic markings include 'p' (piano) and 'pp' (pianissimo). A 'Red.' instruction is visible at the bottom of the score.

Example 27: *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54*, 3rd Movement, MM. 145-150, Robert Schumann, Muzyka, 1985.

Overall, this contrasting effect which brings a delicate design of rhythm and phrasing shows the introspective conflict of Robert's dual personality. This dual personality trait is also shown in the third theme when an elegant waltz danced by Clara and Robert Schumann. Firstly, the oboe plays a new melody in F major followed by the piano, which is followed by a duet between the piano which imitate

each other. Finally the music brings back the waltz and leads the dance into the recap section.

The image displays a musical score for Example 28, which is a section from the third movement of Robert Schumann's Piano Concerto Op. 54. The score is presented in two systems. The first system features a piano part on the left and an orchestral part on the right. The piano part begins with a treble clef and a bass clef, with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The orchestral part includes staves for Clarinet (Cl.), Violin (Vn.), and Oboe (Ob.). The second system continues the piano part and adds staves for Clarinet (Cl.), Violin (Vn.), and Oboe (Ob.). The score is marked with a box containing the number 7 in the top left corner of each system. The piano part includes fingering numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) and a first ending bracket. The orchestral part includes dynamic markings like *mf* and *f*, and various articulation marks.

Example 28: *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54*, 3rd Movement, MM. 287-291, Robert Schumann, Muzyka, 1985.

Another interesting point of the third movement, unlike the first movement, is that it engages the soloist in a great amount of virtuoso playing. The ending section has a very unique, endless spinning waltz a feeling, which excites the audience. Obviously, Robert Schumann idealizes using these passages to convey a feeling of happiness and excitement. In addition, this effect is not caused by the sole effort of the pianist in his challenge of playing this part, but rather the collaboration between the orchestra and the piano, which gradually lead to the final climax.

To sum up, this Concerto is often considered as the most Romantic Concerto of its time. In terms of Concerto composing technique, Schumann successfully changed the outlook that the orchestral and piano parts should conflict with each other in a concerto. In terms of innovation of form, he unified: the whole Concerto with a single theme and its transformation. More importantly, Robert integrated his love feelings for Clara, his imagination and his inner experience into this piece exceptionally. His feelings could be identified from the smallest motif to the overall structure through all of the beautiful designs of melody, rhythm and textures.

3.3: My playing experience of A minor Piano Concerto Op.54

A piano performer's main job is to approach the correct mood and semantics of the music. This is, a combination of the kinetic aspect of the performance, the subjective arousal of the performer and the actual mood of the music itself, being as compact as possible to create the correct reaction between the performer and the composer. In order to do so, our finger touch, arm and body movements along with other techniques, according to the musical expression itself, must be adjusted. As Sandor said: *Sound is the result of motions, and motions must correspond to emotions* (Sandor, 1981:4).

To be more specific, as a pianist, I need to be sensitive with the textures from both, horizontal and vertical dimensions, such as harmony progression, melody and their combination with rhythm, timbre/dynamic. In this *A minor Concerto Op.54*, Schumann engages different composing techniques to express his musical ideas. Concretely speaking, I find the homophonic texture, a melody with accompaniment texture and polyphonic texture. For the homophonic texture, although for the passages with the same texture, depending on the different mood, I need to approach them differently to express the emotion behind the timbre changes, rhythmic and metric variations.

Firstly, I discuss my choice of the kinetic movement for homophonic textures in different sections with different tempos, rhythms, and moods. The music starts with a series of descending chords with dotted rhythm. As I discussed in the last section, this phrase is a self-revealing gesture that shows Robert Schumann's passionate love for Clara. In order to express his enthusiasm and dramatic tension, I choose the *con bravura* for the touching of the keys. The pianist should make a full sound by using a lot of body weight through the: finger tips with relaxed arms and wrists in such a way that the sound becomes powerful. However, the sixteenth rests of the dotted rhythm easily cut the music line and make the sounds disconnected and mechanical. To prevent that from happening, I need to be mindful of the long line and endeavor to play these chords coherently. The same

type of playing can also be applied to the development section, where Robert Schumann brings back the same rhythmic element but with octaves, and where the mood is more passionate. In my performance, I engage more energy in the rebounding movement. In the polonaise-like theme of the third movement, I also choose to play in the same manner.

