



Schumann as Aspiring Pianist
Technique, Sonority and Composition

Balder Blankholm Neergaard

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Abstract

In recent decades, the pianism of Robert Schumann's compositions has increasingly gained recognition. What was previously seen as dense and mid-keyboard centric is now recognised as ground-breaking in terms of sonorous invention, informed by an intimate understanding of the instrument and its playing techniques. Yet, as pianist Schumann has received little credit, primarily due to a short-lived and relatively unsuccessful career. This thesis aims to explore this seeming paradox. I shall argue that Schumann developed rarely discussed concepts of imagined sound and tactile feedback during his days as aspiring pianist (1828–1831), and that these became integral to the pianistic style of his earliest published compositions. Following a general overview of the historical and biographical contexts for this study, I will trace Schumann's piano practice to establish his overall artistic aims and the primacy of sonority in this regard. This leads to an investigation of his ideals of tone to locate Schumann within prevailing schools of piano playing and of piano making around 1830. Acknowledging his comprehension of playing mechanics, I observe that during an 1831 crisis which preceded his much-debated hand injury, his technique suffered from a series of insurmountable issues relating to the right hand. Disabled as performer, Schumann realised his virtuoso aspirations in his capacity as composer. Two case studies featuring the *Abegg Variations* op. 1 and *Papillons* op. 2 demonstrate his use of sound—audible and imagined—to elevate the mechanical virtuosity of piano playing into a virtuosity of the imagination. Not only does this demonstrate a transfer of sound concepts from performance to composition; it offers a timely reassessment of Schumann's pianistic merits and presents new interpretational paths for future performances of his piano music.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is the culmination of many years of work. On this journey, I have had the pleasure of meeting and working with a number of the finest performers and academics. They have offered inspiration, advice and encouragement, for which I owe them my deepest gratitude.

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I have consulted a host of pianists, who have kindly shared their insights and experiences on the performance Schumann's piano music with me: Kevin Kenner, Paolo Giacometti, Edna Stern, Eugen Indjic and Tobias Koch, to name but a few. Coming from different playing traditions, they have expanded my horizons and been a valuable source of inspiration to my own Schumann playing. I shall also take the opportunity to thank my teacher and mentor at the Royal College of Music, Yonty Solomon (1937–2008). He invigorated my fascination with sound and opened my ears to the many-faceted world of piano sonority. Without him, this thesis would never have taken shape.

Several institutions and organisations have generously offered their assistance, providing me with access to archival materials and historical pianos. I would especially like to thank RCM Museum and Dr Jenny Nex, Finchcocks Musical Museum and Katherine and Richard Burnett, British Library Sound Archives, Stadtarchiv Braunschweig and Britta Moneke, as well as the Royal Danish Academy of Music and professor Friedrich Gürtler. A special thanks to Dr Thomas Synofzik for his hospitality and assistance during my memorable visit to Robert-Schumann-Haus Zwickau.

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Lastly, I wish to thank my family and especially my wife, Sara, to whom this thesis is dedicated. She has followed this project from the very beginning, and has been unwavering in her support throughout. She has been gracefully patient when I have worked early mornings, long days and late nights, and she has encouraged me and given me the strength to continue even at difficult times. Thank you.

Note to the Reader

A selection of the printed music examples is accompanied by audio clips. These are available on the enclosed CD or at www.schumannpianist.com (internet connection required).

Printed music examples have been transcribed based on historical first editions. Where these early editions have been unavailable for this study, this has been noted clearly in the text. Full reference to all editions is provided in the 'Works Cited' list on page 284.

The choice of using first editions is based on two considerations. Firstly, it has been my ambition to use one type of edition—historical or modern—consistently, and since a number of examples by lesser known composers (today) are from works which have not been reissued since the nineteenth century, historical editions have occasionally been the only choice. Secondly, it has been a priority to use texts which most accurately render Schumann's pianism of the period central to this study, that is, the early 1830s. As Chapters 7 to 8 shall illustrate, Schumann's compositions should first of all be seen as works in progress, and a printed edition is thus merely a snapshot of the work in a given state. In the case of Schumann's early piano works, first editions are therefore most often the only preferable option.

The importance of first editions is seen in the last bars of the fifth movement of *Papillons* op. 2 (see example on page vi).¹ *Papillons* was the only published work composed during Schumann's years as aspiring pianist, from which a complete autograph exists, the engraver's copy. Although Schumann made corrections to this piece during the publication process, the last two bars remained unchanged. Decades later, a re-engraved fourth edition appeared, containing several changes to the original text, including the addition of *portato* to the right hand in the bars in question. It has been argued that Clara Schumann was possibly involved in preparing Kistner's 4th edition, and her own edition of the work from 1879 indeed retain those changes, except for, perhaps inadvertently, the pedal indication which is placed fractionally earlier.² It remains uncertain whether Schumann had instructed or at least agreed with the 4th edition, and its authority is in any case questionable. Nevertheless, it is not predetermined that modern editions would prefer Schumann's 1830s version over later corrections, regardless of the quality of the sources. Thus, whilst Hans-Christian Müller in this particular case reproduces the bars similarly to the first edition, there is no guarantee that modern editions will favour Schumann's version of the 1830s at any time in any work. For instance, Ernst Herttrich chooses a solution similar to Müller, but offers *staccato* dots in brackets in bar 26, while still leaving out the slurs that would indicate the *portato* seen in the 4th edition, effectively producing a hybrid between

1. These particular bars are discussed in further detail on page 237.

2. Nortbert Gertsch, 'Ossia and Da Capo – Confusion in Schumann's *Papillons*, Op. 2', G. Henle Verlag, 2013, accessed 1 April 2017, <http://www.henle.de/blog/en/2013/09/02/ossia-and-da-capo-%E2%80%93-confusion-in-schumann%E2%80%99s-papillons-op-2/>.

the two historical editions in question. It is therefore not feasible to rely on a specific modern edition across all of Schumann's works. It should be noted, however, that deviances like these are generally few and far between, and the ambiguities highlighted in this example serve as an exception more than a rule.



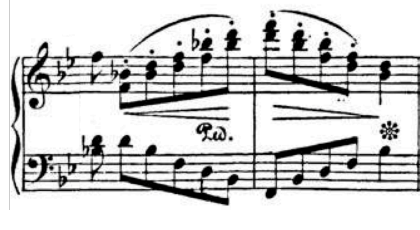
a. Engraver's copy



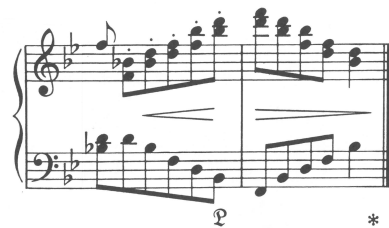
b. Kistner (First edition, 1832)



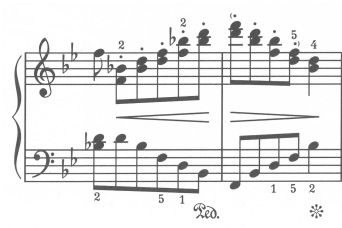
c. Kistner (Fourth edition, c. 1860)



d. Breitkopf & Härtel (ed. by Clara Schumann, 1879)



e. Wiener Urtext (ed. by Hans-Christian Müller, 1973)



f. Henle Urtext (ed. by Ernst Hertrich, 2009)

Schumann: *Papillons* op. 2 no. 5, bars 25–26

In addition to the published works, a number of unfinished, posthumously published works have appeared in print in recent decades. In these cases, I have used the publicly available editions at the time of writing, both published by Henle: *Studies on a Theme by Beethoven* RSW:Anh:F25 (early version transcribed from *Skizzenbuch IV*) and *Exercice* (early version of *Toccata* op. 7; transcribed from surviving autograph).³ In addition, examples from the Piano Concerto in F major RSW:Anh:B3 have been transcribed from Claudia Macdonald's recon-

3. Robert Schumann, *Exercises (Beethoven-Etuden)*, RSW:Anh:F25, ed. Robert Münster (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 1976); Robert Schumann, *Toccata*, op. 7. Fassungen 1830 und 1834, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2009).

struction of the work.⁴ Unless otherwise stated, all fingerings provided are the composer's.⁵ All other fragments and sketches have been transcribed from Schumann's sketchbooks ('Skizzenbücher'). Due to the continued research on the sketchbooks, the page numbering has undergone some revision over the years. In the present text, I have followed the page numbering schemes provided by the *Neue Schumann Ausgabe*, where available.⁶ For a detailed overview of the pagination in the sketch books, cf. the Appendix on page 265.

Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

4. Claudia Macdonald, 'Robert Schumann's F-Major Piano Concerto of 1831 as Reconstructed From His First Sketchbook: A History of Its Composition and Study of Its Musical Background' (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1986), 464–496.

5. Occasionally, Paderewski's fingerings have been used for reference in music examples from Chopin's op. 2, cf. Frédéric Chopin, *Variations sur "Là ci darem la mano" de "Don Juan" de Mozart*, op. 2, ed. Ignacy Jan Paderewski, Ludwik Bronarski and Józef Turczyński (Warsaw: The Fryderyk Chopin Institute, 1949), 11–56.

6. At the time of writing, *Skizzenbücher I–III* have been published as part of the *Neue Schumann Ausgabe*, cf. Robert Schumann, *Studien- und Skizzenbuch I und II*, vol. 1 of *Neue Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Matthias Wendt, *Neue Gesamtausgabe 3* (Mainz: Schott, 2011); Robert Schumann, *Studien- und Skizzenbuch III*, vol. 2 of *Neue Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Matthias Wendt, *Neue Gesamtausgabe 3* (Mainz: Schott, 2016).

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Friedrich Kalkbrenner

Piano Concerto in D minor op. 61

- 2 1st movement, bars 105–113

Robert Schumann

Piano Concerto in F major, RSW:Anh:B3 (fragment)

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- 31 No. 11, bars 32–39
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- 33 No. 12, bars 41–88
- 34 No. 12, bars 87–88

Paganini Studies op. 3

- 35 No. 1, bars 2–9
- 36 No. 3, bars 1–3
- 37 No. 5, bars 1–4 (with three different pedal configurations)

List of Abbreviations

Briefe	Schumann, Clara, ed. <i>Jugendbriefe</i> . 4 th ed. 1886. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1910.
Letters	Schumann, Clara, ed. <i>Early Letters of Robert Schumann</i> . Translated by May Herbert. London: G. Bell & Sons, 1888.
Materialen	Wieck, Friedrich. <i>Materialen zu Friedrich Wieck's Pianoforte-Methodik</i> . Edited by Alwin Wieck. Berlin: Simrock, 1875.
PS	Wieck, Friedrich. <i>Piano and Singing</i> . Translated by Mary P. Nicholls. Boston: Lockwood, Brooks & Company, 1875.
Quellen	Eismann, Georg, ed. <i>Briefe, Aufzeichnungen, Dokumente, mit zahlreichen Erstveröffentlichungen</i> . Vol. 1 of <i>Robert Schumann: ein Quellenwerk über sein Leben und Schaffen</i> . Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1956.
RS3-Henle	Schumann, Robert. <i>Paganini-Etuden</i> . Op. 3. Edited by Ernst Herttrich. Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2009.
RS3-Hof	Schumann, Robert. <i>Etudes pour le Pianoforte d'après les Caprices de Paganini</i> . Op. 3. 1 st ed. Leipzig: Friedrich Hofmeister, [n.d.]
SB1	Schumann, Robert. 'Skizzenbuch I'. Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn, D-Bnu NL Schumann 13, 1831–1832. Accessed 1 April 2017. http://digitale-sammlungen.ulb.uni-bonn.de/ulbbnhans/content/titleinfo/1043463 .
SB3	Schumann, Robert. 'Skizzenbuch III'. Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn, D-Bnu NL Schumann 15, 1832. Accessed 1 April 2017. http://digitale-sammlungen.ulb.uni-bonn.de/ulbbnhans/content/titleinfo/1043491 .
Studien	Wieck, Friedrich. <i>Pianoforte Studien</i> . Edited by Marie Wieck. New York: Schirmer, 1901.
TB1	Schumann, Robert. <i>1827–1838</i> . Vol. 1 of <i>Tagebücher</i> , edited by Georg Eismann. Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1971.

Introduction

Playing the piano is a magician's act. To transcend the inherent percussiveness of the piano's mechanism, the pianist must persuade the listener to hear things which the instrument cannot possibly produce: seemingly unrelated pitches can persuasively be turned into a melodic *legato*; clusters of sound untangle into a chorale; and aided by the damper pedal, tones spread across the keyboard can merge into orchestral sonorities. There are thus two types of sound that one can experience: the audible, measurable sound and the sound created by the imagination. The intersection of these two types of sound may indeed leave the listener convinced, but pales in comparison to the music that the performer experiences. This involves tactile feedback—the pianist's *sensation* of the notes connecting, the voices leading and the powerful sonorities vibrating from the instrument. The magic happens when these different layers of the performance align: the audible sound from the piano, the inaudible sound of the imagination, and the tactile sensation which is only felt within the pianist's body. The listener may observe the wizardry at a distance, but only the performer can truly be caught by its spell.

Few piano composers have mastered all of these different types of sound as Robert Schumann (1810–1856) did. Not only was he amongst the most influential composers of his generation, his approach to piano sound was as ingenious and fantastic as the artistic vision which he sought to realise. While this was founded on a deep understanding of the piano and its playing techniques, music scholarship has to this day not given him much credit for his pianistic accomplishment.¹ Indeed, there is not much in his short-lived career as pianist to suggest his later significance in the world of the piano. He received no formal instrumental training until the age of eighteen, made only one public concert appearance and, shortly after his decision to pursue a career as pianist, he plunged into a deep crisis in his practice, followed by a detrimental injury to the right hand. The course of Schumann's pianistic career thus presents a paradox: how could a largely self-taught, relatively unsuccessful piano student become one of the greatest, most innovative, composers for the piano in music history?

This is the issue which this thesis aims to address. With a focus on his formative years as

1. The scholarly evaluation of Schumann the pianist shall be discussed in further detail on pages 18–19.

piano student in Leipzig (1828–1832), the following shall examine how his concepts of piano sound sprang out from his instrumental practice and improvisations and made their way into his earliest published works, namely the *Abegg Variations* op. 1 and *Papillons* op. 2. Following an overview of the historical and biographical contexts for this study, Chapter 1 traces Schumann's piano practice during his period as piano student to establish sound as fundamental to his artistry (Chapter 2). This will highlight Schumann's striving to recreate an idealised performance of 'magical' inspiration, in which sound played a principal role. To him, this was 'true music'—the final step of a self-defined three-stage learning process: the first stage represented the early infatuation with the work, a state resembling the feeling of 'fresh spirit' and inspiration which he knew from his improvisations; the second stage was the time of technical labour, where 'only the dry, cold keys remain'. The second stage was a time of struggle, and during 1831 his frustrations caused a deep crisis in his practice.

Schumann's inability to reach the third stage was, in part, his inability to reproduce his ideal sound. Chapters 3 to 6 therefore seek to identify his sound ideals and the technical methods to realise them, and assess why their realisation was beyond his reach. To survey his sound ideals in a more tangible way, they shall be examined from the simplest possible perspective: the production of a single tone. This will place Schumann within a larger historical and pianistic context to position his ideals of tone among the prevailing piano traditions of Europe, both in terms of piano playing (Chapter 3) as well as piano making (Chapter 4). This will determine how his ideological stances within these areas shaped his own methods of tone production (Chapter 5). Knowing the fundamental idiosyncrasies of his technique will suggest that his inability to realise his idealised inspired performance was not due to a lack of diligence, but the result of a highly idiosyncratic technique, possibly influenced by the hand injury (Chapter 6).

Without the technical means to realise his ideals as performer, Schumann arguably reached the third stage of 'true music' in the capacity as composer, using sound—audible and imagined—as a primary vehicle of musical expression. This is seen in two case studies, which demonstrate his shift away from the bravura of the postclassical style towards a type of 'imaginative virtuosity'. As these studies will demonstrate, Schumann used common notational devices as agents of sound to realise a broader artistic vision—articulation marks and accents in the *Abegg Variations* to approximate the virtuosity of Paganini (Chapter 7), and pedal indications as sonorous triggers of 'imaginative virtuosity' in *Papillons* (Chapter 8). Not only is it my hope that this thesis will contribute to the knowledge in a relatively unexplored area of Schumann's musicianship and give rise to a timely reassessment of Schumann the pianist, I also hope to invigorate the interest in the rarely discussed subject of imagined sound and tactile feedback in relation to piano playing, and to inspire pianists to explore these types of inaudible sound in further depth—not only in Schumann's music, but in the piano literature in general.

