

The Songs of Clara Schumann

Focusing on Clara Schumann's central contributions to the genre of the Lied (or German art song), this is the first book-length critical study of her songs. Although relatively few in number, they were published and reviewed favorably in the press during her lifetime, and they continue to be programmed regularly in recitals by professional and amateur performers alike. Highlighting the powerful and distinctive features of the songs, this book treats them as a prism, casting light not just *on* them but also *through* them to explore questions that foster a deeper understanding of the work of female composers. The author argues for the importance of taking Clara Schumann's music on its own terms, the intimate relationship between text and musical form, and the vital role of musical analysis in recuperating the contributions of previously understudied composers.

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The Songs of Clara Schumann

STEPHEN RODGERS

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Contents

List of Tables [page vi]

List of Music Examples [vii]

Acknowledgments [ix]

Introduction [1]

PART I CONTEXT AND STYLE [11]

1 Three Assumptions [13]

2 Three Hallmarks [28]

PART II ANALYSIS [59]

3 Songs without Opus Numbers [61]

4 Songs with Opus Numbers [133]

Epilogue: Clara Schumann and the Depths of Song [177]

References [182]

Index [190]

Tables

- 2.1 Clara Schumann's songs containing compound antecedents [page 35]

Music Examples

- 2.1 “Die stille Lotosblume,” opening theme [page 30]
- 2.2 “Liebeszauber,” opening theme [34]
- 2.3 “An einem lichten Morgen,” opening theme [37]
- 2.4 “Ich hab’ in deinem Auge,” original version, seam between B and A’ [41]
- 2.5 “Ich hab’ in deinem Auge,” revised autograph, seam between B and A’ [42]
- 2.6 “Ich hab’ in deinem Auge,” published version, seam between B and A’ [43]
- 2.7 “Warum willst du and’re fragen,” mm. 5–20 [45]
- 2.8 “Liebst du um Schönheit,” mm. 3–20 [48]
- 2.9 “Er ist gekommen,” piano introduction [51]
- 2.10 “Ich stand in dunklen Träumen,” mm. 1–9 [53]
- 2.11 “Der Mond kommt still gegangen,” postlude [57]
- 2.12 “Geheimes Flüstern hier und dort,” postlude [57]
- 3.1 “Der Wanderer,” setting of stanza 1 [64]
- 3.2 “Der Wanderer,” setting of stanza 2 [66]
- 3.3 “Der Wanderer in der Sägemühle,” mm. 1–10 [68]
- 3.4 “Der Wanderer in der Sägemühle,” ending [69]
- 3.5 “Der Abendstern” [73]
- 3.6 “Walzer,” opening theme [75]
- 3.7 “Walzer,” opening theme, alternate hypermetrical interpretation [79]
- 3.8 “Walzer,” end of middle section leading into final section [80]
- 3.9 “Am Strande,” setting of opening stanza [84]
- 3.10 “Am Strande,” setting of second stanza [86]
- 3.11 “Am Strande,” beginning of final section [91]
- 3.12 (a) Robert Schumann, “Volkslied,” opening section [93]
 (b) Clara Schumann, “Volkslied,” opening section [94]
- 3.13 Clara Schumann, “Volkslied,” final section [97]
- 3.14 Robert Schumann, “Die gute Nacht, die ich dir sage,” melody [99]
- 3.15 Clara Schumann, “Die gute Nacht, die ich dir sage,” melody, recomposed [100]

- 3.16 Clara Schumann, “Die gute Nacht, die ich dir sage,”
opening couplet [101]
- 3.17 Clara Schumann, “Die gute Nacht, die ich dir sage,” postlude [103]
- 3.18 “Oh weh des Scheidens, das er tat,” mm. 1–8 [112]
- 3.19 “Oh weh des Scheidens, das er tat,” mm. 9–18 [113]
- 3.20 “Oh weh des Scheidens, das er tat,” mm. 19–27 [116]
- 3.21 “Mein Stern,” opening strophe [120]
- 3.22 “Beim Abschied” [123]
- 3.23 “Das Veilchen,” ending [130]
- 3.24 “Das Veilchen,” setting of first stanza [131]
- 4.1 “Sie liebten sich beide,” final phrase of original version [151]
- 4.2 Similar motives in “Was weinst du, Blümlein” and “Geheimes
Flüstern” [171]
- 4.3 Motive in “Auf einem grünen Hügel” [174]

Acknowledgments

This book would not exist had I not been fortunate enough to attend a conference in Oxford called “Clara Schumann (née Wieck) and her World.” That was in June of 2019, many months before the COVID-19 pandemic would turn the world on its head and make travel of this sort impossible. It seems like a lifetime ago now, but the memory of the event has stayed with me and has been a guiding force as I have worked toward the completion of this book. I gave my first ever conference presentation on Clara Schumann at that conference, on musical and poetic closure in one of her songs. Parts of that presentation made their way into a chapter that was later published in *Clara Schumann Studies*, a volume of essays edited by the brilliant Joe Davies, who, along with Susan Wollenberg and Laura Tunbridge, helped to organize the conference; some of the material also appears in this book.

More than getting the chance to present at the conference, however, it was getting the chance to hear other presentations that inspired me to continue studying Clara Schumann’s music – presentations by Natasha Loges, Susan Youens, Harald Krebs, Benedict Taylor, Nicole Grimes, and Christopher Parton, not to mention a thrilling performance of Schumann’s songs by soprano Aisling Kenny and pianists Cecily Lock and Cheryl Tan. On the plane ride home, I barely slept, so intoxicated was I with what I heard and experienced over the course of those three days. I opened up the two volumes of Clara Schumann’s songs, published by Breitkopf & Härtel, and reread every page, returning to songs I was familiar with but didn’t know inside and out, savoring every bar. By the time I arrived back in Oregon I was convinced that if we already had books on the songs of Schubert, Wolf, Brahms, and Robert Schumann, why couldn’t we have one on the songs of Clara Schumann?

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the many scholars who have written about Clara Schumann’s life and music, and not just those who shared their ideas at the Oxford conference. Thank you especially to Julie Pedneault-Deslauriers, whose ever-sensitive analyses of Schumann’s music have served as a model for my own; I’m grateful that Julie invited me to participate in a daylong symposium on Clara Schumann at the University

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