Although in the first movement's main theme, which embodies Clara's rhythmic leitmotiv, the composition also holds homophonic texture. I need to play it with a different approach from the beginning section. Robert Schumann marked *expressivo* here. As mentioned earlier, this theme represents Robert Schumann's pleading gesture to Clara in a sweet loving tone. Hence, I have to create a gentle and passionate spirit. When I play the top voice, I decide to use the *lyric-sentimental* aspect in my touch of the keys. In one movement, I need to stretch the fingers and use their pads, instead of the fingertips, to touch the keyboard. At the same time, the wrists have to be relaxed so that the natural weight from the arms can be transferred to the fingertips. In another movement, I also need to slow down the touches, making the movement of my fingers like a *vibrato* movement on the violin. This kind of touching manner can produce a singing voice with great *legato* quality. The melody should sound not only clear and singing, but also full of color. The harmony should also be presented well with a full tone to support the melody that is being sung. In this Concerto, all passages with this kind of texture should be played in the same way. For instance, in the *cadenza* of the first movement, when the right hand plays the trill and the left hand brings back the main theme, I also play the theme accordingly.

The homophonic texture does not only appear in the first movement, but also in the A section of the second movement. However, the mood and the rhythm are quite different from what I have discussed to this point, as they must be played differently. The music seemed to paint a portrait of young Clara in Schumann's head. So when I play, I choose another touch manner, which can be seen as a

kind of *portamento* (*staccato* with *vibrato*), meaning the pianist uses only fingers and wrists to make the sound *leggiero* and elegant, thus achieving Robert Schumann's marking of *Grazioso* and the mood indicated.

The second main texture in this Concerto is the melody with accompaniment texture. This texture first appears in the first development section of the first movement. In this section, the music presents a dream-like aural sensation as Schumann wrote the term *Andante espressivo* to express the mood. When I play the melody with my right hand, in order to achieve the *espressivo* tone color, I combine both *free-weight-produced touch* and a *legato* touch, to give every note a singing sonority with profound feelings. In order to create the dream-like and serene aural sensation, I use the *una coda* to soften the tone. Moreover, Robert Schumann used the sextuplets on the left hand as an accompaniment, which should not be confused with the melody. Instead, it should sound much softer than the melody and correspond with its fluctuation played by both, the piano and the orchestra.

Apart from the first movement, this accompaniment line, with broken chords and arpeggio, also appears in the conversation section between the piano and the cello, in the second movement. In this section, I believe the music represents Robert Schumann's warmest sentiments for Clara. Thus, the performance of this section should be very expressive. When the piano is playing the accompaniment, in order to highlight the melody played by the cello, the triplet sixteenth notes should be very soft and evenly played. When the cello stops on a single long note and the piano takes over the melody, a very singing, whole tone should sound from the piano, in answer to the cello's pleading. While I'm playing, I choose the manner of *legato* touch with a very affective timbre. The wrist and the arm should be relaxed with flexible coordination when applying force.

The third kind of texture, that I discuss, is the polyphonic texture in this Concerto. The first taste of polyphonic texture appears in the transition part

between the first theme and the varying elements. This part is a typical dialogue between the piano and the orchestra, just as a conversation had between two lovers. Thus, the perfect balance between the piano and the orchestra is required. When I play this section, I need to listen to the orchestra part attentively. I then attempt to create an atmosphere for the conversation between the piano and the orchestral melodies. Moreover, when I play the running arpeggios with my right hand, I choose a *legato* touch with the energy of the fingers. I try to play all the notes as evenly as a colourful decoration for the main melody, which is played by my left hand and by the string section of the orchestra.

After the transition, the music reaches the first variation of the main theme. Here the music reaches a new tempo and mood, which is marked by the *Animato* created by Robert Schumann in this section. As stated in the last section, the music here reminds me of the frustration Robert Schumann experienced during his courtship, which was prohibited by Clara's father. Thus, compared with the previous section, I aspire to make this section a little more exciting with a faster tempo and an up-lifting mood. For the left hand of the piano, Robert Schumann uses triplet broken chords as accompanying figures. When I play this section, I concentrate on keeping the triplets even and light. When I play with the right hand, however, the chords correspond with the markings of *sf* on the right hand, therefore I use *Free-weight-produced-touch* with a bounding energy to create the *sf* sonority to express the fluctuant moods.

The polyphonic texture also appears in the third section of the development part of the first movement. This section is the first climax of the piece. Robert Schumann used polyphonic texture to enhance the tension of the music. I use the *non-legato* manner with the *vibratissimo* manner in combination with an upper-arm movement. The up voice of the piano goes along with the melody played by the orchestra, with a triplet accompanying figure, in the middle voice of the piano and ascending octaves as harmonic support in the low voice. In this section, the right

hand melody has many large leaps, which could easily lead to harsh sounds due to the fast hitting of the keys. In order to avoid such an unpleasant sound, I choose to control the arm weight by suspending the arm a little. When I play the octave, in the low voice, I choose to put more weight on the thumb, of my left hand, to create a melodic line as the walking base. This also corresponds with the right hand melody, to create a passionate aural sensation. Therefore, the audience can feel the excitement expressed by the composer.