This study will treat sound concepts which are sophisticated to the degree that it is necessary to further nuance the language that describes them. For the purpose of this study, the following terminology has therefore been adopted:²

Audible sound: encompasses all measurable sounds from the instrument. These can be sub-categorised as follows:

Timbre: the character of sound as it is produced by the instrument.

Tone: the sound which appears as the result of a single note being struck, the quality of which is called ‘tone colour’. The act of producing a tone by depressing its key is referred to as ‘touch’.

Sonority: a group of several tones, which collectively constitutes a musical unit or event.

Imagined sound: tones or sonorities which have no physical representation and only exist in the mind of the listener or performer.

Tactile feedback: as such not a sound, but a musical event which is represented only by its tactile sensation. It is a byproduct of the tone-production process, which may trigger imagined sound, and thus acts as a bridge between the audible and imagined sound. By nature, it is only the performer who can experience tactile feedback.

2. These definitions are based on common usages in nineteenth century sources and modern literature. The terminology adheres to the use of ‘tone’ (‘Ton’) and touch (‘Anschlag’) in tutors, including Johann Nepomuk Hummel, *Ausführliche theoretisch-practische Anweisung zum Piano-Forte-Spiel*, 1st ed. (Vienna: Tobias Haslinger, 1828), 2, 427 (‘Anschlag’); 2 (‘Ton’); Carl Czerny, *Erster Theil*, in *Klavier-Schule*, op. 500, 1st ed. (Vienna: Diabelli, [n.d.]), 17, 37, 40, 45 (‘Anschlag’); 37, 55 (‘Ton’); Friedrich Kalkbrenner, *Complete Course of Instruction for the Piano Forte* (Edinburgh: Alex Robertson, [n.d.]), 17, 18 (‘touch’); 11 (‘tone’). The term ‘sonority’ is used in more recent writings, often in relation to the effects of using the damper pedal, cf. Kenneth Hamilton, *After the Golden Age: Romantic Pianism and Modern Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 141, 145, 153, 155, 170, 199, 212; Christina Caparelli Gerling, ‘Franz Schubert and Franz Liszt: A Posthumous Partnership’, in *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music: Essays in Performance and Analysis*, ed. David Witten (Routledge, 1996), 217, 224. In some works, the use of ‘sonority’ overlaps with the present definition of ‘timbre’ (for instance in Hamilton, *After the Golden Age*, 35, 221), which is based on the implicit use of the term in organological writings, for instance, Edwin Marshall Good, *Giraffes, Black Dragons and Other Pianos: A Technological History from Christofori to the Modern Concert Grand*, 2nd edition (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 75, 184–185, 305–306; David Rowland, ‘Pianos and Pianists c. 1770–c. 1825’, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Piano*, ed. David Rowland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 37; Malcolm Bilson, ‘The Viennese Fortepiano of the Late 18th Century’, *Early Music* 8, no. 2 (1980): 158. The use of imagined sound will be discussed below, and is inspired by Rosen’s descriptions of ‘inaudible music’, cf. Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 2–13.

Schumann and Piano Sound

While the current interest in Schumann's piano music among scholars and performers may imply an acceptance of his position as one of the greatest composers for the instrument, it is only recently that he has been broadly recognised as such. Indeed, in his own day the piano works gained only little popularity. Carl Koßmaly argued in 1844 that Schumann's reputation as composer was spreading slowly. At the time of writing, Schumann had already published his streak of 26 consecutive opuses of piano works between 1831 and 1840; however, Koßmaly could observe that 'in spite of their noteworthy and significant musical merit, they too have become known and recognised only among a small, albeit select and artistically knowledgeable, circle'.³ Thus, 'the broader public has remained relatively untouched, and Schumann's works have not succeeded in reaching the popular masses'.⁴ In addition, even amongst those in the know, the pianistic and musical qualities of these works proved difficult to appreciate. Despite being a fellow *Davidsbündler* and supporter of Schumann, Koßmaly was still disturbed by the 'originality' of his early piano compositions; that his striving 'always to be new and striking makes itself all too strongly felt', as it 'occasionally degenerates into the search for alienating, unheard-of phrases and completely unenjoyable bizarreness'.⁵ To Koßmaly, this was most evident in the works of 'his earlier period', which 'suffer from confusion and over-decoration'.⁶ With *Davidsbündlertänze* op. 6 and *Carnaval* op. 9 being 'welcome exceptions', this criticism covered canonical masterpieces, such as the *Fantasie* in C major op. 17, which by Koßmaly's measure offered the 'richest harvest' of 'highly unsatisfying outgrowths of new romantic hypergenius': 'its eccentricity, arbitrariness, vagueness, and the nonclarity of its contours can hardly be surpassed'.⁷ Lastly, Schumann's pianism proved equally problematic. His contemporaries, including Liszt, Thalberg, Chopin and Alkan, picked up the baton from the postclassical vir-

3. Carl Koßmaly, 'Ueber Robert Schumann's Claviercompositionen', *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* (Leipzig) 64, nos. 1–3 (1844): 3. 'Auch sie sind, ungeachtet ihres, sie auszeichnenden, bedeutenden musikalischen Werthes, bis jetzt in einem kleinen, wenn auch gewälten, kunstsinnigen Kreise bekannt und soerkannt'. Translated in Carl Koßmaly, 'On Robert Schumann's Piano Compositions (1844)', in *Schumann and His World*, ed. R. Larry Todd, trans. Susan Gillespie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 305.

4. Koßmaly, 'Claviercompositionen', 3. '[...] das eigentliche grosse Publicum ist bisher ziemlich unberührt davon geblieben'. Translated in Koßmaly, 'Piano Compositions', 305.

5. Koßmaly, 'Claviercompositionen', 17. 'Was die von Schumann immer erstrebte Originalität betrifft, so wirkt es mitunter recht störend, die Absicht: [...] noch mehr verstimmt es uns jedoch, wenn jenen Streben zuweilen in bloße Sucht nach befremdenden, unerhörten Wendungen und Effecten, in völlig ungeniessbare Bizarrerie ausartet.' Translated in Koßmaly, 'Piano Compositions', 308.

6. Koßmaly, 'Claviercompositionen', 17. 'Namentlich ist dies bei den einer früheren Periode zugehörigen Stücken der Fall, welche fast alle an Verworrenheit und Ueberladung leiden'. Translated in Koßmaly, 'Piano Compositions', 309.

7. Koßmaly, 'Claviercompositionen', 20. 'Die reichsten Ausbeute von üppig wuchernden, höchst unerquicklichen Auswüchsen neuromantischer Hypergenialität liefert unstreitig die "Fantasie für Pianoforte," Liszt zugeeignet. Das Excentrische, Willkührliche, das Unbestimmte und Zerflossene lässt sich kaum noch weiter treiben'. Translated in Koßmaly, 'Piano Compositions', 310.

tuosos to push the boundaries of technical accomplishment and pianistic effect. Meanwhile, Schumann's piano music seemed fairly conventional. Avoiding brilliant passagework and coloristic figurations, his writing for the piano was characterised by dense textures centred at the middle of the keyboard. Yet, despite its lack of dazzling effects, Koßmaly found Schumann's music to be as inhospitably difficult, to the extent that 'even the best, most practiced performer [...] must despair of achieving even a more or less satisfactory performance'.⁸

While Koßmaly indeed found the *Humoreske* op. 18 and the Piano Sonata in G minor op. 22 'outstanding', observing a development towards 'simplicity' and 'spiritual autonomy' in his most recent works at the time, it was only in the latter half of the nineteenth century that even Schumann's most daring piano works found general public recognition.⁹ Thus, when Liszt wrote to Schumann in June 1839, he had prepared to play in public some of the works which Koßmaly would later applaud, including *Davidsbündlertänze*, *Carnaval* and *Kinderszenen* op. 15—the latter of which Koßmaly considered among Schumann's 'finest achievements'.¹⁰ Still, Liszt found neither *Kreisleriana* op. 16 nor the *Fantasie* op. 17 ripe for public performance, as they were 'more difficult of digestion for the public': 'I shall reserve them till later'.¹¹ Liszt kept his promise, and according to his own catalogue of concert repertoire for the years 1839–1848, he did indeed perform at least the Piano Sonata in F# minor op. 11 and the Fantasy op. 17.¹² This was part of a larger movement towards a broader acceptance of Schumann's piano music. Marston cites a review by Schumann protégé Karl Debrois van Bruyck (1828–1902) from 1859, which observed that whilst Schumann's music 'had formerly been largely neglected', it was by the time of writing 'rare for a Vienna concert' to omit his works in the programming.¹³

Stylistically and pianistically, Schumann nevertheless remained difficult to place. In 1855, Liszt published an essay, in which he interpreted Schumann's output for the piano as programmatic, and praised him as the 'author who in his pianoforte compositions most completely grasped the significance of the programme and gave the splendid examples of its employment'.¹⁴

8. Koßmaly, 'Claviercompositionen', '[...] findet man auf jeder Seite Schwierigkeiten vom ersten und bedrohlichsten Caliber ohne Noth und dermaassen gehäuft, dass selbst der tüchtigste, geübteste Spieler [...] davor zurückschrecken und an einer nur einigermaassen genügenden Ausführung derselben verzweifeln muss.' Translated in Koßmaly, 'Piano Compositions', 310.

9. Koßmaly, 'Piano Compositions', 312.

10. Ibid., 311.

11. La Mara, ed., *Franz Liszt's Briefe*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1893), 34. 'Le Kreisleriana et la Fantaisie qui m'est dédiée, sont de digestion plus difficile pour le public—je les réserverai pour plus tard.' Letter of 5 June 1839. Translated in La Mara, ed., *Letters of Franz Liszt*, trans. Constance Bache, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), 34.

12. Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years, 1811–1847*, revised ed., vol. 1 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 445.

13. Nicholas Marston, *Fantasie, Op. 17* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 95.

14. Franz Liszt, 'Robert Schumann', ed. Franz Brendel, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (Leipzig) 54 (1861): 196. 'Wir glauben also den großen Musiker [Schumann] [...] den Autor bezeichnen der in seinen Pianofortecompositionen

While this appeared to be an attempt to draw Schumann into a school of musical thinking of which Liszt was an important proponent, Adolf Schubring argued for the consideration of a ‘Schumann school, separate and distinct from the “conservative” Mendelssohnians and the “progressive” *Zukunftsmusiker* represented by Liszt and Wagner’.¹⁵ Schubring recognised the special place of the piano in Schumann’s musicianship, marvelling at the ‘surprisingly magical tones he achieved on this instrument (previously treated as sterile)’: more than any other medium, ‘he has poured his deepest and most innermost self, the blood of his soul’ into his piano works.¹⁶ Despite this acknowledgement, a more tangible understanding of Schumann’s use of the piano remained elusive well into the twentieth century.

During the first half of the twentieth century, theses by Rosalie Goldenberg and Wolfgang Gertler attempted to grasp the idiosyncrasies of Schumann’s writing for the piano, trying to pinpoint Schumann’s use of pianistic texture (‘*Klaviersatz*’). However, while both writers identified important characteristics of his use of the instrument, both fell prey to the notion of conceiving the piano works as adaptations of a fundamentally orchestral sonorous conception.¹⁷ As Sauer argues, this view was problematic on a number of levels. Firstly, since Mendelssohn Schumann’s orchestration had been criticised for being pianistic—‘it is implausible that Schumann composed his piano music with the orchestra in mind, and his chamber and orchestral music with the piano in mind’.¹⁸ Secondly, Schumann himself never expressed any preference of a ‘mixed’ or orchestral ‘conception of sound’.¹⁹ And lastly, if the opening of the second movement of the *Fantasie* op. 17 was orchestrally conceived—as Gertler proposed—then contemporary piano works by other composers could be seen as equally orchestral, such as passages of Chopin’s Polonaise in A^b major op. 53.²⁰ In contrast to the observations of Goldenberg and Gertler, Hopf proposed that the characteristics of Schumann’s pianistic style could be found amongst his predecessors. These included chordal techniques, the absence of passagework, polyphonic textures and lastly his engagement with ‘tonal issues’, such as pedalled sonorities.²¹ Hopf con-

die Bedeutung des Programms am vollständigsten erfaßte und zu seiner Anwendung die trefflichsten Beispiele gab.’ Translated in Franz Liszt, ‘Robert Schumann (1855)’, in Todd, *Schumann and His World*, 357–358.

15. Adolf Schubring, ‘Schumanniana no. 4 (1861)’, in Todd, *Schumann and His World*, 362. Translator’s note.

16. Adolf Schubring, ‘Schumanniana nr. 4’, ed. Franz Brendel, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (Leipzig) 54 (1861): 213–214. ‘Wir bewundern zunächst an ihm den für das Clavier geschriebenen Werken einen bei diesem bisher für steril gehaltenen Instrumente überraschenden Zauber des Tones [...] in seinen Claviererzählungen [...] hat er sein Eigenstes und Innerstes, sein Herzblut gegeben.’ Translated in Schubring, ‘Schumanniana 4 (English)’, 370–371.

17. Rosalie Goldenberg, ‘Der Klaviersatz bei Schumann’ (inaugral dissertation, University of Vienna, 1930), 110–111; Wolfgang Gertler, ‘Robert Schumann in seinen frühen Klavierwerken’ (inaugral dissertation, Albert-Ludwigs University, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1931), 101–102.

18. Thomas Sauer, ‘Texture in Robert Schumann’s First-Decade Piano Works’ (PhD diss., The City University of New York, 1997), 23.

19. *Ibid.*, 22.

20. Sauer, ‘Texture’, 23; Gertler, ‘Frühen Klavierwerken’, 102.

21. Helmut Hopf, ‘Stilistische Voraussetzungen der Klaviermusik Robert Schumanns’ (inaugral dissertation,

cluded that Schumann was first and foremost ‘a pure composer for the piano’, i.e. that Schumann only had the sound of the piano in mind when composing for the instrument.²² Similar to the conclusions of Goldenberg and Gertler, this amounted to a speculative understanding of the ‘conceptual origins’ of Schumann’s piano music, rather than providing an understanding of Schumann’s exploitation of the piano’s resources in terms of playing technique and sonority. As Sauer argues, ‘it seems more instructive to assess a composer’s particular instrumental style based on all of the musical material present than to focus exclusively on material deemed most characteristic of that instrument’.²³

Sauer’s approach thus rejects previous discussions arguing that Schumann’s piano music is orchestral or pianistic, but applies a methodology which solely treats ‘texture as an aspect of musical style’: thus, whilst ‘the analysis of texture differs from a Schenkerian approach in its fundamentals’, both approaches seek to ‘rationalize a structure (the composition) brought into existence by an ineffable mixture of conscious planning and intuition’.²⁴ In doing so, he assesses the piano works based on parameters deemed important by Schumann himself: ‘fullness of voicing and harmonic succession’, the damper pedal as a ‘unique’ resource of the piano, as well as ‘volubility’, i.e. the fluidity or ‘pearliness’ of playing.²⁵ Sauer concludes that ‘Schumann interweaves musical material to create distinctive textures throughout his first decade of composition’, ‘richly polyphonic, and [...] solidly anchored in a many-tiered harmonic structure’.²⁶ Due to his ‘marked preference for the middle and lower registers of the piano’, which ‘tends to situate the hands in close proximity to one another’, this results in ‘much sharing between hands of accompanimental material, and enables Schumann’s beloved pedal to act as fully as possible on the sounding material’.²⁷ Sauer provides an important understanding of the material nature of Schumann’s writing for the piano. However, he engages only to a limited degree with the technical realisation of the textures, let alone the resulting sonorities.

In this regard, Rosen’s opening chapter to *The Romantic Generation* offers perhaps the most significant reevaluation of Schumann’s approach to the piano. According to Rosen, Schumann most importantly led the way in bringing the concept of imagined sound to the piano, a kind of ‘unperformed sonority’ which had been an overlooked topic in music scholarship. As he describes Schumann’s significance in this regard: ‘the absolutely inaudible is rejected from music

Georg-August University, 1957); Sauer, ‘Texture’, 25.

