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Schumann: *Fantasie*, Op. 17

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Schumann: *Fantasie*, Op. 17



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Meinem guten Geist, meinem besseren Ich

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*Between pages 32 and 33*

- 1 *Fantasie*, first movement, bars 1–29. Schumann's autograph manuscript (present location unknown). © Sotheby's. Reproduced by permission of Sotheby's and the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.
- 2 *Fantasie*, first movement, bars 125–66. Schumann's autograph manuscript (present location unknown). © Sotheby's. Reproduced by permission of Sotheby's and the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



## Preface

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A book on Schumann's *Fantasie*, Op. 17 should require no special pleading. The work's popularity is attested by a distinguished performance history; many of the greatest pianists of the twentieth century have recorded it. It has long been recognized not only as one of Schumann's greatest piano compositions but as one of the central works of the early Romantic period. Yet such fame can result in a weakening of critical attention. In writing this book I have been as surprised by the amount of documentary evidence that has hitherto gone unmentioned or unnoticed as by the generally unadmitted fragility of some of the established 'facts' about the *Fantasie*. On reflection, such surprise is perhaps unmerited. It is only in very recent years that Schumann's music has aroused a level of scholarly interest commensurate with its popularity in performance. Only since the mid 1980s has it been possible to consult a reliable edition of the complete *Tagebücher* and *Haushaltsbücher*, for example; for Schumann's general correspondence one must still rely on Gustav Jansen's edition of 1904, while the new edition of the Robert–Clara *Briefwechsel* remains incomplete at the time of writing. And quite apart from these major *lacunae* in the sources, the quantity and quality of detailed discussions of individual works remains lamentable, particularly for readers confined to literature in English. It is hoped that this book helps to fill the gap.

The main historical discussion is presented in chapters 1 and 7, which thus frame the more specific discussion of the *Fantasie* itself. Chapter 1 deals with the compositional history of the work as this may be reconstructed from correspondence, sketches, and other musical sources; chapter 7 examines the history of the work after its publication. Chapter 1 also provides the seeds for much of the discussion in chapters 2–6: thus, Schumann's constantly changing nomenclature for the work becomes the springboard for the discussion of genre in chapter 2, while his decision to preface the score with a quotation from a poem by Friedrich Schlegel fuels the examination of allusion and quotation in chapter 3. The evidence for an intended cyclical connection

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between the first and third movements revealed in the *Stichvorlage* similarly raises the question of inter-movement unity, which is taken up in chapter 5. The central chapter 4 deals at some length with the first movement, which has always attracted the most critical and analytical attention, while chapters 5 and 6 together go some way towards reviving interest in the other two movements, which have on the whole been unfairly neglected.

Since one of my aims has been to raise the level of analytical discussion of the *Fantasie*, I have on occasion found it unavoidable to use terminology and notational devices with which some readers will be unfamiliar. The greatest difficulty is likely to be encountered in connection with examples such as 4.7 (p. 55), which is grounded in the analytical concepts and techniques developed by Heinrich Schenker. Voice-leading (or Schenkerian) analysis holds that the structure of a piece of tonal music, such as the *Fantasie*, is multilayered: that is, the surface, or 'foreground', may be understood as an elaboration of a simpler underlying structure, or 'middleground', which may itself be reduced to simpler structures until an irreducible 'background' structure is revealed. A consequence of this view is that not all events on the surface are regarded equally: some may be of relatively long-range significance while others are regarded as purely local or immediate details helping to 'prolong' the more structural elements. In attempting to express this multilayered conception, analysts bend conventional musical symbols to their own purpose. Unstemmed black noteheads, stemmed black notes (crotchets) and stemmed white notes (minims) denote the structural hierarchy, proceeding upwards from the least to the most important elements; broken slurs (or beams) are used to highlight structural elements – individual notes or complete harmonies – that are operative (while not being constantly present aurally) over a large musical span; *unbroken* slurs or beams denote motion from one structural point to another, and the events grouped under a slur can be understood as elements 'prolonging' this larger motion.