The *cadenza* of this Concerto contains the second climax of the first movement. Usually, a *cadenza* is supposed to be a “show-off” section, for the performer, to improvise during performance and often not very closely connected to the main part of the movement. However, the *cadenza* in this concerto is completely written by the composer himself. Robert Schumann used polyphonic technique to compose this *cadenza*, and expressed his strong psychic emotions through it. In this section, I discover two famous conflicting characters in Schumann’s mind, Eusebius and Florestan.

(Cadenza соответствует прежней ♩)

espress.

Example 29: *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54*, 1st Movement, MM. 402-405, Robert Schumann, *Muzyka*, 1985.

It could be argued that this passage is describing Eusebius’ character as being a sensitive and introspective fantast. This music conveys the searching and intertwining moods. I apply the *legato* touch manner to make it sound floating and full of sentiment.



Example 30: *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54*, 1st Movement, MM. 422-425, Robert Schumann, Muzyka, 1985.

This passage, on the other hand, is a depiction of Florestan, of his brave and impulsive character. In performance, I use the touch manner of *non-legato* with *vibrato* to achieve the desired sound.

Besides the three main textures I discuss above, in the third movement, there are also many passages with rapid running eighth notes, showing two different musical images. The performer should approach them accordingly.

The first type of running eighth notes appear in the second theme of the piano part. As I discussed in the last section, here the music depicts two characters playing, teasing and flirting with each other. In order to get this happy and joyful aural sensation, I choose to play those eighth notes with the manner of the *jeu perle* touch, which requires an even and quick movement from the fingers. With this way of playing, I would like to present this music as light and *leggiero*.

The second type of running eighth notes appears in the waltz section. It is true that the finger strength should be present while playing this section. However, I desire to play that passage in a much smoother and flowing manner. The evenness of the running notes is expected and in order to present the feeling of the waltz dance, one has to connect all the melodic notes into a smooth and elegant line.

Overall my interpretation of the *A minor concerto* is based on my understanding of this piece as a loving letter from Robert Schumann to Clara. When I play this piece, I do not only see Clara Schumann through Robert Schumann's eyes but also immerse myself into the intimate love language

conveyed from Robert to his wife. Rationally, I engage my knowledge about piano playing to achieve my performance as I see through the analysis of the musical text. On the other hand, when I play this piece I focus on listening to what I desire, above all, which is to transmit the most truthful emotions of the concerto to the audience.

Chapter 4: The Interpretation of Variations On A Theme Of Robert Schumann Op.20

In this chapter, a personal understanding of Clara Schumann's *Variations on a theme of Robert Schumann Op.20* will be explained. The *Variations* was given to Robert Schumann by Clara as a present for his birthday, which was the last one he spent with his family in 1853, the year before Schumann's mental breakdown and admittance into the psychiatric hospital of Eendenich. In this mature work, Clara used a citation of the main theme of her *Romance Variée Op.3* beside the theme of Robert Schumann. This piece, in which Clara's love is so deeply conveyed, was the first that Clara dedicated to Robert. However, in the *Variations Op.20*, the love theme of *Romance Variée Op.3* created a different ambience. The particular meaning was verified when comparing the passion and enchantment of the young couple manifested in *Romance Variée Op.3* with the complex and perplexed feeling that Clara expressed in *Op.20*. As we all know, after their fourteen years of marriage, Clara faced an arduous situation, confronted with Robert's mental problem. Following, the background context of this piece will be discussed, as will also, a personal understanding and interpretation.

4.1 The context of Variations on a theme of Robert Schumann Op.20

The *Variations on a theme of Robert Schumann Op.20* was composed in May 1853. This piece is one of Clara's most mature large-scale works and it could be seen as a symbol of how their love evolved. After a long period without composing, Clara restarted with a recreation of Robert's theme from his music collection *Bunte Blätter*. The major motivation for Clara was to create a piece as a birthday gift for her husband. She mentioned this in her diary on May 29, 1853:

Today I began to compose again for the first time in several years; I want to work on a variation on a theme from his Bunte Blätter for Robert's birthday; it is very hard for me, however- I have paused for too long (Reich, 2001:313).

From Clara's diary, as was understood, Clara did not just create a composition

for her husband's birthday, more than that, it was a hard psychological process for her. On one hand, she needed to care for her husband, who had a mental problem and avoid him being hurt by the outside world; on the other hand, she received, sometimes, unfair criticism from her husband, even when it came to her piano performance, which had been so praised by Robert before.