22. Hopf, ‘Stilistische Voraussetzungen’, 246. ‘In den verschiedenen Komplementierungen zu der ersten Idee erweist sich Schumann als ein reiner Klavierkomponist, der die klavieristischen Möglichkeiten seines Instruments erschöpfen will’.

23. Sauer, ‘Texture’, 27.

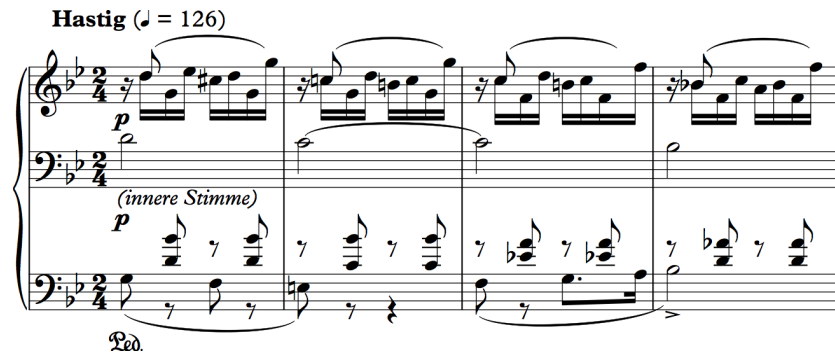
24. Ibid., 218–219.

25. Ibid., 28.

26. Ibid., 216.

27. Ibid.

during the period of Viennese Classicism in which every musical line is potentially or imaginatively audible'; however, 'in the music of Schumann' the imagined sound made 'a dramatic reappearance', particularly in his piano works from the 1830s.²⁸ To support his claim, Rosen provides two notable examples of Schumann's reintroduction of this concept. The first example is from the *Humoreske* op. 20, where the 'Hastig' section introduces an accompanied melody written in three staves, of which only the upper and lower staves are to be played; the melody part written in the middle is an *innere Stimme*, a voice which is not to be performed:



Example 0.1. Schumann: *Humoreske* op. 20, bars 251–254

As Rosen describes this peculiar notation:

Note that the melody is no more to be imagined as a specific sound than it is to be played: nothing tells us that the melody is to be heard as vocal or instrumental. This melody, however, is embodied in the upper and lower parts as a kind of after-resonance—out of phase, delicate, and shadowy. What one hears is the echo of an unperformed melody, the accompaniment of a song. The middle part is marked *innere Stimme*, and it is both interior and inward, a double sense calculated by the composer: a voice between soprano and bass, it is also an inner voice that is never exteriorized. It has its being within the mind and its existence only through its echo.²⁹

Following the repetition sign, 'the paradox is stretched still further'.³⁰ Whilst the accompaniment in the outer staves of the third phrase remains nearly identical to the opening of the section, only the inaudible melody delays its entry, leaving the middle stave blank in this bar: 'for one bar a voice which was not present before is *not*, now, *not present*':³¹

28. Rosen, *Romantic Generation*, 7.

29. *Ibid.*, 8–9.

30. *Ibid.*, 9.

31. *Ibid.*

[Hastig (♩ = 126)]

The musical score is for Schumann's Humoreske op. 20, bars 267-274. It is in 2/4 time and B-flat major. The tempo is marked [Hastig (♩ = 126)]. The score is divided into two systems of four bars each. The first system begins with a piano (p) dynamic. The second system starts at bar 21 and concludes with a ritardando marking. The notation features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, as well as rests and accidentals. Phrasing slurs are used to group certain notes together.

Example 0.2. Schumann: *Humoreske* op. 20, bars 267–274

Although Rosen concedes that a ‘sensitive performer’ would doubtlessly play this bar differently to ‘acknowledge the reentry of a solo voice’, the absence of the melody in this particular bar is only truly perceptible to the player, who reads the score.³² When the harmonic skeleton of this passage returns later in the work as a distant echo—‘the remote resonance of the original appearance, an echo of an echo’, as Rosen eloquently describes it—the last five notes of the *innere Stimme* ‘turns outward’ by transiently surfacing as played notes:

32. Ibid.

[Hastig (♩ = 126)]

474

ri - tar - dan - - do

Example 0.3. Schumann: *Humoreske* op. 20, bars 467–482

Although this unheard theme will make a welcome reappearance to the attentive player, the uninitiated listener will have no recollection of its existence and will not recognise it.

While the example from the *Humoreske* presents a concept of imagined sound which could be applied on any other keyboard instrument, Rosen's other example of Schumann's play with inaudible sound is intrinsically pianistic:

Péd. *

Audio 15

Example 0.4. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, 'Finale alla fantasia', bars 73–74

The passage in question is the famous reappearance of the ABEGG-motif in the 'Finale alla fantasia' of the *Abegg Variations* op. 1 as printed in the *Titelaufgabe* of 1845, which shall be discussed in further detail in Chapter 7: 'this is the first time in history that a melody is signified not by its attack but by the release of a series of notes'.³³ Here, Schumann relies on the musical memory of his audience to convey his message. When the sound of each individual note of the motif is brought forward to the listener's attention, the note is released and has already ceased to exist. The motif thus remains an unperformed musical entity, which only materialises as a reflection in the imagination of the listener. However, what Rosen sees as the true 'paradox' is

33. Rosen, *Romantic Generation*, 10.

an inherent pianistic limitation.³⁴ To complete the entry of the 'ABEGG'-motif, the g must be struck twice: while the action of the piano allows for a single key to be struck two times in succession by releasing it in between, a note which has already been released cannot in any conceivable way be released again.

Schumann's solution to this riddle is ingenious. He added a series of accents, possibly to signify a quick release of each note to cut off the vibrations of the strings as effectively as possible. The last remaining g¹—which is supposed to be sustained—also receives an accent to signify its function as the final 'G' in 'ABEGG'. However, 'on the piano an accent in the middle of a sustained note is a contradiction in terms', Rosen writes.³⁵ Despite the 'humorous' pedal marking, 'Schumann's accent is an impossibility even in the imagination, since it indicates an impossible release'.³⁶ But is this accent so impossible that not even the most vivid imagination could reproduce it? Only if the listener can be considered to be Schumann's prime audience, and not the performer. While the accent in question remains concealed to everyone else, it nevertheless marks a musical impulse for the pianist. Whether or not the pianist can perform it in any audibly imaginable way is not the question; the physical sensation of sustaining the note with the fingers whilst pressing down the pedal may be enough for the player to experience the final note of the 'ABEGG'-motif.

In addition to Schumann's insistence on engaging the musical and sonorous imagination, these examples clearly highlight a change of attitude which Schumann's piano music exemplifies: that the pianist to an increasing degree became the principal recipient at the expense of the listener. This explains why the performer may feel as if the music was composed for no one but him or her, as described beautifully by Roland Barthes:

There is a kind of French prejudice [...] against Schumann: [...] the reason for this lack of interest (or this minor interest) is historical [...].

Schumann is very broadly a piano composer. Now the piano, as a social instrument (and every musical instrument, from the lute to the saxophone, implies an ideology), has undergone for a century a historical evolution of which Schumann is the victim. The human subject has changed: inferiority, intimacy, solitude have lost their value, the individual has become increasingly gregarious, he wants collective, massive often paroxysmal music, the expression of *us* rather than of *me*; yet Schumann is truly the musician of solitary intimacy, of the amorous and imprisoned soul that speaks to itself [...] in short of the child who has no other link than to the Mother.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid., 10–11.

Listening to the piano has also changed. It is not merely that we have shifted from a private, at the very most a family, listening to a public listening—each record, even when listened to at home, presenting itself as a concert event and the piano becoming a field of achievements—it is also that virtuosity itself [...] has suffered a mutilation: [...] because of the record, it has become a somewhat chilly prowess, a perfect achievement (without flaw, without accident), in which there is nothing to find fault with, but which does not exalt, does not *carry away*: far from the body, in a sense. [...] Now Schumann's piano music, which is difficult, does not give rise to the image of virtuosity (in effect, virtuosity is an image, not a technique); we can play it neither according to the old delirium nor according to the new style [...]. This piano music is intimate (which does not mean *gentle*), or again, *private*, even individual, refractory to professional approach, since to play Schumann implies a technical *innocence* very few artists can attain.

Finally, what has changed, and fundamentally, is the piano's *use*. [...] nowadays listening to music is dissociated from its practice: many virtuosos, listeners, *en masse*: but as for practitioners, amateurs—very few. Now (here again) Schumann lets his music be fully heard only by someone who plays it, even badly. I have always been struck by this paradox: that a certain piece of Schumann's delighted me when I played it (approximately), and rather disappointed me when I heard it on records: then it seemed mysteriously impoverished, incomplete. This was not, I believe, an infatuation on my part. It is because Schumann's music goes much farther than the ear; it goes into the body, into the muscles by the beats of its rhythm, and somehow into the viscera by the voluptuous pleasure of its melos: as if on each occasion the piece was written only for one person, the one who plays it; the true Schumannian pianist—*c'est moi*.³⁷

The intimacy between composer and performer, which Barthes experiences when playing Schumann's piano music, is partly due to Schumann confiding in the player and not in the listener; often, the score conceals hidden meanings where only the pianist is let in on the secret.

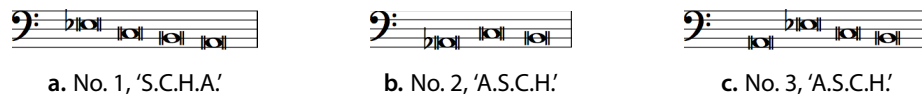
Carnaval op. 9 is a prime example of this. The work was the result of a play on the four letters 'ASCH'—the name of the hometown of Ernestine von Fricken (1816–1844), Schumann's fiancée at the time.³⁸ Incidentally, 'A-S-C-H' were the only four letters in Schumann's last name which could be represented by note names ('SCHumAnn').³⁹ Aside from the open-

37. Roland Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms*, trans. Richard Howard, Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation (New York: Hill & Wang, 1985), 293–295.

38. The town of Asch (Aš) is located in Bohemia, now Czech Republic.

39. In German, 'B' is denoted as 'H' and E^b is called 'Es', i.e. 'S'.

ing 'Préambule' (and the 'Pause', which itself is a recapitulation of a section from the first movement), each piece of *Carnaval* contains one of the following three motifs: E^b–C–B–A ('SCHA'), A^b–C–B ('ASCH') or A–E^b–C–H ('ASCH'). While the subtitle, *Scènes mignonnes sur quatre lettres*, indeed alludes to a connection to these four letters, the listener is given no other indication of their motivic meaning in this work, and this is—initially—also the case for the player. However, the insertion of three 'Sphinxes' between the eighth and ninth piece reveal the existence each of the three aforementioned motifs:



Example 0.5. Schumann: *Carnaval* op. 9, 'Sphinxes'

Despite their occasional appearance in the discography, the 'Sphinxes' remain unnumbered in the score, and are clearly not notated in any practically performable way; they should therefore not be played.⁴⁰ Any pianist who has played *Carnaval* must know about the experience of the three motifs 'lighting up' to the ear every time they are played, due to the clarification offered by the 'Sphinxes'. However, what is truly peculiar is their place within the work: had Schumann simply wished to inform the pianist about the fundamental motivic relationships of *Carnaval*, he could easily have placed the 'Sphinxes' underneath the title on the first page of the score. However, when they do appear, almost half of the work has already passed. The 'Sphinxes' are thus introduced partly in retrospect, and for the first movements—'Pierrot', 'Arlequin', 'Valse noble', 'Eusebius', 'Florestan', 'Coquette' and 'Replique'—the three motifs are only experienced in the player's musical memory. Inside the imagination of the performer, the sound of these movements is altered long *after* their performance.⁴¹

40. Nevertheless, a number of pianists insist on playing the 'Sphinxes', resulting in an odd intermezzo from the rest of the music, cf. Robert Schumann, 'Carnaval', op. 2, on *The Schumann Recordings*, perf. Alfred Cortot, recorded 1935, Andromeda ANDRCD5012, 1995, CD; Robert Schumann, 'Carnaval', op. 9, on *Carnaval/Papillons/Faschingsschwank aus Wien*, perf. Andrei Gavrilov, recorded 1987, Warner Classics 2435730065, 2005, CD; Robert Schumann, 'Carnaval', op. 9, on *Schumann: Piano Works*, perf. Walter Gieseking, recorded 1943, Andromeda 9009, 2014, CD; Robert Schumann, 'Carnaval', op. 9, on *Rachmaninov: Complete RCA Recordings*, perf. Sergey Rachmaninov, recorded 1929, RCA 88843073922, 2015, CD; Robert Schumann, 'Carnaval', op. 9, on *Schubert, Schumann, Chopin, Scriabin, Stravinsky, Prokofiev*, perf. Grigory Sokolov, recorded 1966, Melodiya 2292, 2014, CD; Robert Schumann, 'Carnaval', op. 9, on *Schumann: Carnaval, Kreisleriana*, perf. Mitsuko Uchida, Phillips 000943602, 2007, CD.

41. Whilst the motifs of the 'Sphinxes' are explained to the performer *en route* but remain hidden to the listener, Schumann does the exact opposite when he finally makes an overt, clearly audible, reference in *Carnaval*. In general, Schumann's music is highly self-referential and full of musical quotations: look no further than the opening of *Davidbündlertänze* op. 6 (Clara Wieck: Mazurka in G major op. 6 no. 5); the end of the first movement of the *Fantasie* in C major op. 17 (Beethoven: 'Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder' from *An die ferne Geliebte* op. 98); the third movement of the same work (Beethoven: Piano Concerto no. 5 op. 73); or the first movement of *Faschingsschwank aus Wien* op. 26 (the *Marseillaise*). This is also the case in the *Carnaval*, where Schumann makes an unmistakable

While *Carnaval* offers an example of the performer experiencing imagined sonorities due to additional, non-performed, information provided in the score, the *Fantasie* op. 17 does something similar in a very poetic way. In this work, Schumann supplied a motto by Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) at the very top of the first page:

Through all the tones
In Earth's many-coloured dream
There sounds one soft long-drawn note
For the secret listener.⁴²

The reference to Clara Wieck (1819–1893)—whom Schumann was forbidden to marry at the time—is unmistakable. As Schumann wrote in a letter to Clara following the work's publication: 'are you not the "note" in the motto: I almost believe you are'.⁴³ Yonty Solomon observes that the falling melodic line of the opening motif, which appears not only in the *Fantasie* but also the Piano Sonatas, were 'all a tribute to Clara'.⁴⁴ However, the most profound reference to Clara in the opening of the *Fantasie* is produced by an unperformed, unheard sound. Beginning with the aforementioned 'ABEGG'-motif and the four-letter mottos of *Carnaval*, one can find a play with musical letters throughout Schumann's compositional output, and as Eric Sams' theory of a cipher-system suggests, Clara's name came to play an elaborate role in this.⁴⁵ The symbolic weight of the note C in Schumann's piano music should therefore not be underestimated, especially in the works from the period of his and Clara's forbidden engagement. Unlike the final bars of the last movement of *Davidbündlertänze* op. 6—where the left hand lets three repeated bass CCs resonate as a similar reference to Clara—the most notable feature about the use of the C in the *Fantasie* is not its presence, but its absence in the opening.

Here, the musical textures appear to be an almost literal rendition of Schlegel's motto:

reference to the first piece from *Papillons* op. 2 in 'Florestan'. However, while the listener may be certain about the connection, Schumann plays a game of concealment, where he questions the integrity of the self-quotation by adding a '(Papillon?)' to the score, leaving the pianist in doubt whether or not he actually played a snippet from *Papillons* or not.

42. Translated in Yonty Solomon, 'Solo Piano Music (I): The Sonatas and Fantasie', in *Robert Schumann: The Man & His Music*, ed. Alan Walker (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1972), 62. 'Durch alle Töne tönet / Im bunten Erdentraum / Ein leiser Ton gezogen / Für den, der heimlich lauschet.'

43. Clara Schumann, ed., *Jugendbriefe*, 4th ed. (1886; Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1910), 303. 'Der "Ton" im Motto bist du Wohl? Beinah glaub ich es.' (Hereafter cited as Briefe).

44. Solomon, 'The Sonatas and Fantasie', 63.

45. Eric Sams, 'Did Schumann Use Ciphers?', *The Musical Times* 106, no. 1470 (1965): 584–585.

Durchaus phantastisch und leidenschaftlich vorzutragen $\text{♩} = 80$

The musical score is for the first six bars of the first movement of Schumann's Fantasia in C major, op. 17. It is written for piano in C major, 4/4 time, with a tempo of quarter note = 80. The first system consists of two measures. The right hand plays a half note G4 and a half note F#4. The left hand plays a continuous eighth-note figure. The second system also consists of two measures. The right hand plays a half note G4 and a half note F#4. The left hand plays a continuous eighth-note figure. The score is marked with 'sf' and 'ff' dynamics.