As its name implies, voice-leading analysis lays particular emphasis on the *linear*, or contrapuntal, structure of tonal music rather than assuming its structure to be essentially vertical, or harmonic. The musical surface of a work often distorts the underlying linear structure, however: simple 'middleground' contrapuntal progressions may be masked by 'foreground' detail and embellishment; and a particular musical line may begin in one part of the texture and be completed in another. One of the tasks of a voice-leading graph such as Example 4.7 is to help clarify such passages. In order to do this, it is often helpful to represent the notes in the score in simple rearrangements: for example, inner notes within a particular passage may be transferred to a

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Preface

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higher octave in order to show that they are part of a line which has begun in the top voice. Readers may find it helpful to play the few examples of voice-leading analysis at the keyboard and to compare their sound closely with that of the relevant passage in the printed score.

*Pitch identification*

Throughout the text, specific pitches are identified according to the Helmholtz system: C–B, c–b, c<sup>1</sup>–b<sup>1</sup>, c<sup>2</sup>–b<sup>2</sup> . . . where c<sup>1</sup> = middle C. In chapter 5 certain notes are identified as ‘scale degrees’ by means of a number combined with a superscript caret. The number identifies the position of the note within the octave scale of the prevailing key: thus C is scale degree  $\hat{1}$  in the key of C but scale degree  $\hat{5}$  in the key of F.

*Formal analyses*

Italicized upper and lower-case letters, combined where necessary with numbers or an apostrophe, are used to denote formal sections and subsections: *A*, *Al*, *a*, *a1*, *a'*, etc.

*Keys and harmonic functions*

Upper-case letters denote major keys; lower-case letters denote minor keys. The expression V/C etc. means V of C, that is, the dominant of C major.

## Acknowledgements

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I am multiply indebted to Julian Rushton, whose enthusiasm for the *Fantasie* in an undergraduate seminar on the period 1830–50 at Cambridge in 1979–80 first aroused my own serious interest; it is fitting that this book appears under his general editorship. I must also thank, anonymously, the several generations of students who have struggled dutifully to analyse one or other movement of the *Fantasie* at my command, and who have no less dutifully endured my own burgeoning ideas; my colleague Jim Samson endured critically as well as dutifully. Lesley Sharpe, Lecturer in German at Exeter University, kindly read and improved upon my translations from that language. I prepared the music examples using music-processing equipment purchased with a generous grant from the Research Grant Committee at Exeter University. Others who have eased the writing of this book in various ways include the staffs of the British Library Manuscript Students' Room and Photographic Department, Dr Bernhard Appel (Robert-Schumann-Forschungsstelle), Dr Oswald Brill (Hessische Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek, Darmstadt), John Butt, Gerry Bye (Cambridge University Library Photographic Department), Timothy Day (National Sound Archive), Dr Joachim Draheim, Dr Maria Eckhardt (Liszt Memorial Museum and Research Centre, Budapest), Dr Uta Hertin-Loeser (Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin), Birgit Kelber (Universitätsbibliothek, Bonn), Jana Kerkow (Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, Berlin), Dame Moura Lympany, Catherine Massip (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris), Barbara Mohn, Dr Robert Murányi (National Széchényi Library, Budapest), Dr Gerd Nauhaus (Robert-Schumann-Haus, Zwickau), Stephen Redhead, Dr Stephen Roe (Sotheby's), Dr Linda Correll Roesner, Dr J Rigbie Turner (Pierpont Morgan Library, New York), and Dr Matthias Wendt (Robert-Schumann-Forschungsstelle).

## Abbreviations

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<i>AMZ</i>	<i>Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung</i>
<i>BG</i>	<i>Briefe und Gedichte aus dem Album Robert und Clara Schumanns</i> , ed. Wolfgang Boetticher
<i>Bw</i> I, II	Robert and Clara Schumann, <i>Briefwechsel: kritische Gesamtausgabe</i> , ed. Eva Weissweiler
<i>D-DS</i>	Darmstadt, Hessische Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek
<i>F-Pn</i>	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale
<i>GB-Lbl</i>	London, British Library
<i>Grove</i>	<i>The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians</i> , ed. Stanley Sadie
<i>GS</i> , I–IV	Robert Schumann, <i>Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker</i>
<i>JNF</i>	<i>Robert Schumanns Briefe: neue Folge</i> , ed. F. Gustav Jansen
<i>NZfM</i>	<i>Neue Zeitschrift für Musik</i>
<i>SmW</i>	<i>Signale für die musikalische Welt</i>
<i>Tb</i> I, II	Robert Schumann, <i>Tagebücher</i>
<i>US-NYpm</i>	New York, Pierpont Morgan Library
<i>D-Zsch</i>	Zwickau, Robert-Schumann-Haus