Looking at the historical context, in 1850 the couple moved to Düsseldorf and from then on, Clara was very busy with her concert tours, the reason being she needed to support her family; while at the same time, she caring for Robert, while his health was getting worse. Clara's meticulous caring for her husband can be read in the writings of Frederick Niecks, one of their colleagues:

She watched over him, she placed herself between the outside world and him, and prevented, as far as possible, those frictions, which tortured his sensitive mind. (Niecks, 1925:302).

Robert Schumann was not able to control his behavior at times; he was often anxious and unstable, and his attitude towards his wife was not as good as before as he even criticized Clara's playing. All these changes marked Clara. When she chose the specific theme from the *Bunte Blätter Op.99*⁷ to create her *Variations Op. 20*, there were many relatable emotions, which stimulated her. Firstly, this theme contained a warm but melancholic tonality and a very slow, poetical metric. This was a very attractive characteristic, which inspired Clara, especially because of what she was going through at the time. Curiously, in all *Bunte Blätter Op. 99*, there were only two pieces that conveyed the gloomy and retrospective expression – the theme used in Clara's *Variations Op. 20* and the piece entitled *Marsch*. Both of them were composed by Robert between 1841 and 1843. This period also coincided with the creation of the song-cycle the *Zwölf Gedichte aus F. Rückert's Liebesfrühling Op.37/12* – the unique opus that brought Clara and Robert

⁷ *Bunte Blätter Op.99* contains many small pieces that Robert Schumann composed in different years. He published this work in 1851.

Schumann's names together as composers. Perhaps it was because of this that so much similarity is notable in the aural sensation between Robert's theme and Clara's *Warum willst du and're fragen* in *Op 37/12*, such as the melody undulation, the metric arrangement, and the expressive mood. Simultaneously, the lyrics⁸ of this song were reflected in Clara's real psychological and emotional state in 1853 and stimulated her to choose Robert's theme specifically to create a musical gift for her husband. Following the sense of the lyrics, I could see how Clara desired for her lover not to believe the rumors and just trust in her eyes and in her love. Secondly, the beginning of Robert's theme contained the five-note leitmotif, usually regarding Clara, could also be the other reason why Clara chose this specific theme. Either in music or life, they bonded, as Robert Schumann had always desired. When Clara included her earlier piece – the theme from *Romance Variée Op.3* in her *Variations Op.20*, she was trying to recall her husband's memory of the past and the feelings when he first met her. In *Romance Variée Op.3*, a younger Clara was presented, a girl of thirteen who just fell in love with a visitor who came to her household. Also, *Variations Op.20* there is a romantic theme that appeared almost at the end of the piece, followed by a dreamlike arabesque line. It brings a dreamy hope that their love is never blocked and will keep blooming forever.

⁸ Warum willst du and're fragen, die's nicht meinen treu mit dir? Glaube nicht, als was dir sagen, diese beiden Augen hier! Glaube nicht den fremden Leuten, glaube nicht dem eignen Wahn; nicht mein Tun auch sollst du deuten, sondern sieh die Augen an! Schweigt die Lippe deinen Fragen, oder zeugt sie gegen mich? Was auch meine Lippen sagen, sieh mein Aug', ich liebe dich!

4.2 The strong sentiment in Clara's Variations Op.20

Between Clara and Robert Schumann, compositions were often dedicated to each other as gifts on various occasions. Robert Schumann dedicated his *Myrthen*, Op.25 as a wedding gift to her. Clara also dedicated her *Romance Variations Opus 3*, *Trios Romance Op. 11* to Robert Schumann. The *Variations Op.20* was the last piece that Clara dedicated to Robert for his birthday, which particularly shows her feelings towards him. In this subchapter, there is a display and a personal interpretation of those encoded feelings in the notes.

The whole piece includes Robert Schumann's theme, seven variations and one *coda*. Except for the third variation, the end of the seventh variation and the *coda*, which are in F sharp minor, all the other sections are in F minor. The melody of the theme can be clearly identified through all the variations. The ambience of the variations are mostly gloomy and melancholic yet there are delicate differences among the variations as well – anxious, exciting and a nostalgic moods can be heard in different variations. First, the gloomy mood in this piece will be discussed. Besides the theme, the first, third, and sixth variations all have a similar ambience.



Example 31: *Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann Op.20*, MM.1-8, Clara Schumann, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1887.

This theme consists of three phrases. The first and the third one have a similar dynamic and pitch relation. The music starts with the descending five-note leitmotif, which is regarded as Clara's image. This leitmotif is also recognized in many of Robert Schumann's musical pieces, such as the second movement *Andantino de Clara Wieck* in the *Sonata in F Minor No.3 Op.14*. Clearly, Robert Schumann

composed this piece with Clara's image in mind. This could be one of the reasons why Clara chose this theme to write her variations. In this piece, Robert Schumann's poetic style is clear. The phrasing of the theme is very close to the rhyme scheme of a poem. As discussed in the previous section about *Warum willst du and're fragen* by Rückert and one of the lieder in Clara's Op.12 which took this poem as lyrics, The similarity of the theme and the poem by Rückert, in terms of rhythm, phrasing, tone and melodic shape can clearly be seen.