Example 0.6. Schumann: *Fantasia* in C major op. 17, 1st mvmt., bars 1–6

This setting produces a vivid image of the ‘Earth’s many-coloured dream’ with a murmuring, pedalled left hand figuration, which gives the impression that ‘the music commenced some time before the piece itself actually started’.⁴⁶ This sonority is supported by a sustained pedal G dominant, which finds no resolution to its tonic C during the first two pages of music. Nevertheless, the G’s function is unmistakable and, while the tonic is not played, its presence is implied by the dominant, as ‘one soft long-drawn note’. It is, however, only audible to initiated, ‘secret listener’, that is, the performer.

Aside from the ground-breaking ‘removed notes’-technique of the *Abegg Variations*, these examples are not particularly pianistic by nature. An organist could readily experience the sound of an *innere Stimme*, the ‘Sphinxes’ could easily occur in an orchestral score, and while the left hand figuration is highly pianistic, the idea of producing an unheard tonic as found in the *Fantasia* could be adequately realised in a different instrumental setting.⁴⁷ However, one should not be mistaken: Schumann was extremely sensitive to the delicate subtleties of piano sonority, based on a profound understanding of the instrument.

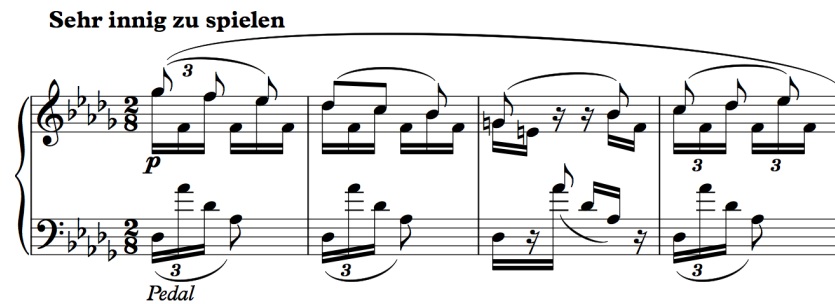
In addition to his discussions on the ‘removed-notes technique’ of the *Abegg Variations*, Rosen provides a few notable examples of this. Firstly, he refers to the use of a sparse, unpedalled setting against a richly textured pedalled sonority to produce the illusion of a ternary structure in ‘Eusebius’ in *Carnaval*, despite the melody suggesting an *AA-BA-BA-BA*-form. As he argues, the ‘full effect of “Eusebius”,’ is only achieved if the performer obeys ‘Schumann’s directions strictly’, playing ‘the beginning and the end absolutely without pedal’; ‘the middle section, by

46. Solomon, ‘The Sonatas and Fantasia’, 63.

47. The ‘removed notes’-technique of the *Abegg Variations*, is, by nature, impossible to replicate on a wind or string instrument, and due to their lack ability to voice each note individually an organ or a harpsichord would barely be able to produce the desired effect. Thus, to aid the recognisability of the ABEGG-motif, the pianist can voice the right hand seventh chord, playing the lower notes slightly stronger.

auditory illusion: the notes of the chord appear with what seems like a crescendo. [...] It would be misleading to describe this passage as a modulation from F minor to A flat major realized by overtones; the emergence of the overtones of V⁷ of A flat from the chord of F minor is as fundamental to the harmonic structure.⁴⁹

Finally, through the textures of ‘Des Abends’ from *Fantasiestücke* op. 12, Rosen demonstrates the depth of Schumann’s understanding of piano technique, and how the crossing of the thumbs influences the sound of the piece in the most delicate way. ‘The sonority of the accompaniment is exquisite’, Rosen writes, as ‘the simplicity of surface hides an extraordinary subtlety’:



The lower note of the right hand belongs to the accompanying texture, but it is in the triple rhythm of the melody, and the repetition of this note by the thumb adds a delicate counter rhythm that reinforces the syncopation; it serves to blend the two opposing rhythmic systems.⁵⁰

It is thus the technique itself of crossing the thumbs which gives the piece its special atmosphere. Rosen continues:

The stillness of the music depends on the way the sound is conceived for the hands. Crossing the thumbs allows the lower part of the right hand to remain anchored with almost no movement, and this would be spoiled if the layout were rearranged.⁵¹

This points towards an observation which I have made through my own experience of playing Schumann’s piano music. Despite its idiosyncrasies, and difficult as it may be, Schumann’s style of writing for the instrument is rarely un pianistic. With some practice, even the notoriously challenging coda of the second movement from the *Fantasia* op. 17, can be choreographed

49. Ibid., 25.

50. Ibid., 34.

51. Ibid.

with natural movement patterns which engage with the entire playing apparatus, and the third movement from *Kreisleriana* can straightforwardly be executed with the aid of circular wrist movements. Much of Schumann's passagework even lies beautifully under the hands: note for instance the opening of the first piece from *Kreisleriana* (Example 6.41 on page 183), where the fingers find their way so naturally at the keyboard that it would be superfluous for an editor to provide fingerings.



Considering this mastery over the piano as composer, Schumann's pianistic upbringing seems almost unlikely. Growing up in small-town Zwickau, he was largely self-taught as pianist until the age of eighteen, and it was only after relocating to Leipzig to study jurisprudence that he began taking regular piano lessons with an established teacher, Friedrich Wieck (1785–1873). As a seasoned sight-reader and gifted improviser, Schumann quickly established himself in the amateur music circles of the city. It was only after his success of performing Moscheles' *La Marche Alexandre Variée* op. 32 (hereafter referred to as the *Alexander Variations*) at a publicly advertised concert in January 1830, along with his experience of hearing Paganini perform at a concert in April the same year, that Schumann felt the urge to forfeit his studies at the university to pursue a career as pianist. However, his aspirations were short-lived. After a productive period of practice between October 1830 and May 1831, he plunged into a deep crisis while learning Chopin's *Variations on La ci darem la mano* op. 2. This particular work proved insurmountable, and he never quite managed to learn it as well as he had hoped. Concurrently, an injury to the right hand became increasingly detrimental to his practice, and by the spring of 1832 his playing had deteriorated to such a degree that he was unable to maintain a regular practice routine, and was therefore forced to abandon his ambitions of becoming a concert pianist.

With his brief career in mind, it is appropriate to revisit the question introduced in the opening: how could a largely self-taught, relatively unsuccessful piano student become one of the greatest, most innovative, composers for the piano in music history? Obvious as this question may be, it still goes unanswered. This is, for the most part, due to the limited knowledge about Schumann the pianist. Thus, topics including his piano practice, playing style, sound ideals and technique are largely unknown territory. This has naturally prompted some caution amongst biographers when assessing this aspect of his musicianship. While Jensen attempts to account for the mysteries of Schumann's hand injury and the subsequent abandonment of the piano, he and Daverio both refrain from judging his pianistic accomplishments.⁵² Conversely, Ostwald is more dismissive, suggesting that Schumann's aspirations to become a piano virtuoso

52. Daverio concludes that Schumann's hand injury 'remains a mystery' and is unconvinced about the prevailing

were a ‘combination of naivité and megalomania’, happily unaware of his ‘competitors’ on the international concert stage.⁵³ Worthen describes Schumann as a skillful pianist, quoting contemporary observations of his playing. Unfortunately, all of these testimonies were made long after Schumann had stopped practising the piano regularly, and there is therefore a lack of reliable accounts of his playing from the time when he was at his peak.⁵⁴ Without this knowledge, a fundamentally important aspect of Schumann’s musicianship may be missed: that Schumann was a far more capable pianist than the outcome of his career would lead to suggest, and that his experience as piano player had an enormous impact on his later compositions. The deep understanding of piano sonority, which Schumann demonstrated in his works of the 1830s, were thus a natural product of his unusual musical upbringing. In other words, Schumann developed his ground-breaking approach to sound *because* of his background as pianist and not despite it.

Research Context

Although there is much scholarship on Schumann’s early career, little of this considers him in any detail as a pianist. However, this is certainly not because of general lack of interest in his adolescence and young adulthood. The last decades have seen an increasing amount of scholarship, which, at least in part, covers his compositions from his period as piano student. In particular, studies by Alexander Stefaniak and Erika Reiman treat themes which are central to the understanding of Schumann as young composer.⁵⁵ Stefaniak tackles the topic of virtuosity in Schumann’s piano music, including the *Abegg Variations* op. 1; based on Schumann’s music

arguments in the debate at the time of writing. Jensen, on the other hand, is persuaded by the idea that the injury was ‘clearly the result of the abuse to which he subjected his right hand’. As will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6, new theories have arisen, most notably that Schumann suffered from focal dystonia, cf. Eric Frederick Jensen, *Schumann* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 67–68; John Daverio, *Robert Schumann: Herald of a ‘New Poetic Age’* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 77–78.

53. Peter F. Ostwald, *Schumann: The Inner Voices of a Musical Genius* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1985), 65.

54. Worthen’s testimonies are quoted from the two nineteenth-century biographies *Die Davidsbündler* and *Schumanniana*. While both Hieronymus Truhn and Alfred Dörffel were impressed by the ‘velocity of his fingers’, they both observed his excessive use of the pedals, to the extent that the ‘phrases swam into each other’. This was supported by Wasielewski, who thought Schumann’s style to be ‘not really piano playing, but more a ghostly gliding and weaving’. Worthen guesses that this could have been the way that Schumann ‘liked to hear his music’; however, as any pianist will know, the first qualities one loses when not practising regularly are clarity of touch and precision of execution. Schumann would certainly not be the last pianist in history who would try to conceal this through an over-use of the damper pedal. What Truhn, Dörffel and Wasielewski heard was probably the symptoms of years without proper piano practice, cf. John Worthen, *Robert Schumann: Life and Death of a Musician* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2007), 69; F. Gustav Jansen, *Die Davidsbündler* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1883), 74–75; Joseph Wilhelm von Wasielewski, *Schumanniana* (Bonn: Emil Strauß, 1883), 82.

55. Alexander Stefaniak, *Schumann’s Virtuosity, Criticism, Composition, and Performance in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2016); Erika Reiman, *Schumann’s Piano Cycles and the Novels of Jean Paul* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2004).

criticism as well as his own compositional contributions to the genre, Stefaniak explores Schumann's approach to virtuosity and how it emerged as a response to the tradition of postclassical pianism.⁵⁶ In doing this, he nuances the polarised debate between 'entertaining' and 'serious' music, proposing that Schumann was neither a 'crusader or spoilsport' in relation to piano virtuosity, but that he 'regarded virtuosity as simultaneously problematic and indispensable, as potentially a "threat from within" but also as a potentially productive, valuable, and attractive component of the culture of serious music'.⁵⁷ Extending studies on *Papillons* op. 2 by Robert L. Jacobs and Eric Frederick Jensen, Reiman compares the digressive style in the writing of Jean Paul—Schumann's favourite author during his late adolescence—with Schumann's piano cycles, arguing that tonal and thematic structures adopt a digressive style similar to that of Jean Paul.⁵⁸ While these works provide illuminating insights into two central themes of this thesis, neither of them attempt to engage with Schumann's pianistic heritage. Stefaniak only approaches virtuosity from Schumann's perspective as composer and critic. This way Stefaniak avoids any confrontation with Schumann's background as a performer in the postclassical tradition—a style that Schumann came to distance himself from early on in his compositional career. Similarly, whilst Schumann's piano playing is of lesser concern in Reiman's study, his fascination with Jean Paul was nevertheless at its highest during his time as piano student. Still, Reiman does not seek to find any connection between Schumann the pianist and the poetry which profoundly inspired his practice and improvisations.

The exclusion of the performing aspect in Schumann's musicianship is by no means limited to the writings of Stefaniak and Reiman. Other studies of Schumann's earliest piano works bring forth conclusions on compositional genesis and stylistic heritage, but only engage with Schumann's piano playing to a limited extent. Although Claudia Macdonald provides a detailed overview of Schumann's career as pianist up to his move to Leipzig in 1828, and compares his unfinished Piano Concerto in F major RSW:Anh:B3 (1831) to the concertos which he knew and played at the time, her observations do not take his style of playing into account, primarily focussing on formal issues.⁵⁹ The same could be said of Hans-Joachim Köhler's analysis of Schumann's practice on Chopin's Variations op. 2 and its influence on the musical narrative of the *Abegg Variations*.⁶⁰ Overall, these studies do not seek to bridge Schumann's piano playing

56. Other case studies of Stefaniak's work is the Toccata op. 7, *Concert sans orchestre* op. 14, as well as the Piano Concerto op. 54.

57. Alexander Stefaniak, "Poetic Virtuosity": Robert Schumann as a Critic and Composer of Virtuoso Instrumental Music' (PhD, Eastman School of Music, 2012), 14–15.

58. Reiman, *Schumann's Piano Cycles*, 37–48; Robert L. Jacobs, 'Schumann and Jean Paul', *Music & Letters* 30, no. 3 (1949): 250–258; Eric Frederick Jensen, 'Explicating Jean Paul: Robert Schumann's Program for "Papillons," op. 2', *19th-Century Music* 22, no. 2 (1998): 127–143.

59. Claudia Macdonald, *Robert Schumann and the Piano Concerto* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 1–7.

60. Hans-Joachim Köhler, 'Ein Werk I – Zur Genese der Abegg Variationen op. 1 von Robert Schumann', in

and his compositions. Instead, it is necessary to turn to the scholarship which approaches Schumann from the opposite perspective, namely the studies focussing on Schumann the pianist.

Despite an obvious lack of existing scholarship in this area, few scholars have used Schumann's piano playing as their point of departure in their exploration of his early musicianship. Most of the studies on Schumann's role as performer have aimed to document and index his piano practice; this includes Bodo Bischoff's exhaustive catalogue of Schumann's piano and chamber music repertoire, Claudia Macdonald's summary of his work at the piano until 1831, as well as two articles by Joachim Draheim which highlight Schumann's practice and performances of Chopin and Herz.⁶¹ These writings present factual information about what and when he practised, but offer no suggestions as to how he practised or for which purpose. However, another article by Macdonald is a notable exception. Focussing on the period of his studies with Wieck, she establishes the inherent conflict between musical expression and mechanical dexterity, concluding that Schumann gave priority to 'his ideal music of the heart and mind over technical display'.⁶² The result, Macdonald demonstrates, was an intention for Schumann to give his performances 'greater melodic definition' for a more expressive style of playing.⁶³ While these observations are indeed key to the understanding of Schumann's pianism, Macdonald does not attempt to go into further detail about Schumann's playing, neither technique nor playing style, nor does she endeavour to pinpoint the exact nature of this 'ideal music'.

It largely remains for Schumann scholarship to bridge the gap between Schumann's two musical identities—performer and composer. Studies of his musical works do not take his piano playing into account, nor has the present research on Schumann's piano practice addressed its effect on his compositions. Eric Sams, Peter Ostwald, John Worthen, Justo García de Yébenes and Eckart Altenmüller have contributed to the most debated area of Schumann's early career, namely the hand injury.⁶⁴ This has resulted in a variety of theories regarding its cause, including

Schumanniana Nova, ed. Bernhard R Appel, Ute Bär and Matthias Wendt (Sinzig: Studio Punkt Verlag, 2002), 363–386.

61. Bodo Bischoff, *Monument für Beethoven: Die Entwicklung der Beethoven-Rezeption Robert Schumanns* (Cologne: Dohr, 1994), 33, 47–49, 69–71, 92–93, 101–103, 115–118; Claudia Macdonald, 'Schumann's Earliest Compositions and Performances', *Journal of Musicological Research* 7, no. 2 (1987): 259–283; Joachim Draheim, 'Schumann und Chopin', in *Schumann Studien* 3/4, ed. Gerd Nauhaus (Sinzig: Studio Punkt Verlag, 1994), 221–241; Joachim Draheim, 'Robert Schumann und Henri Herz', in *Robert Schumann und die französische Romantik*, ed. Ute Bär (Mainz: Schott, 1997), 153–168.

62. Claudia Macdonald, 'Schumann's Piano Practice: Technical Mastery and Artistic Ideal', *The Journal of Musicology* 19, no. 4 (2002): 528.

63. *Ibid.*, 553.

64. The debate on this particular topic will be reviewed in further depth in Chapter 6, cf. Eric Sams, 'Schumann's Hand Injury', *The Musical Times* 112, no. 1546 (1971): 1156–1159; Eric Sams, 'Schumann's Hand Injury: Some Further Evidence', *The Musical Times* 113, no. 1551 (1972): 456; Peter F. Ostwald, 'Florestan, Eusebius, Clara, and Schumann's Right Hand', *19th-Century Music* 4, no. 1 (1980): 17–31; Worthen, *Robert Schumann*; J García de Yébenes, 'Did Robert Schumann Have Dystonia?', *Mov Disord* 10, no. 4 (1995): 413–417; Eckart Altenmüller, 'Robert Schumann's Focal Dystonia', in *Neurological Disorders in Famous Artists*, ed. Julien Bogousslavsky

arsenic poisoning, psychosomatic reactions, strain injuries and focal dystonia. However, aside from Altenmüller's observation of Schumann's accommodation of the numbed third finger in the *Toccata* op. 7, none of these studies addresses the important issue, namely how the injury affected his piano playing and compositions for the instrument.⁶⁵

Dana Gooley has addressed the connection between Schumann's performances and compositions to some extent, in his study of improvisational agencies in Schumann's piano music. Gooley places Schumann's improvisations in line with 'conventional practices of postclassical pianism, even if he submitted these conventions to the powerful empire of his imagination'.⁶⁶ By providing examples from the *Abegg Variations* op. 1, *Toccata* op. 7 and *Allegro* op. 8, Gooley identifies improvisatory material found in other works and treatises at the time. He concludes that improvisation thus gave Schumann 'a space to invent and experiment with figures, rhetorics, and forms of elaboration that fed directly into his early compositions': it is thus this tactile experimentation at the keyboard, which distinguishes Schumann's first-decade piano works from his later output that is characterised by a 'sense of abstraction or distance'.⁶⁷ Gooley bridges a gap between Schumann's performances—in this case improvisation—and composition, and his work therefore serves as a valuable starting point for this thesis. This thesis extends Gooley's account in three significant ways. Firstly, it strives to define Schumann as a pianist in general, not being restricted to improvisation. Secondly, it goes beyond Schumann's published works, engaging with a wealth of fragments and sketches instructive of their improvisational background. Lastly, it uses the analyses of pianistic style for different purposes than Gooley's: while Gooley traces the implementation of improvisatory figurations in Schumann's compositions, this thesis accounts for the significance of sound as a vehicle of musical expression, both in Schumann's improvisations and in his compositions. In other words, Gooley traces the development of textures typical to postclassical improvisation in Schumann's works, laying the groundwork for further research into issues of playing technique, tone production, sonority, imagined sound or tactile feedback, all being central themes to the present thesis.

With the currently available research on Schumann the pianist, it is nearly impossible to draw any conclusions as to how his piano works were informed by his instrumental practice, especially in terms of sound. While Rosen presents a new understanding of Schumann's piano music in terms of sound—and, not the least, the absence of it—and demonstrates that it was founded on a deep awareness of the technical and sonorous subtleties of the piano, Gooley highlights how Schumann's performances and compositions were coupled by impro-

and François Boller (Basel: Karger, 2005), 179–188.

65. Altenmüller, 'Focal Dystonia', 183.

66. Dana Gooley, 'Schumann and Agencies of Improvisation', in *Rethinking Schumann*, ed. Roe-Min Kok and Laura Tunbridge (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2011), 134.

67. *Ibid.*, 152.

visation. However, despite the significance of these writings, there are still considerable voids in the knowledge on his piano practice, his artistic ideals and his subsequent attempts to realise them—both as performer and as composer. This thesis aims to fill these. Many authors tend to interpret Schumann's works through the lens of his literary and aesthetic preoccupations.⁶⁸ However, different insights can be drawn from an investigation focusing on Schumann's pianism. Supported by a rich library of primary sources—covering his piano practice, improvisations, pedagogy and compositional work—this thesis shall engage with methods including the analysis of piano textures, as well as a hands-on experimentation with piano techniques and sonorities. As the following chapters will demonstrate, this approach will lead to conclusions attainable only through the keyboard. To provide an overview of these primary sources, this wealth of materials will briefly be reviewed.

Overview of Sources

Overall, Schumann was an avid diary keeper, and from 1827 to 1833 he wrote in his 'most trusted companion', albeit with some inconsistency.⁶⁹ During the period central to this study, he went through seven diaries, of which nos. 2, 4 and 5 are travel logs from his journeys from Prague, Munich, Strasbourg, Frankfurt, Switzerland and Italy between 1827 and 1830.⁷⁰ The other diaries record his everyday life:

Tage des Jünglinge Lebens; Zwickau, January–February 1827.

Hottentottiana; Leipzig and Heidelberg, May 1828–April 1830.

Leipziger Lebensbuch I; Leipzig, May 1831–August 1831.

Leipziger Lebensbuch II; Leipzig, October 1831–March 1833. Includes an additional summary from 1838 of the years 1833–1837.⁷¹

Not only do these diaries present a log of his daily activities, they provide useful insights into musical life, including his practising and improvisational routines, the repertoire he played and sight-read, which performances he attended and the music that he heard, his candid view on the people in his musical network, and, not the least, reflections on music and piano playing.

68. Notable literary and aesthetic studies of Schumann's early years include Daverio, *Robert Schumann*, 20–104; Reiman, *Schumann's Piano Cycles*, 9–47; Uwe Schweikert, 'Das literarische Werk – Lectüre, Poesie, Kritik und Poetische Musik', in *Schumann Handbuch*, ed. Ulrich Tadday (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2006), 107–126.

69. Robert Schumann, 1827–1838, vol. 1 of *Tagebücher*, ed. Georg Eismann (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1971), 417. 'Buch, mein vertrauestes Mitding' (hereafter cited as TB1).

70. TB1, 33–70, 245–326.

71. TB1, 19–32, 71–244, 327–438.

Throughout his young adulthood, there were extended periods of time in which he did not record life events; these pauses were not necessarily a symptom of Schumann being unhappy or simply idle. At the beginning of his *Leipziger Lebensbuch I* diary, which he kept from 11 May 1831 onwards, his first entry declared a resolution to ‘write something every day’. Schumann clearly had an ambition of maintaining his diary, but at the same time he was well aware of his proneness to fail.⁷² However, Worthen’s conclusion that Schumann’s diaries ‘tend to be a record of his unhappier times’ seems exaggerated. For instance, Schumann explained that he was highly preoccupied with piano practice during his longest pause from diary keeping, between 1830 and 1831; still, he was able to maintain his diary during his travels to Strasbourg and the Netherlands in the same period.⁷³ Thus, it appears that Schumann’s prime reason for not keeping up with diary writing was his preoccupation with piano practice, regardless of his state of mind. In 1833 Schumann reflected on the nature of his diary keeping. Here, he noted that he generally tended to write in his diary when everything was ‘quiet and dead’, as he felt that he could not get to write when life was ‘lively’.⁷⁴ This may explain why there are numerous periods in his diaries with little or no mentions of piano practice, combined with diary pauses for extended periods of time: on many occasions he may have neglected his diary because he was busy practising, or because this activity was so ingrained in his everyday life that it did not qualify to receive any particular mentions in his daily logs.

In addition to the diaries, a vast number of letters have survived. Some of these were published by Clara Schumann or were compiled at her commission in 1886, and later correspondences with Hummel and Moscheles among others appeared in 1979.⁷⁵ Aside from these volumes, there have only been sporadic attempts to publish these letters. However, since 2008 the new *Schumann Briefedition* has been under preparation (planned completion in 2025). The series comprises 20,000 letters in 50 volumes, and aims to include all surviving letters to and from Robert and Clara Schumann. Many of the early letters from Schumann’s student years are correspondences with his mother, and while Schumann tends to paint a picture of a more sober lifestyle than his diaries tend to reveal, these letters offer a more nuanced picture of Schumann’s persona, which highlights the contrast between his interior (diaries) and exterior (letters).

As a source on Schumann’s early pianism, the five sketchbooks from this period are just as valuable as the diaries, letters and other writings. Located at the University Library of Bonn,

72. TB1, 329.

73. Worthen, *Robert Schumann*, 18.

74. TB1, 417. ‘Warum kann ich nicht schreiben, wenn das Leben lebendig über mich strömt; u. warum griff ich nach Dir, Lebensbuch, wenn es still u. todt ist’.

75. Briefe; F. Gustav Jansen, ed., *Robert Schumanns Briefe: Neue Folge*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1904); Wolfgang Boetticher, ed., *Briefe und Gedichte aus dem Album Robert und Clara Schumanns* (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1979); Clara Schumann’s volume of early letters were translated to English in Clara Schumann, ed., *Early Letters of Robert Schumann*, trans. May Herbert (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1888) (hereafter cited as Letters).

these volumes contain loosely collected fragments from the years 1828–1837, including compositional sketches, thematic ideas, contrapuntal studies, harmonic and pianistic experiments and piano exercises:

Skizzenbuch I; Heidelberg and Leipzig (1831–1832). Includes compositional sketches (primarily *Abegg Variations* op. 1 and Piano Concerto RSW:Anh:B3), as well as pedagogical and technical materials (exercises based on Hummel's *Anweisung*, the *Klavierschule* and the *Uebungstagebuch*).⁷⁶

Skizzenbuch II; Leipzig (1833–1837). Includes a catalogue of musical themes as well as contrapuntal studies.⁷⁷

Skizzenbuch III; Zwickau and Leipzig (1828–1832). Includes compositional sketches (primarily *Abegg Variations* op. 1 and *Papillons* op. 2) as well as contrapuntal studies.⁷⁸

Skizzenbuch IV; Leipzig (1831–1833). Includes compositional sketches (primarily *Etuden in Form freier Variationen über ein Beethoven'sches Thema*, RSW:Anh:F25), as well as contrapuntal studies.⁷⁹

Skizzenbuch V; Heidelberg and Leipzig (c. 1830). Includes compositional sketches and contrapuntal studies.⁸⁰

Whilst all volumes will be reproduced with transcriptions as part of the *Neue Schumann Ausgabe*, the contents of these five sketchbooks (*Skizzenbuch I–V*) were catalogued in 1985 by Matthias Wendt (*Skizzenbuch I–III*), Reinhold Dusella (*Skizzenbuch IV*) and Reiner Leister (*Skizzenbuch V*).⁸¹ Out of these, *Skizzenbuch I* is of particular interest, as this loosely compiled collection

76. Robert Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch I' (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn, D-Bnu NL Schumann 13, 1831–1832), accessed 1 April 2017, <http://digitale-sammlungen.ulb.uni-bonn.de/ulbbnhans/content/titleinfo/1043463> (hereafter cited as SB1).

77. Robert Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch II' (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn, D-Bnu NL Schumann 14, 1833–1837), accessed 1 April 2017, <http://digitale-sammlungen.ulb.uni-bonn.de/ulbbnhans/content/titleinfo/1043479>.

78. Robert Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch III' (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn, D-Bnu NL Schumann 15, 1832), accessed 1 April 2017, <http://digitale-sammlungen.ulb.uni-bonn.de/ulbbnhans/content/titleinfo/1043491> (hereafter cited as SB3).

79. Robert Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch IV' (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn, D-Bnu NL Schumann 16, 1831–1833), accessed 1 April 2017, <http://digitale-sammlungen.ulb.uni-bonn.de/ulbbnhans/content/titleinfo/1043520>.

80. Robert Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch V' (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn, D-Bnu NL Schumann 17, 1830), accessed 1 April 2017, <http://digitale-sammlungen.ulb.uni-bonn.de/ulbbnhans/content/titleinfo/1043629>.

81. For more information on the editorial history of the sketchbooks, cf. Robert Schumann, *Studien- und Skizzenbuch I und II*, vol. 1 of *Neue Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Matthias Wendt, Neue Gesamtausgabe 3 (Mainz: Schott, 2011), x. At the time of writing, *Skizzenbuch I–III* have appeared in print, cf. Robert Schumann, *Studien- und Skizzenbuch III*, vol. 2 of *Neue Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Matthias Wendt, Neue Gesamtausgabe 3 (Mainz: Schott, 2016).

of sketches, exercises and notes give a profound insight into Schumann's working methods and technical ideas. Three elements of the sketchbook stand out: the *Uebungstagebuch* ('Practice Diary'), the *Klavierschule* ('Piano School'), and the transposed exercises from Hummel's tutor *Ausführliche theoretisch-practische Anweisung zum Piano-Forte-Spiel* (hereafter referred to as the *Anweisung*). The *Uebungstagebuch* will be examined in further detail in Chapter 6; it contains a series of 103 short exercises, based on his piano practice between 30 May 1831 and 6 April 1832. During his practice on Hummel's *Anweisung*, Schumann systematically transposed a number of exercises, primarily from the tutor's first part, and his own *Klavierschule* is loosely inspired by the *Anweisung*. Although there are only few surviving fragments of the *Klavierschule*, its layout of exercises follows Hummel's systems so closely that it, more than anything else, appears to be an attempt to comprehend and reimagine the pedagogy and technical principles of Hummel.

Aside from the unfinished *Klavierschule*, Schumann produced three works which served a didactic purpose to some extent:

Exercice pour le Pianoforte;

the earliest surviving incarnation of the *Toccata* op. 7 (fragment, c. 1829–1830).⁸²

Etuden in Form freier Variationen über ein Beethoven'sches Thema RSW:Anh:F25;

etudes in the form of variations on the 2nd movement theme from Beethoven's Symphony no. 7 op. 92. Hereafter referred to as *Beethoven-Exercises* (c. 1831–1835).⁸³

Etudes pour le pianoforte d'après les Caprices de Paganini op. 3;

six etudes based on Caprices from Paganini's op. 1. Hereafter referred to as *Paganini Studies* (1832).

As the earliest surviving etude sketches, the *Exercice pour le Pianoforte* as well as the *Beethoven-Exercises* were conceived during Schumann's years as a piano student, and highlight many of the idiosyncracies of his playing. During his transition away from the role of performer, both works underwent significant transformations: the *Exercice* changed dramatically in content before its publication in 1834 as *Toccata* op. 7, and although Schumann never published the *Beethoven-Exercises*, another two versions survive, the last one dating from 1834 or 1835. As will be

82. Throughout its genesis, Schumann amended the title of the *Toccata* several times. Michael Luebbe lists the following titles: *Exercice*, *Exercice fantastique*, *Etude en double sons*, and *Etude fantastique en double sons*. The history of the different versions of the work will be discussed later. In the following, the title used in the earliest complete version of the work has been preferred, first published in Michael Jude Luebbe, 'Robert Schumann's Exercise pour le Pianoforte', in *Schumanniana Nova*, ed. Bernhard R Appel, Ute Bär and Matthias Wendt (Sinzig: Studio Punkt Verlag, 2002), 432, 436–448. Date based on Boetticher's estimate, cf. Wolfgang Boetticher, *Opus 7–13*, vol. 2 of *Robert Schumanns Klavierwerke: Neue biographische und textkritische Untersuchungen* (Wilhelmshafen: Heinrichshofen's Verlag, 1984), 25.

83. The title provided here is taken from the first version of the work (c. 1831). Subsequent versions were titled *Etudes basées sur un Theme de Beethoven* and later just *Exercises*.

discussed in Chapter 6, this gives an opportunity to compare Schumann's approach to piano technique before and after his hand injury. While the *Paganini Studies* were written during the spring of 1832, and therefore after Schumann had stopped practising regularly, its preface is filled with advice to the player on piano practice, performing style and musical artistry, providing a useful retrospective insight into Schumann's own experiences as a piano student.⁸⁴

Whilst the *Abegg Variations* and *Papillons*—the primary reference to Schumann's earliest compositional efforts—served no pedagogical purpose as such, the sketches from these two works are nevertheless instructive to this study. With the engraver's copy of *Papillons* as the only surviving manuscript, the fragments from the sketchbooks are the only source for the compositional process, and attest to a hands-on approach to pianistic issues, including the experimentation with sonorities as integral to the work's creation. Together with Schumann's writings, piano exercises and didactic works, as well as a number of tutors and treatises related to Schumann and his pianistic heritage, these primary sources form the backbone of the eight chapters described below.⁸⁵

Overview of Chapters

Chapter 1 provides a general historical and biographical framework upon which the following chapters will draw. Divided into two sections, this chapter examines the development of the piano and its playing styles from the perspective of sonority, followed by an overview of Schumann's piano studies until his move to Leipzig in 1828. Thus, the first section

84. In addition to the abovementioned sources, Schumann published in 1850 the *Musikalische Haus- und Lebensregeln* as an appendix to his *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. Although this short volume contains insightful thoughts on performance and practising, drawing on his experiences from his days as piano student, it is without doubt that Schumann's understanding of music had changed significantly. As a source on Schumann's early pianism, the *Musikalische Haus- und Lebensregeln* are therefore only referred to sparingly.