The top voice of the first variation shares the same melody with the theme. The mood and the tempo of both sections should be similar as well. However, the new triplet texture presented by the left hand gives the theme more feelings of movement and flow to the quite peaceful theme. A similar example in the second movement *Andantino de Clara Wieck* in Robert's F minor sonata No.3 Op.14 was also found. Thus, it is certain that the appearance of this triplet showed Robert Schumann's composing technique and musical thinking influenced Clara's creative process.



Example 32: *Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann Op.20*, MM.25-28, Clara Schumann, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1887.



Example 33: *Piano Sonata in F Minor Op.14*, 2nd movement, MM.45-40, Robert Schuman, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1887.

The third variation shares the same structure as the main theme. This variation is in F major. Usually, the colour of a major key is brighter than that of a minor key and it also gives the listener a feeling of hope. However, in this variation the ascending chromatic octaves, which played by the left hand along with several diminished seventh chords, acoustically generate the ambiguity and uncertainty of the tonal relationship. In this variation, I can still hear the gloomy temperament brought by the minor keys, as well as reflecting Clara's inner feelings.



Example 34: *Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann Op.20*, MM.76-83, Clara Schumann, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1887.

Apart from the two variations above, the sixth variation also appears to have a gloomy ambience. What makes this variation special is that it is written in a polyphonic canon manner. For the first phrase, the soprano and the tenor voice form a canon featuring a fifth interval. Then during the second phrase, two voices reach a simple canon style, which means they are on the same pitch. When the music gets to the third phrase there is an interval canon again with a fifth interval between the two voices. As we all know, after their marriage, Clara spent a long time studying the composing counterpoint, and also the music of J.S. Bach together with Robert Schumann. During that period, Robert Schumann also wrote a lot of music featuring a beautiful counterpoint, as it was discussed in his *A Minor Concerto*. Here, again, it's present Robert Schumann's constant support of Clara's career and his influence on Clara's creative work. At the same time, during this passage, Clara was recalling the times when they studied polyphonic music together. Moreover, during the baroque period, polyphony was often used in church music to express people's praise and prayers to God.



Example 35: *Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann Op.20*, MM.149-156, Clara Schumann, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1887.

Other than the overall gloomy mood, in the second variation, there is some sort of uneasiness. In this passage, the melody of the theme appears in the repeating sixteenth notes or the accompanying figures as broken chords. In the soprano voice, Clara used a lot of syncopation, and both the rhythmic feeling of syncopation and the accompanying sixteen notes, express feelings of anxiety and uneasiness. Here, the piece shows Clara's worries about her husband's health and anxiety about their future.



Example 36: *Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann Op.20*, MM.49-55, Clara, Schumann, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1887.

In the fourth variation, the music becomes a little more exciting. In this variation, the theme appears in the left hand without many differences in terms of melody and structure. However, Clara writes running chromatic sixteenth notes to accompany the theme, which brings a new ambience. This specific texture recalls the piano accompanying part of another lieder *Er ist gekommen*, which is in Schumann's song-cycle Op.37/12. Comparing this song with the fourth variation, no matter the dynamic or phrase tone, it's possible to feel a similar mood. The

lyrics⁹ described a woman's excitement when she saw her lover, incorporating Clara's memory of when Robert came to see her while she was composing. The mixed figuration of the ascending and descending scales creating small ripples expresses her excitement and also connects the music to the next variation.



Example 37: *Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann Op.20*, MM.100-102, Clara Schumann, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1887.

Example 38: *Er ist gekommen in Liebsfrühling Op.37/12*, MM.4-6, Clara Schumann, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1879-1912.

The fifth variation is marked as *Poco animato*. It is the most exhilarating moment in the whole piece and it is the only passage requiring a dynamic of forte. The right hand plays the melody with chords while the left hand accompanies the melody with octave arpeggio and octave descending chromatic scales. The left hand's texture brings a lot of tension to the music, which creates the nervous

⁹ Er ist gekommen in Sturm und Regen, ihm schlug beklommen mein Herz entgegen. Wie konnt' ich ahnen, daß seine Bahnen sich einen sollten meinen Wegen. Er ist gekommen in Sturm und Regen, er hat genommen mein Herz verwegen. Nahm er das meine? Nahm ich das seine? Die beiden kamen sich entgegen. Er ist gekommen in Sturm und Regen, Nun ist gekommen des Frühlings Segen. Der Freund zieht weiter, ich seh' es heiter, denn er bleibt mein auf allen Wegen.

sensation. Here, the music expressed Clara's confidence to conquer any difficulties to be with Robert.