85. These treatises and other publications by other pianists and pedagogues include: the writings and piano studies by Friedrich Wieck; the works by his two main influences, Johann Peter Milchmeyer and Johann Bernhard Logier; the aforementioned *Anweisung* by Hummel; in addition, tutors by Czerny, Kalkbrenner and Herz among others will be studied, cf. Friedrich Wieck, *Materialen zu Friedrich Wieck's Pianoforte-Methodik*, ed. Alwin Wieck (Berlin: Simrock, 1875) (hereafter cited as *Materialen*); Friedrich Wieck, *Pianoforte Studien*, ed. Marie Wieck (New York: Schirmer, 1901) (hereafter cited as *Studien*); Friedrich Wieck, *Piano and Singing*, trans. Mary P. Nicholls (Boston: Lockwood, Brooks & Company, 1875) (hereafter cited as *PS*); Friedrich Wieck, *Klavier und Gesang: Didactisches und Polemisches*, 3rd ed. (Leipzig: F. E. C. Leuckart, 1878); Johann Peter Milchmeyer, *Die wahre Art das Pianoforte zu spielen* (Dresden: Carl Christian Meinhold, 1797); Johann Bernhard Logier, *Peculiar Method of Teaching the Art of Sciences and Music* (London: J. Green, 1828); Johann Bernhard Logier, *Sequel to the First Companion, to the Chiroplast* (London: Boosey & Co., 1827); Johann Nepomuk Hummel, *Ausführliche theoretisch-practische Anweisung zum Piano-Forte-Spiel*, 2nd ed. (Vienna: Tobias Haslinger, 1838); Johann Nepomuk Hummel, *A Complete Theoretical & Practical Course of Instructions on the Art of Playing the Piano Forte* (London: Boosey, 1828); Czerny, *Klavier-Schule*; Carl Czerny, *Complete Theoretical and Practical Piano Forte School*, op. 500, trans. J. A. Hamilton, 3 vols. (London: R. Cocks, 1839); Kalkbrenner, *Complete Course*; Henri Herz, *Méthode complète de piano*, op. 100 (Mainz: B. Schotts Söhne, 1838).

of the chapter shall define the characteristics of the principal schools of piano playing and piano making until around 1830. Highlighting timbre and sonority as decisive differentiators between the leading piano traditions of the day, this will demonstrate the fundamental importance of sound in the piano culture at the time. The second section then focusses on Schumann's position within this context, by providing a biographical overview of his musical upbringing until 1828. He grew up in provincial Zwickau, far away from the musical capitals of Europe, in an environment with only limited access to the newest musical trends and competent instrumental tuition. Without proper pianistic guidance, Schumann knew little about structured, attentive piano practice, but spent many hours extemporising and sight-reading. This identity as a highly independent, largely self-taught improviser is key to the understanding of Schumann.

Chapter 2 focusses on 1828–1831, tracing Schumann's piano practice from the introduction to his piano teacher, Friedrich Wieck, in August to his crisis over the summer months of 1831. During this period, Schumann's practising discipline and methods underwent a dramatic transformation as his ambitions gradually rose towards a concert career: during his first year as Wieck's student his practice was sporadic at best, primarily concentrating on mechanical studies to provide him with better technical skills for improvising and sight-reading. In 1830, supported by his mother and Wieck, Schumann decided to pursue a career in music, following a practice regimen laid out by Wieck. However, during the late spring and summer of 1831, Schumann became increasingly unable to meet the growing demands of himself and his teacher, which led to a major crisis over the following months. What triggered the crisis was—according to Schumann himself—his inability to conquer the second phase of a self-defined three-stage learning process: the first stage representing the initial infatuation with the work, the second stage, where the technical obstacles dominate and 'only the dry, cold keys remain', and the third stage, where spirit and mechanics merge into a state of 'true music'. Studying this process of learning and his subsequent attempts to address the challenges of the second stage will not only allow the establishment of his overall aims in relation to piano performance, it provides an opportunity to demonstrate sonority as fundamental to his playing and a backbone of his ideal 'true music', and that his inability to reproduce it was a trigger for the crisis.

Chapters 3 and 4 will address Schumann's ideal sound at the most fundamental level, by identifying his tone concepts. While it is impossible to reproduce Schumann's own experience of his inspired performance, his sound ideals and their technical realisation can be traced on a more tangible level. This is in itself a highly complex topic, which shall be reduced

to the simplest musical element, namely the production of a single tone. These chapters treat the topic of Schumann's ideal tone from two perspectives, by establishing his positions within the schools of piano playing and piano making, discussed in Chapter 1. Chapter 3 concludes that Schumann cannot be placed exclusively in one pianistic tradition, as it is possible to trace allegiances to the Viennese tradition of Hummel, alongside the French postclassical virtuoso school and Field's singing tone ideal. While this required a broad palette of tone colours, Chapter 4 confirms that Schumann was limited to producing these on Viennese instruments alone. This was not a question of preference, but the result of Schumann living in a region dominated by pianos of this type. These were instruments with a softer tone and shorter decay than their French and English counterparts, which found their means of musical expression within the fine nuances of tone.

Chapter 5 seeks to reconcile the conclusions of the preceding two chapters by pinpointing the technical means with which Schumann could realise a broad range of tone colours on the Viennese piano. In doing so, this chapter challenges the preconceived notion of a purely finger-based technique by exploring an array of invisible playing agents, which the established still-hand principle of the day did not preclude. This includes the application of weight from the hand and arm, and, more importantly, the engagement with non-audible approaches to experiencing sound. This will demonstrate how the tactile feedback from playing could enhance, or potentially replace, the experience of hearing sound as audible tones. This required a minutely tuned technique, which Schumann to an increasing degree found himself unable to master during 1831.

Chapter 6 investigates Schumann's failed attempts to realise the ideals outlined in Chapter 5 during the time of his crisis over the summer of 1831. Challenging the previously established notion that Schumann suffered from a lack of diligence, this chapter proposes that his struggles were purely a question of technique. Thus, based on exercises from the *Uebungstagebuch* as well as Schumann's earliest compositions and etudes this chapter identifies four key areas of piano technique which Schumann was struggling to master. Whilst this does not allow for an assessment of Schumann the pianist, his endeavours to solve technical problems attest to a profound understanding of the fundamentals of piano playing, despite the lack of a performing career. The chapter ends with an open-ended discussion of the hand injury as a possible trigger to the crisis. Whilst the evidence presented is inconclusive on its own, it nevertheless contributes to one of the most debated topics in Schumann scholarship.

Chapter 7 turns towards Schumann's compositional responses by studying his first published work, the *Abegg Variations*. Unable to realise his musical ideal as performer, this and the last chapter will demonstrate his realisation of 'true music' in the capacity of composer. Describing his ideal performance, Schumann had defined Paganini as the embodiment of true virtuosity, as he merged the 'ideal of skill' with that of 'expression'. While the preceding chapters engage with Schumann's 'ideal of skill', this chapter is dedicated to his 'ideal of expression' and his efforts to approximate his idolised virtuosic figure. This involves a study of the expressive devices in his musical notation in the *Abegg Variations*, including his use of articulation marks and accents. Concealed under a surface of textures and figurations typical to the postclassical style, these markings represent the outcome of countless hours of experimentation at the keyboard, and demonstrate a more general shift away from the prevailing contemporary idiom of postclassical bravura. It is thus a first step towards a type of imaginative virtuosity, where it is the sonorous inventiveness of the performer and not the mechanical skills which seek to dazzle the audience.

Chapter 8 builds upon the notion of sonority as integral to the musical expression as established in the previous chapter. This chapter investigates how Schumann engaged with sonority in a broader artistic context, by examining the pedal markings of *Papillons* op. 2 as a trigger of imaginative virtuosity. While these indications resulted from an ongoing process of hands-on experimentation with sonority—similarly to the *Abegg Variations*—*Papillons* rejects many of the virtuosic elements of postclassical virtuosity found in the previous opus. Instead, the work features a Schubertian idiom of waltzes and polonaises, which offer simpler pianistic textures. Nevertheless, the use of the pedal is highly elaborate, signalling an approach to imaginative virtuosity characteristic of his later works; one that requires a careful balancing of voices and nuancing of touches, a vivid sonorous imagination and, in one case, the ability to *feel* a sonorous effect through the act of depressing and releasing the pedal. Thus, through the application of the pedal, Schumann engages with many of the techniques which defined his piano playing: visible and invisible playing agents, imagined sonority, and tactile feedback. Thus, this work recreates the 'magic' which Schumann experienced back in his days as young improviser.

Supplementary Recordings

As illustrative supplements to the printed text, I have produced a number of musical excerpts. These have been recorded on a grand piano (no. 513) by Viennese maker André Stein (Matthäus Andreas Stein; 1776–1842), now located in Schumann's reconstructed birth room at the

Robert-Schumann-Haus in Zwickau.⁸⁶ Wieck purchased the piano on 4 March 1828, and it was also on this particular instrument that the nine-year-old Clara Wieck gave her first performance at the Leipzig Gewandhaus on 20 October the same year, playing Kalkbrenner's *Variations brillantes sur la marche de "Moïse"* for four-hand piano op. 94 with fellow student Emilie Reichold.⁸⁷ It cannot be established with certainty that this very piano inspired Schumann's desire to acquire an instrument by Stein: he voiced this wish in a letter to his mother in June 1828, and there is no evidence of Schumann having met the Wiecks prior to August. Nevertheless, this piano was still in Wieck's possession during the early months of Schumann's studentship with him. He must therefore with certainty have known of this instrument, and possibly also played it.

The piano is made from cherry wood with a six-octave compass (F–f³), and bears many of the features typical of an instrument from Vienna from this period: Viennese action, wooden frame and leather-covered hammers. After Wieck sold the instrument, it underwent two restorations, first in 1955 by the technicians at the Händel-Haus in Halle, and later in 1995/96 by Robert A. Brown in Arnsdorf near Salzburg. Initially, the piano was equipped with a typical pedal setup with *una corda*, moderator, and damper pedal (from left to right). This setup was altered sometime during the nineteenth century, so that the moderator now also invokes the shifting mechanism, working as a combined moderator and *due corde* pedal.⁸⁸ While this setup makes a wonderfully muted and highly sensitive tone, it is important to keep in mind that this particular timbre was not intended by Stein, nor was it ever heard by the Wiecks or Schumann.

Choosing an instrument for a study of this nature invariably opens the age-old discussion between the preference of original instruments versus replicas. Is an old instrument preferable, although it may not sound exactly the way it did when it was new, or is a replica, which may appear in mint condition but cannot with certainty be said to sound like an original back in the day?⁸⁹ This is a debate which has still not been settled, and leaves the choice between two evils. Rather than choosing one type of instrument over the other, I have attempted to balance the interests of both arguments by consulting a variety of pianos for this project, most notably an 1826 Conrad Graf grand piano, a replica of an 1830 Maximilian Schott by David Winston, as

86. This piano can also be heard on Clara Schumann, *Complete Songs*, perf. Dorothea Craxton and Hedayet Djed-dikar, Naxos 8.570747, 2009, CD.

87. Jean-Jacques Düнки, 'Möglichkeiten der Realisation Schumannscher Vortragsanweisungen auf historischen und modernen Klavieren', in *Schumann Studien 10*, ed. Thomas Synofzik (Sinzig: Studio Punkt Verlag, 2012), 60–61; Nancy B. Reich, 'Schumann, Clara', in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed 1 April 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/25152>.

88. Düнки, 'Möglichkeiten der Realisation', 61.

89. In this debate, Robert Winter in particular has been extremely critical of the use of original nineteenth-century instruments in concerts and recordings, cf. Robert Winter, 'Performing Nineteenth-Century Music on Nineteenth-Century Instruments', *19th-Century Music* 1, no. 2 (1977): 163–175; Robert Winter, 'The Emperor's New Clothes: Nineteenth-Century Instruments Revisited', *19th-Century Music* 7, no. 3 (1984): 251–265.

well as a replica of an 1825 Conrad Graf grand piano by Paul Poletti.⁹⁰

90. The 1825 original Graf grand piano was previously located at Finchcocks Musical Museum, and is now owned by the The Richard Burnett Heritage Collection. The replicas of Schott and Graf are located at the Royal College of Music and the Royal Danish Academy of Music respectively.

Chapter 1

Historical and Biographical Contexts

To understand Schumann's evolution from pianist in the early days in Zwickau to his ambitions, crises and eventual abandonment of the piano as a career, the historical and biographical background from which Schumann emerged as an aspiring pianist must first be established. This contextual information shall be treated in two separate sections, the first of which aims to produce a brief overview of the piano, its performances and sound ideals until *c.* 1830 to offer an in-depth understanding of the mechanical and sonorous possibilities of the instrument. It would be beyond the scope of this study to provide a comprehensive history of the piano. Instead, this section aims to give a concise overview of the differences between the prevailing pianistic ideologies. Engaging primarily with sound ideals and technical idioms, this serves as a foundation for the discussions in the following chapters. Not only does the early history of the piano leave the impression of a musical culture in which the beauty of tone was paramount; it also demonstrates how a variety of sound ideals became decisive differentiators between the different traditions of piano making and playing.

The second section turns to the early biography of Schumann, examining his musical upbringing in Zwickau, until his move to Leipzig in March 1828. It shows a gifted, self-taught, young pianist, who grew up far away from the leading musical trends. At the time, Schumann knew nothing of the existence of Beethoven and Schubert, but improvised a great deal and cherished the music which was available to him, primarily the Classicists of the late eighteenth century as well as the early Viennese postclassical piano virtuosos. The dissonance between these two musical environments—the establishment of the European musical capitals versus Schumann's provincial Zwickau—is fundamental to the understanding of his failed attempt to join the ranks of the virtuosos in the years following his move to Leipzig.

The Piano and Its Sound Ideals until c. 1830: A Historical Overview

The formation of the leading piano schools goes back to the invention of the instrument itself. It emerged from the need to address what was perceived as shortcomings of other keyboard instruments.¹ Thus, with a growing need to produce subtler musical and dynamic nuances, the dominant keyboard instruments of the eighteenth century—the clavichord, harpsichord and organ—were considered less adequate to meet the changing demands of musical life.² This was, in part, due to the emergence of a new melodic musical style, which developed in Italy in the 1730s.³ Rosenblum describes the need for an instrument which could address this:

Its melodies—simpler, often lyrical or tuneful, and of a periodic nature—demanded nuance and dynamic inflection [...] inevitably, the growing need for dynamic expression led to the success of the instrument in which dynamic flexibility was inherently easy rather than an afterthought.⁴

The ability to shape a melodic line with precise dynamic nuances allowed the piano to mimic the lyrical qualities of wind and string instruments, and, not the least, the singing voice. This would become a decisive factor in the development of the instrument, its sound ideals and playing styles over the following two centuries.

Unlike the highly standardised nature of the modern piano, the instruments and playing styles of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries differed vastly from region to region. Thus, after the piano was introduced in Northern Europe during the 1730s—when clavichord maker Gottfried Silbermann copied Bartolomeo Cristofori's original design, based on technical drawings published by Scipione Maffei—the development of piano actions split into two

1. Along with Dussek's and Pleyel's *Nouvelle Méthode de Pianoforte*, Johann Peter Milchmeyer's (1750–1813) *Die wahre Art das Pianoforte zu spielen* from 1797 was one of the first keyboard tutors to deal with the piano alone, rather than piano *and* harpsichord or clavichord. At the time Milchmeyer was rather dismissive about the alternatives to the piano: 'if anyone is too poor to afford a pianoforte, then he must be satisfied with the clavichord, for, next to the pianoforte, it is the best instrument for musical expression. It is only the harpsichord that I cannot at all recommend' ('Sollte iemand zu unbemittelt seyn, um sich eine Pianoforte zu kaufen, der wird sich mit dem Clavichord begnügen müssen, da es nächst dem Pianoforte das beste Instrument für den musikalischen Ausdruck ist. Nur den Flügel kann ich auf keine Weise empfehlen'), cf. Johann Peter Milchmeyer, *Die wahre Art das Pianoforte zu spielen* (Dresden: Carl Christian Meinhold, 1797), 58. Translated in Robert Rhein, 'Johann Peter Milchmeyer's "Die wahre Art das Pianoforte zu spielen": An annotated translation' (PhD, University of Nebraska, 1993), xxi, 141.

2. Whilst the clavichord was able to render fine dynamic shadings, *crescendos* and *diminuendos*, with minute precision as well as producing the so-called *Bebung* (vibrato), its general softness of tone made it unsuitable within an orchestra or ensemble, or even in a concert performance. Although the harpsichord was the preferred orchestral keyboard instrument, together with the organ it lacked the ability to produce dynamic contrasts beyond the block dynamics.

3. Sandra P. Rosenblum, *Performance Practices in Classic Piano Music* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), 3.

4. Ibid.

distinct schools: the Viennese and the English.⁵ In Vienna and most of Germany the *Prellmechanik* quickly became dominant in pianos of the second half of the eighteenth century.⁶ In this action, each hammer is mounted on its key lever, and swung towards the string with the help of an escapement rail ('Prelleiste'). The compound leverage of this simple action is highly efficient, which means that only a light touch and shallow dip (the distance the key travels between its resting position and the key bed) is needed to produce a tone using this action.⁷ In England, notable makers including Americus Backers, Robert Stodart and John Broadwood, had been working in the late 1760s on an improved version of Cristofori's action, which later became known as the English grand action. This action was based on a design which worked differently from the Viennese action: all hammers were attached to a rail, and the escapement mechanism was handled by each key separately.⁸

While both actions solved the problem of rendering melodic inflections and dynamic nuances, they did so in fundamentally different ways. As such, these two schools of piano making catered to two diametrically different playing styles. Whilst the reliability and responsiveness of the Viennese pianos allowed for an elegant, articulate, albeit dry style of playing, the instruments from England had less efficient dampers and were therefore considerably more resonant, encouraging players to apply a grander, more sonorous manner. Naturally, the two main schools of piano making did not develop in a vacuum. Instead, they emerged in response to regional musical traditions as well as innovations among composers and performers. Simultaneously, the piano makers' persistent efforts to improve their instruments continued to inspire musi-

5. The earliest reliable source on Cristofori's invention of the piano dates back to 1700, cf. Michael O'Brien, 'Cristofori, Bartolomeo', in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed 1 April 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/06835>.

6. The invention of this action has been attributed to Johann Andreas Stein of Augsburg. His daughter and son, Nannette and Matthäus, settled in Vienna and became some of the most influential piano makers of their generation. Due to its possible German origin and Viennese popularity, the *Prellmechanik* is therefore interchangeably referred to as the German or Viennese action, cf. Michael Latham, 'Stein, Johann Andreas', in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed 1 April 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/26631>.

7. Kenneth Mobbs, 'A Performer's Comparative Study of Touchweight, Key-Dip, Keyboard Design and Repetition in Early Grand Pianos, c. 1770 to 1850', *The Galpin Society Journal* 54 (2001): 19–21. Mobbs demonstrates through measurements of various Viennese, English and French pianos that the Viennese pianos made in Schumann's lifetime are generally lighter in the treble than English and French competitors, whilst their bass register appears to be heavier. These differences between the various piano-making traditions are not as great as one would expect; for instance the touchweight (the minimum amount of weight required to make the softest of sounds) on a middle C with dampers down is largely identical on an English and a Viennese piano from the 1820s—the English being fractionally heavier than the Viennese actions. The perceived lightness of touch on the Viennese piano is therefore only related to the actual key weight to a rather limited extent; instead, key dip seems to be a more important factor, as the touch is consistently shallower on the Viennese pianos than on the French and English pianos (middle C averages on Viennese pianos made 1836–1850 on 7.83mm, English pianos on 8.95mm, and a modern Steinway & Sons grand piano on 10–11mm).

8. David Rowland, 'Pianos and Pianists c. 1770–c. 1825', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Piano*, ed. David Rowland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 68–72.

cians to produce new playing techniques, musical textures and sonorities. In other words, the traditions of piano making were inseparable from their respective schools of playing.

Thus, the Viennese and English schools of piano making did not only serve two different compositional and performance styles; they represented two different sound ideals. Generally, the Viennese pianos had a rather fragile timbre, characterised by a variety of tone across the compass of the instrument, which enabled the player to colour the different voices of the musical setting, allowing for renditions of densely written textures with great clarity and variety of tone of colour.⁹ This prompted several early nineteenth century sources to compare Viennese pianos to wind instruments, whilst string instruments with their evenness of tone compared to the more resonant sound of the pianos made in England.¹⁰ The difference between the two sound ideals also showed in their approach to instrument resonance and sonority: English pianos were from the early years fitted with two pedals, as opposed to the knee-levers of early Viennese instruments. Compared to knee-levers, a pedal is easier to operate, and the limited use of the damper lever by Viennese composers may explain why makers kept them until the turn of the nineteenth century.¹¹ However, whilst the English pianos only included an *una corda* pedal aside from the damper pedal, the Viennese instruments developed a number of other stops to alter the timbre in different ways, most notably the moderator, which was included in pianos as late as the mid-1800s.¹² Roughly speaking, the English pianos encouraged players to enrich the sound through resonance, while the stops of the Viennese pianos allowed for a more articulate style of playing through the use of dynamic nuances and tone colour. These qualities continued to distinguish the two schools of piano making throughout Schumann's lifetime.

During the last decades of the eighteenth century and well into the following century, the gap between the two schools continued to widen. This was primarily a result of the early adoption of the piano among English keyboard players. Thus, the first English compositions scored for the piano appeared as early as the 1760s, the earliest being the op. 5 Sonatas

9. My recordings attached to this submission illustrate this at several places. In the *Abegg Variations*, Schumann explored the entire range of keyboard frequently, demonstrating the different tonal characters the compass. Notable examples include: Variation 1, bars 1, 3, and 8-12; 'Cantabile', bars 14-19; 'Finale alla fantasia', bars 33-36 and 93-101.

10. Christian Ahrens, '...welch eine Schönheit und gleichheit der Töne und gewalt im Starken und Sanften gleich: Das Piano mit Wiener Mechanik im frühen 19. Jahrhundert', in *Das Wiener Klavier bis 1850: Bericht des Symposiums 'Das Wiener Klavier bis 1850'*, ed. Beatrix Darmstädter, Alfons Huber and Rudolf Hopfner (Tutzing: H. Schneider, 2007), 154. Furthermore, Andreas Streicher wrote in 1801 that his personal ideal tone resembles 'the sound of the best wind instruments', cf. Richard A Fuller, 'Andreas Streicher's Notes on the Fortepiano: Chapter 2: "On Tone"', *Early Music* 12, no. 4 (1984): 463.

11. Rowland, 'Pianos and Pianists c. 1770–c. 1825', 33.

12. The moderator refers to a tongue of felt, cloth or leather that slides in between the hammers and strings, by the help of a pedal, knee-lever or stop. The sound created by the hammers striking the string through the material creates a soft, delicate sound. Other common stops included the bassoon stop (a strip of parchment or silk touching the bass strings for a buzzing sound), as well as janissary music (drums and bells built in to the piano to be operated by a pedal; inspired by the highly popular Turkish march music).

by J. C. Bach (published 1766).¹³ In Germany and Austria, the instrument took more time to establish itself, still competing with the harpsichord and clavichord as the preferred instrument about a century after its invention.¹⁴ Indeed, Mozart was greatly enthusiastic about Stein's pianos in 1777, and by 1788 Haydn had certainly adopted the piano as his keyboard instrument of choice.¹⁵ However, this did not mean that other instruments were abandoned. Haydn worked on the *Creation* in 1799 from a clavichord, and Beethoven's earliest sonatas were all published for the harpsichord ('Clavecin') or the pianoforte—the two Sonatas op. 14 (1799) being the first to carry the *pianoforte* indication alone.¹⁶ Indeed, in his *Klavierschule* (1789), Daniel Gottlob Türk (1750–1813) could list no fewer than eighteen keyboard instruments aside from his preferred 'organ, harpsichord and fortepiano'.¹⁷ It was only in Johann Peter Milchmeyer's (1750–1813) tutor from 1797, *Die wahre Art das Pianoforte zu spielen* ('The True Art of Playing the Piano-forte'), that the piano found unequivocal support in the treatises, as he found the clavichord as well as the harpsichord unfit for keyboard training.¹⁸ By comparison, the 'harpsichord' designation was on the retreat by the early 1790s in London-based publications; notably many of Dussek's keyboard works were scored for the piano alone.¹⁹ Even though they were being gradually replaced by the piano, the harpsichord and the clavichord remained in use even during Schumann's lifetime, with German makers still producing clavichords—albeit by this time

13. Christoph Wolff et al., 'Bach', in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed 1 April 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40023pg15>; David Rowland, 'The Music of the Early Pianists (to c. 1830)', in Rowland, *The Cambridge Companion to the Piano*, 137. At the time of publication, Bach had lived in London for a few years, after relocating in 1762.

14. Charles Burney (1726–1814), who travelled Northern Europe in the early 1770s, reported only few encounters with pianists and pianofortes in the German-speaking part of the continent. Even in Vienna, the piano only figured in one out of fifteen accounts of keyboard playing, although he was pleased with the performance on this occasion, on what he described as 'a small, not good Piano forte', cf. Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany, The Netherlands and United Provinces*, vol. 1 (London: T. Beckett / Co., 1773), 278.

15. Reginald R Gerig, *Famous Pianists and Their Technique*, new edition (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 39–41.

16. Philip James, *Early Keyboard Instruments: From Their Beginnings to the Year 1820* (London: Peter Davies, 1930), 18. Similarly to the earliest English piano works, it is possible that Beethoven's indications of the harpsichord for the early sonatas could have been for commercial reasons. Nevertheless, its inclusion in these works show that there was still a market for this instrument in 1799. Ludwig van Beethoven, *Grande Sonate Pathétique Pour le Clavecin ou Piano-Forte*, op. 13, 1st ed. (Vienna: Eder, [1799]); Ludwig van Beethoven, *Deux Sonates pour le Piano-Forte*, op. 14, 1st ed. (Vienna: Mollo, [1799]).

17. Daniel Gottlob Türk, *Klavierschule* (Leipzig and Halle: Schwickert; Hemmerde und Schwetschke, 1789), 1.

18. Milchmeyer, *Die wahre Art*, 2.

19. This only applied to those editions of Dussek's works published in London. In France, where the general adoption of the piano occurred later than in England and Germany, his works continued to be published for the harpsichord as well. Note for instance his Sonatas op. 12, which appeared as 'Three Sonatas for the Piano-Forte with an Accompaniment for a Violin Composed [...] Op. XII' in the English edition, but was sold as 'Trois Sonates Pour Clavecin Ou Forté-Piano Avec Violon [...] Oeuvre XII^{me}', cf. Jan Ladislav Dussek, *Trois Sonates Pour Clavecin Ou Forté-Piano Avec Violon*, op. 12, 1st ed. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, [n.d.]); Jan Ladislav Dussek, *Three Sonatas for the Piano-Forte with an Accompaniment for a Violin*, op. 12, 1st ed. (London: Bland & Weller, 1790).

heavier and more resonant—as late as the 1820s.²⁰

The result of the early adoption in England was the development of an instrument-specific pianistic idiom, which relied heavily on effects feasible on the piano alone, including passages spanning the full compass of the keyboard, chordal sonorities, parallel double stops as well as the juxtaposition of extreme dynamics.²¹ This was in stark contrast to the articulate yet elegant sonatas of the 1780s by Haydn and Mozart, which—although their composers by the time preferred the piano—by no means utilised the full sonorous potential of the instrument. It was only around the last decade of the eighteenth century that Viennese pianism began to adopt some of the virtues of the English school. Firstly, Haydn and Hummel—two of the most significant musicians from the Viennese tradition—spent extended periods of time in London. During their visits to the English capital both musicians came into contact with the musical life of the city, and, not the least, its pianos. The influence of English pianism was immediate and visible in their piano scores from this period, notably in Haydn's three *English Sonatas* Hob. XVI:50–52 (1794/95), and in Hummel's Sonata in C major op. 2a no. 3 (1792). In these works, Haydn uses much broader strokes to characterise and differentiate musical phrases and motifs compared to his earlier sonatas, and Hummel's sonata feature a more muscular approach to piano playing, unprecedented amongst Viennese piano composers.²² Secondly, the impact of the English school went beyond the style of composing for the instrument. It affected the playing technique and the understanding of tone production at its most fundamental level; that is, the acceptance of the *legato* touch as the default mode of playing. Due to its ability to reproduce melodic lines with precise dynamic nuances, the adoption of the piano allowed for a type of musical expression which had previously only been partly available on keyboard instruments. Therefore, the departure from a *non-legato* touch was not only a natural consequence of the development of a playing technique specific to the piano, but also a first important step towards the much touted 'singing tone'-ideal of nineteenth-century pianism.

On both sides of the English Channel, early piano players had inherited the *non-legato* touch as the default from the harpsichord and the clavichord. For instance, Mozart was, according to Eva and Paul Badura-Skoda, known to default to a '*non-legato* and even *staccato*, rather than *legato*' type of touch.²³ The Badura-Skodas concede that Mozart 'does indeed often demand a *legato* for melodic passages', but still 'he almost always wanted virtuoso passage-work played

20. Edwin M Ripid et al., 'Clavichord', in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed 1 April 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/05909>.

21. These are common traits in, for instance, Dussek's piano sonatas op. 10.

22. The technique of playing the straightforward opening theme in unison arpeggiated octaves is similar to the technique found in the opening movement of Beethoven's C major Sonata op. 2 no. 3 (bars 85–89) which appeared in print three years later.

23. Eva Badura-Skoda and Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Mozart on the Keyboard* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1962), 66.

non-legato. This is in line with principles set out by C. P. E. Bach, who argued that ‘the briskness of *allegros* is expressed by detached notes and the tenderness of *adagios* by broad, slurred notes.’²⁴ Hummel also supported this concept of playing melodic passages *legato* and virtuosic sections more articulated. A pupil of Mozart, Hummel elaborated on the differences when performing an *Allegro* or an *Adagio*:

The *Allegro* requires spark, strength and decisiveness in execution, and if possible a part energetic, part pearly springiness in the fingers. [...] The *Adagio* generally requires singing, softness, tranquility, more neatness and a steady attitude. The expression stands somewhat in contrast to the *Allegro*; here the notes must be much more halted, carried, tied to one another and made singing through a fully calculated touch.²⁵

However, even during Mozart’s lifetime there are early indications of a new style of touch coming to the fore, Clementi being an early example. Czerny made an observation which suggests that Hummel’s playing had evolved since his studies with Mozart. He noted that to Hummel ‘all difficulties were calculated for the greatest and most stunning effect, which he achieved by combining Clementi’s manner of playing, so wisely gauged for the instrument, with that of Mozart’.²⁶ There was certainly a development towards the *legato* as the default type of touch, and even though there is no evidence that Hummel studied with Clementi, he was by no means resistant to the English style of playing, and his touch could therefore very well have evolved with the times.

Mozart met Clementi in a piano duel in 1781 and, following their encounter, Mozart warned his sister against Clementi’s works, as she would risk spoiling her ‘quiet, even touch and that her hand may lose its natural lightness’.²⁷ By 1803, Clementi advised in his tutor, *Introduction to the Art of Playing the Pianoforte*:

When the composer leaves the staccato and legato to performer’s taste the best rule

24. Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen* (Berlin: Christian Friedrich Henning, 1753), 118. Translated in Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, trans. William John Mitchell (London: W. W. Norton, 1949), 149. ‘Die Lebhaftigkeit des Allegro wird gemeiniglich in gestossenen Noten und das Zärtliche des Adagio in getragenen und geschleiften Noten vorgestellt.’ My italics.