Example 39: *Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann Op.20*, MM.124-126, Clara Schumann, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1887.

The aural sensation of the seventh variation and the coda are full of memories and fantasies. In the seventh variation, the melodic theme appears in the top voice of the right hand while the voices of arpeggio figurations with the thirty-second notes are played with both hands. These figurations produce a water-like feeling of moving forward and gradually weaken the ambience, calming down soon afterwards.



Example 40: *Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann Op.20*, MM.173-174, Clara Schumann, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1887.

At the end of this variation, the melody of the top voice and the base line are quite similar to the third variation while in the middle voice. Clara brings back her theme from her *Romance Variée Op.3*. She composed this piece when she was only thirteen years old and it was the very first piece she dedicated to Schumann. At that time, young Clara was quite cheerful in both her performance and composition as her love for Robert Schumann was also strong and passionate. Therefore, in this piece, which was dedicated to Schumann, the fact that she included this theme from her youth, could be seen as a recollection of memories

and her effort to stimulate her husband's memory of their good life before his illness.



Example 41: *Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann, Op.20*, MM. 204-211, Clara Schumann, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1887.

After the recollection of those wonderful memories, the music reaches the last section of the coda. Here, the audience hears the same texture with arpeggio figurations as the seventh variation one more time. However, the ambience is transformed into a dreamy fantasy. This is like Clara's dream of a future life in which Robert Schumann would recover and would live a happy life with her. In my mind's eye, this passage leads me to picture Robert Schumann healthy and the loving couple walking into the moonlight, disappearing in the end



Example 42: *Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann, Op.20*, MM. 228-230, Clara Schumann, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1887.

4.3 My playing experience of Clara's Variations Op.20

As mentioned in the previous section, there were different kinds of emotional expressions such as gloom, anxiousness, excitement, nostalgia and fantasy in Clara's variations of Robert Schumann's theme. In this section, my understanding and playing experience of this particular piece will continue.

Firstly, my interpretation of the gloomy theme and its variations with the similar setting is discussed. In Robert Schumann's original theme, it is marked *Zimmlich langsam* to indicate the slow tempo. The texture of this theme contains the chords with a choral sense and a very lyrical melody presented in the top voice. In order to achieve the *legato* sound with singing quality of the soprano voice in this slow tempo, I decided to use *the lyric-sentimental* aspect. In all of the variations with a similar atmosphere, such as the first, the third, and the sixth variations, I chose to play it in the same manner to maintain the coherence of the singing melody. Meanwhile, it is very important to note that when I play the theme, except when playing the top melody as *legato* and singing, I also pay attention to the bass line on the left hand. The bass lines should be played as a melody so that the direction of the music is kept. In order to avoid disrupting the music line, I focus on combining the horizontal melodies and the vertical harmony progressions as well. This approach is also applied to the first, the third and the sixth variation in which the structures and the mood are similar to Robert's original theme.

The mood of the first variation as well as its tempo is quite coherent with the original theme, while the voice of the left hand gets a new element of triplets. I still chose to play these figurations with a *legato* technique. However, I paid a much more attention to the aural detail during my practicing and performance. When I started to practice this variation, I separated the triplets with the melody of the top voice into two different parts. For the melody I played it in the same way as the original theme. At the same time, in order to avoid cutting the melody from its natural flowing, I needed to create a long phrase and try to connect every note. The music should always be sung from the beginning until the end. This is, one voice cannot be cut while the other enters given the similarity in ambience of the third and sixth variations to the original, and the manner of performing should not be changed. However, there are more details to the performance that need to be played carefully. In the third variation, besides the musical structure and the music

atmosphere being similar to the original theme, more attention to the middle voice should be given, especially in the last phrase. In this phrase, the middle line shows a triplet rhythm, which is easy to mix up with the top voice line, and cut the music line. In order to solve this problem, I suggest finding a melodic line between the top and middle voices to give the music direction. The sixth variation is written in a polyphonic canon method. In the last section, I mentioned that the polyphonic was often used in church music to express people's praise to God. Therefore, this variation is Clara's way of praying that Robert could overcome his mental distress. In order to express this devotional aura, I play this variation slowly while singing, and listen carefully to every voice, especially the melody of the middle voice. Furthermore, I also use the *una coda* in the ending bars in order to change the tone colour.

Besides the gloomy mood: I also feel another mood, which appears in the second variation. As stated in the previous subchapter, I felt anxious when listening to this piece. I interpreted this feeling as Clara's worry and anxiousness due to Robert Schumann's mental problems. Giving the music a slight faster tempo than the previous variation helped to achieve a feeling of worry. Besides the tempo, the changed compositional material, such as the rhythm pattern and horizontal texture, also revealed this anxious sensation. At the same time, the original theme is hidden in the chords and appears from time to time. The melody is written in syncopation and the accompanying part is made with the repeating sixteenth notes and broken chords. So when I play this variation, I use different playing movements to clearly separate the theme's timbre and the accompanying part. For the soprano melody, I chose the playing way of *free-weight-produced-touch* with *vibrato*. The *free-weight-produced-touch* can help transfer the weight from the arms to the fingers and produce the melodic notes clearly, and the *vibrato* can transfer the weight to the next notes which make a good *legato* line; the compared theme has a more fluctuant shape, which creates an aural effect of

anxiety and nervousness. For these figurations, I chose *non-legato* with a *vibrato* touch to express the mood. When asking to play forte, I chose a rebound technique, but in order to prevent a dry sound, I increased the use of the pedal in order to intensify the music as well.

When the fourth and fifth variations start, the piece becomes more exciting, which shows Clara's determination and purposefulness to surmount the challenge that comes their way. In the fourth variation, the theme line is shown in the chord played by the left-hand, and the component of the right-hand composed in rapid running sixteen notes. This element of running sixteen notes changes the musical atmosphere, which becomes more exciting. Thus, the tempo should be faster than the last variation. The running arpeggios not only serve to show off the piano playing skills, but also work as the background of a painting, as a way to express this feeling. Therefore, I treat these notes with *legato* but also with a light touch that should not over articulate each note. Instead, the coherent singing quality is appreciated. The thumb of the left hand plays the melody. Therefore, in order to make a warm and round sound, I chose to play the thumb with a *free-weight-produced-touch* with *vibrato*. The left-hand should not play with a rapid and direct touch and when playing, the weight from the arm should be transferred to the thumb.

In the fifth variation, the right-hand plays the melody with chords while the left-hand stresses the melody with octave arpeggio and octave descending chromatic scales. In order to make the sonority full of passion and powerful, I chose to play with a combination of *con brilliant* and *free-weight-produced-touch*. For the octaves on the left hand, I used *staccato* with the pedal to create a brilliant and powerful aural sensation.

After going through all the different stages full of gloomy, anxious and exciting moods, the music finally calms down in the seventh variation till the *coda* with a sense of recalling their happy memories. I play this variation with the *legato*

manner as I do for the original theme. Even though the voice is made up of arpeggios and broken chords with thirty-second notes, it sounds quite peaceful due to the slow tempo as the theme. Especially for the last part of the *coda*, the ambience of a dreaming fantasy is quite crucial. Thus, the thirty-second notes should be played evenly and lightly with a soft and liquid quality. In order to achieve that, I chose the touch of *jeu perlé*. This kind of touch can make the sound full of emotion and *legato*. As the aural sensation of the *coda* is quite dreamlike and quiet, I also used the *una coda* that allows the music and its ambience to disappear gradually at the end. It is important to note that in the last part of the seventh variation, where the structure is similar to the third variation, Clara quotes the theme of her *Romance Variée Op.3*¹⁰ in middle voice. Meanwhile, Robert Schumann's theme is shown one last time. Although the third variation is quite dark and depressing, with the appearance of parts from *Romance Variations Op.3*, the music evokes Clara's memories with a more complicated mood. When I play this part, I desire to create an atmosphere of relief and positivity to express how Clara felt during her youth.

¹⁰ Reich considered the theme of Clara's *Romance Variée Op.3* appeared at the beginning of the *coda*, on the bar 202 (Reich, 2001:233). In the two Autographs: RSH, 5989-A1 and WgmVII, 65.501, the theme of Clara's *Romance Variée Op.3* was missing. But when this *Variations* was printed, it contained the theme from her *Romance Variée Op.3* (Reich, 2001:314). As a performer, I studied the final version of this work, so I treated this part as the ending part of the 7th Variation before the *coda*.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I researched the motion and emotion of two romantic pieces by Robert and Clara Schumann: *A minor Piano Concerto Op.54* and *Variations Op.20*. In my opinion, the movements used by the artists in the performance, determines the quality of the sound. Different combinations of kinetic movements and their interdependence of small and big muscles, such as the pianist's touching of the keys, the combination of articulations and the arm movements, produce different colour tones. Accordingly, the sound and the motion are interrelated. In the performance, I understand that my motion and my personal emotion create the sound as a final result and as a musical interpretation. This is accomplished because when the kinetic movements occur without emotion and sensory details, they will become shoddy mechanical movements. The research on how to create the expressive sound and the poetic movements is the most significant aspect of my experience in piano playing. Withal, I argue that the emotion conferred in my performance is not only individual. In my two romantic objects of study, I was greatly affected with the emotion transmitted to the audience by Robert and Clara Schumann. My aural imagination is initially based on the research and analysis of these compositions. During my study I conducted this chain of events. Throughout my research of the two composers' musical thoughts and the contexts of the two works, I realized that to express human inner feelings was the most important aspect of the Schumann couple's musical thoughts. Their strong inner sentiments having definitely been involved through their musical works.

In order to learn about Schumann's life and his musical thoughts, I researched various sources such as Robert Schumann's musical critiques, his diaries, and the letters between himself and Clara. By studying and examining these sources, I realized that Robert Schumann's creative process was deeply influenced by the romantic literature of his time. He valued human inner feelings and daily life experience in his music. This tendency can also be seen quite clearly in his musical critiques. In his compositions not only did I see Robert Schumann

expressing his feelings and ideas with the contrast of the two characters - Florestan and Eusebius, but I also felt his strong love for Clara. During my research, I explained the fact that Clara was the creative inspiration in Robert Schumann's piano pieces. In my particular object of study - *A minor Piano Concerto* - many detailed musical elements are revealed through Clara's pictographic character. These elements included the five notes from Clara leitmotif and Clara's rhythmic leitmotif. Robert also wrote about his wish to connect with Clara in both their personal life and in their work, in his diary. Thus, they published a collection of songs that they composed together, Op.37/12. Clara shared the same will as in her *Variations Op.20*. She took Robert's piece as the theme. She also took materials from her own work, like *Romance Variée Op.3*, as a piece of shared memory between her and Robert Schumann. Moreover, in Clara's *Variations Op.20*, I also felt her strong sentiments, a profound reflection of her love for him.

Besides the musical thoughts that emphasized an expression of human inner emotion, poetic literature played a very important role in their music as well. Both works researched in this thesis were deeply connected to poetry. I found that many sections of these two pieces were related to those *lieder* as the *Liebesfrühling Op. 37/12* and Robert's *Myrthen Op25*. They composed their piano works as songs without words. Hence, they used the meaning carried by the poetic metaphors in their piano works, as a way of expressing their feelings.

In this study, I also focused on Clara's role as an independent professional woman of the 19th century social context, given that Robert Schumann was not only attracted to Clara's beauty but also by her intellect. She was the inspiration for Robert's works, and the most passionate object of his writings. On the other hand, Clara's efforts in playing Robert's pieces throughout Europe were a determinant factor in his work becoming so popular. Moreover, in order to maintain Schumann's reputation after death, Clara had Robert's works and letters of his

youth edited. All of Clara's undertakings were the reason Robert's legacy is alive today. Therefore, it is arguable that, as a visionary woman of the 19th century, Clara was able to create a link between their "love motion" and their professional lives.

All studies made of the two composers and the two works discussed throughout this thesis offered the subjective and objective basis for my interpretation. Throughout my research, I saw the communication through music between Clara and Robert Schumann. I treated this communication - the emotional expression, the different musical moods and the aural effect in the two works - as the "love motion". More importantly, the conclusions of my research of this "love motion" influenced my piano playing. Hence, I thought about how to incorporate this contextual knowledge in the practical realization of the two musical pieces. Evidently, the direct translation of the musical text is unrealistic because it is difficult to understand the composer's original significance behind the score. Nevertheless, the score can be interpreted as a symbol that the composer left for posterity, to be discovered and interpreted by future artists, composers and music lovers in its meaning. As a performer, I myself received inspiration from a series of analyses, such as structural form, texture, tempo, rhythm, harmony, timbre/dynamic and the breathing of phrases. Simultaneously, my research led me to explore the sentimental and poetic moods of the pieces, creatively, in my interpretation. This process allowed me to express my individual cognition and fine emotion.

From the outside, through the analysis, I gained understanding of the musical meaning while on the inside it allow me to activate my sensorial motor when I was playing. This process revealed a spiral and reciprocal model. Thereby, all of the context behind the musical score and the memory, behaviour and inner feelings were incorporated in the desire of listening. This desire was transmitted through the aural sense to the kinetic body movements, such as tone touch, velocity and

intensity of the attack, involvement of the body mass and other interactive gestures and movements, and finally, it achieved the actual musical sound. As a result, the details of my repeated actions and the temporary information in my mind helped me to achieve a desired form in my playing. Thus, when I perform, the emotion and the music diction are indeed unique making it a personal and singular performance.

As a performer, my final goal is to communicate my understanding of the piece to the audience and to evoke their emotional resonance with my playing. However, thus far, my study focuses on the connection between my interpretation with the composers and their works. I have yet to perform these pieces in the public eye and to gain their feedback and this will be the direction my studies take in the future.

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