25. Johann Nepomuk Hummel, *Ausführliche theoretisch-practische Anweisung zum Piano-Forte-Spiel*, 1st ed. (Vienna: Tobias Haslinger, 1828), 418. ‘Das *Allegro* fordert Glanz, Kraft, Entschiedenheit im Vortrag, und damit dies möglich werde, theils eine energische, theils eine perlende Schnellkraft in den Fingern. [...] Das *Adagio* fordert in der Regel Gesang, Zartheit, Ruhe, mehr Netigkeit und gleichmässige Haltung. Sein Vortrag steht daher einigermassen im Gegensatze mit dem *Allegro*; denn hier müssen die Töne vielmehr angehalten, getragen, aneinander gebunden und durch vollberechneten Druck singend gemacht werden’.

26. Carl Czerny, ‘Recollections from My Life’, trans. Ernest Sanders, *The Musical Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (1956): 309.

27. Emily Anderson, ed., *The Letters of Mozart & His Family*, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan, 1938), 850.

is to adhere chiefly to the legato, reserving the staccato to give spirit occasionally to certain passages, and to set off the higher beauty of the legato.²⁸

Clementi admitted to his student Ludwig Berger (1777–1839) in 1806 that his playing style had transformed over the years since meeting Mozart, and he attributed the adoption of a ‘more melodic and noble style of performance’ to the style of ‘famous singers’, as well as to the advances in English piano making: ‘the construction of which formerly stood in the way of a cantabile and legato style of playing’.²⁹

By the turn of the nineteenth century, *legato* as the standard type of touch seems to have become universally commonplace to pianists, even amongst those of the Viennese tradition. With a sensitivity to sound, Milchmeyer recommended that ‘all players of the pianoforte’ should ‘generally [...] choose the legato style, since knocking and hacking notes do not suit the instrument, but rather it must be caressed in a tender manner’.³⁰ Beethoven went as far as to propose a kind of *super-legato* in his annotated score of Cramer’s Etudes: ‘to obtain the necessary binding the finger must not be lifted off the first note of each group until the fourth note is to be struck’.³¹ While the acceptance of the *legato* among pianists of the Viennese tradition may seem unremarkable at first, it signifies the influence of the English pianists at a deeper level: the acceptance of the sustained singing style of playing as a new sound ideal.

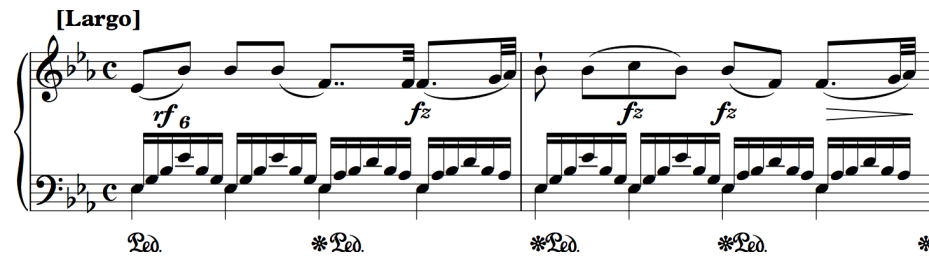
As Clementi noted, the ability to produce a singing tone was prompted by the continued development of the piano in some of the fields in which the English makers excelled. Indeed, the tone of the increasingly resonant instruments had a longer decay, which enabled players to render a more convincing *legato* in melodic passages. Together with the application of the continuous syncopated pedalling technique, this became the most significant differentiating factor between the English pianists and the most conservative ones of the Viennese tradition. One of the earliest instances of notated syncopated pedalling is found in Clementi’s Fantasia op. 48 from 1821:

28. Muzio Clementi, *Introduction to the Art of Playing the Pianoforte*, op. 42 (London: Clementi, Banger, Hyde, Collard & Davis, 1803), 14.

29. Gerig, *Famous Pianists*, 57.

30. Milchmeyer, *Die wahre Art*, 6; Translated in Rhein, ‘Milchmeyer’s “Die wahre Art”’, 18. ‘Alle Spieler des Pianoforte sollten überhaupt, um des Instruments willen, die gebundene Spielart wählen, die geklopfte und gleichsam gehackte Noten für dasselbe gar nicht passen; sondern man ihm vielmehr auf eine zarte Art schmeicheln muß’.

31. Johann Baptist Cramer, *Selection of Studies*, with Comments by Beethoven, ed. and trans. John South Shedlock (London: Augener, 1893), 3. ‘Um die erforderliche Bindung zu erzielen, hebt sich der Finger nicht eher von der ersten Note jeder Gruppe, bis die 4te Note anzuschlagen ist’. Skowronek elaborates on Beethoven’s use of the *super-legato*, and provides several examples of its application in Beethoven’s own works, cf. Tilman Skowronek, *Beethoven the Pianist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 205–208.

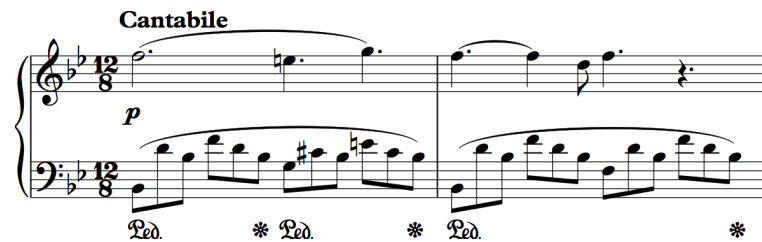


Example 1.1. Clementi: *Fantasia avec variations sur l'air 'Au clair de la lune'* op. 48, bars 17–18

Here, the pedal is applied for the sake of enriching the sonority, or as Rowland states:

[These bars] could easily be played legato this way, but the pedal adds a richness to the sound by sympathetic vibration of the other strings. It is clear evidence that Clementi was beginning to rely on the sustaining pedal for richer sonorities on the instrument.³²

In London's piano environment, Clementi was considered fairly conservative by this time, and while there are no earlier examples of notated syncopated pedalling, the application of this technique is implied in previously written works, notably in John Field's (1782–1837) famous Nocturne in B major H37, composed in 1814:



Example 1.2. Field: Nocturne in B major H37, bars 1–2

The application of syncopated pedalling in this piece not only serves the purpose of adding resonance to the notes of the right hand melodic line; the sonority of the left-hand harmonies produces sympathetic vibrations across the instrument, creating an illusion of the right-hand part being slightly amplified.³³

Despite having accepted some of the fundamental virtues of English pianism, many pianists in Austria and Germany remained ambivalent towards the pedal. Friedrich Kalkbrenner (1785–1849), who was born in Germany but spent much of his adult life in London and later in Paris,

32. David Rowland, *A History of Pianoforte Pedalling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 112.

33. Malcolm Bilson demonstrates that playing the left hand slightly stronger as one would normally do a modern piano has positive influence on the overall sonority, and leaves the impression of a more resonant, singing tone in the melody, cf. Malcolm Bilson, *Knowing the Score*, Cornell University 0801444845 (2005), DVD.

distinguished clearly between the two schools when describing their respective uses of the pedal in 1830:

The instruments of Vienna and London have produced two different schools. The pianists of Vienna are especially distinguished for the precision, clearness and rapidity of their execution; the instruments fabricated in that city are extremely easy to play, and, in order to avoid confusion of sound, they are made with mufflers [dampers] up to the last high note; from this results a great dryness in sostenuto passages, as one sound does not flow into another. In Germany the use of the pedals is scarcely known. English pianos possess rounder sounds and a somewhat heavier touch; they have caused the professors of that country to adopt a grander style, and that beautiful manner of singing which distinguishes them; to succeed in this, the use of the loud pedal is indispensable, in order to conceal the dryness inherent to the pianoforte.³⁴

The ‘pianists of Vienna’, to which Kalkbrenner was referring, were most likely notable figures such as Hummel, Czerny and Moscheles. They all applied the pedal cautiously, but relied on a meticulous finger-legato instead.³⁵ This also showed in their piano works: whereas Kalkbrenner’s Piano Concerto no. 1 in D minor op. 61 (1823) contains several instances of notated syncopated pedal, Hummel’s Piano Concerto no. 5 in A^b major op. 113 composed six years later, does not contain a single pedal marking whatsoever.³⁶ It was, however, this group of Viennese composers who came to represent the earliest exponents of an emerging style of piano virtuosity: the postclassical style.

The postclassical style was primarily a pianistic phenomenon which found its principal stage in the high-society salon and became hugely influential on Schumann’s early pianism. As to its musical properties, Jim Samson defines them concisely:

This was music designed to be popular, and happy to accept its commodity status. Its basic ingredients were a bravura right-hand figuration that took its impetus from the light-actioned Viennese and German pianos of the late eighteenth century and a melodic idiom, associated in its early stages with English and French instruments, that was rooted either in Italian opera, in folk music, or in popular genres such as

34. Friedrich Kalkbrenner, *Method of Learning the Pianoforte*, op. 108, trans. S. Novello (London, [1862]), 10.

35. Rowland, *A History of Pianoforte Pedalling*, 118–119. Moscheles moved to London in 1822, but as Rowland notes, it took him several years to adjust to the prevailing pedalling techniques of that city.

36. Friedrich Kalkbrenner, *Piano Concerto in D minor*, op. 61, 1st ed. (London: [n. pub.], 1823); Johann Nepomuk Hummel, *Grand Concerto for the Piano Forte with Orchestral Accompaniments*, op. 113, 1st ed. (London: J. B. Cramer, Addison & Beale, 1830).

marches (including funeral marches), dance pieces, pastorals, or barcarolles.³⁷

Despite its importance to the Romantic pianistic idiom, its aesthetic was rooted in the eighteenth-century idea that music should always remain beautiful and pleasing, or as Alexander Stefaniak defined the postclassical composers' criteria for excellence: 'accessibility, elegance, pleasing-ness, structural and textural clarity, and use-value'.³⁸ In other words, the purpose of postclassical music was first of all to entertain. In doing so, Stefaniak observes, it shied away from the learnedness of the Viennese Classic composers such as Mozart and Haydn, and it had therefore more in common with 'early nineteenth-century Italian opera and popular dance music'.³⁹ To meet the demands for accessibility, composers of this style sought to build upon the familiarity of popular tunes or opera arias, producing countless variation sets and fantasias with a high degree of formal and stylistic conformity, which kept the melody of the theme recognisable throughout each variation.

Postclassical pianism sprang out of Vienna only in part because of the nature of the instruments, which allowed for elegance of tone and speed of execution. Following an economic downturn, the socio-economic structures of the city changed dramatically, and saw the rise of a new middle-class at the expense of the aristocracy which had previously supported composers including Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven.⁴⁰ Despite his reputation as avant-garde, Beethoven was regarded as a 'source of local pride' by the middle class, as Stefaniak describes it, but when it came to music performances they preferred more easily accessible music. Thus, this environment offered a platform for the postclassical pianists, whose compositional style offered entertainment value comparable to that of the popular Italian operas or, later, the waltzes by Johann Strauss I (1804–1849) or Joseph Lanner (1801–1843).

During the first decades of the nineteenth century, Paris assumed to an increasing degree the role as the centre of innovation in piano playing and making, and even more than Vienna it became the hub of postclassical pianism. The piano had been adopted early on in Paris; it was first referred to in an advertisement from 1759, and by 1768 it appeared on the concert stage, only a year after the earliest documented piano performance in London.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the harpsichord continued to maintain a strong position in Parisian concert life, and in its earliest years the piano primarily found its way to the French markets as a domestic instrument; this happened first through the import of square pianos from England during the 1770s and 1780s,

37. Jim Samson, *Virtuosity and the Musical Work: the Transcendental Studies of Liszt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 19.

38. Alexander Stefaniak, "Poetic Virtuosity": Robert Schumann as a Critic and Composer of Virtuoso Instrumental Music' (PhD, Eastman School of Music, 2012), 38.

39. *Ibid.*, 37.

40. *Ibid.*, 40.

41. David Rowland, 'The Piano to c. 1770', in Rowland, *The Cambridge Companion to the Piano*, 19, 21.

and later by the production of pianos by local makers, notably Sébastien Erard (1752–1831).⁴² With the development of a French piano-making tradition, the piano eventually became the preferred keyboard instrument: pianos were used instead of the harpsichord at the Concert Spirituel from 1780 onwards, and by 1798 the Paris Conservatory stopped awarding prizes in harpsichord altogether.⁴³

The emergence of Paris as a centre of instrumental virtuosity can be attributed partly to the presence of the aristocratic classes. As Stefaniak describes, the city ‘boasted a vibrant community of aristocrats who displayed their wealth, refinement, and prestige by organizing soirées and benefit concerts at which virtuoso instrumentalists assumed a prominent role’.⁴⁴ Whilst the majority of concertgoers as well as customers of the music publishers were upper middle-class, the virtuoso music of Paris nevertheless conveyed an aura of the luxurious salons of the high society. This resulted in a highly lucrative Parisian market in music publishing and, because there were no international copyright laws at the time, composers were required to have their music published in the city to secure local copyrights.⁴⁵ However, there were no royalties, which meant that in order to succeed, composers were required to write prolifically in a style which could easily entertain their audiences. This included the use of a simple musical language, short compositions, the achievement of the most dazzling effect with the least possible difficulty of execution, and finally the integration of themes from popular tunes of the time. These were defining qualities of the postclassical style, and composer-pianists who were comfortable working on the terms of the Parisian market could make a good career.

The association with the Parisian life style aided the popularity of postclassical virtuoso music outside of France. In the German-speaking parts of Europe, the middle class sought to imitate what was perceived as being related to the refined tastes of the Parisian high society, including the bravura music which came out of the publishing houses of Paris. It was probably the combination of these factors which attracted a number of progressive-minded pianists, many from German-speaking Europe. These included some of the most celebrated virtuosos, piano pedagogues and piano composers of the day: Kalkbrenner studied at the Paris Conservatoire between 1798 and 1801, and eventually settled in the city in 1824; the world’s best-selling composer during the 1830s, Henri Herz (1803–1888), settled in Paris in 1816; Franz Hünten (1793–1878) came in 1819, and during the 1820s and 1830s Johann Peter Pixis (1788–1874), Franz Liszt (1811–1883), Sigismond Thalberg (1812–1871), Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849) and

42. Rowland, ‘The Piano to c. 1770’, 20.

43. Rowland, ‘The Piano to c. 1770’, 21; Edwin Marshall Good, *Giraffes, Black Dragons and Other Pianos: A Technological History from Cristofori to the Modern Concert Grand*, 2nd edition (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 90.

44. Stefaniak, ‘Poetic Virtuosity’, 41.

45. Ibid.

César Franck (1822–1890) all lived in Paris for longer or shorter periods of time. Some of these figures—Kalkbrenner, Herz and Chopin in particular—were hugely influential on Schumann during the period of interest to this study.

Thus, the French pianistic style emerged as the amalgamation of an internationalised environment of piano virtuosos with instruments from the Parisian piano workshops, which had traditionally leaned towards the English piano-making tradition. As Friedrich Wieck observed, this school of playing merged the singing tone of the English tradition with the lightness of Viennese pianism, creating a more virtuosic style of playing, which he characterised as ‘piquant’ and ‘frivolous’.⁴⁶



Schumann grew up in a time of transition, where the previously established musical landscape changed dramatically. The international availability of printed music and the visits of touring virtuosos ensured an exchange of ideas across national borders and cultural divides. This meant that the distinctions between the traditional schools of piano playing were becoming less clearly defined, and the musical ideological debates found new battlegrounds, such as the differences between the old and the new, the serious music of the Classics versus the recreational and entertaining music of the postclassical virtuosos, or the differences between musical life in provincial towns and in metropolises. Erard and other French piano makers were making some of the most important innovations in piano history, whilst some German and Scandinavian makers were still producing clavichords. Leading virtuosos of the late 18th century, including Clementi and Hummel, were still active and highly respected pianists, though Liszt had already completed his first concert tours; and while Schubert was still alive, composing his last piano sonatas, Paganini had already established his reputation in Vienna. In other words, Schumann grew up in the middle of a time of wide musical, cultural and aesthetic debate. However, one thing had not changed since the mid-eighteenth century: sonority and instrument timbre continued to represent a fundamentally important differentiator between the different piano traditions and ideological viewpoints.

Schumann's Zwickau Years, 1810–1828: A Biographical Overview

Considering the importance of his position in the German music environment during his adult life, the history of Schumann's musical upbringing seems almost unlikely. During the 1830s and 1840s, he became an authority within the German music establishment as a critic, composer and

46. Cathleen Köckritz, *Friedrich Wieck: Studien zur Biographie und zur Klavierpädagogik* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2007), 473.

music director. In these roles, he had a good sense of the latest developments in musical Europe, honoured the music of the great masters of previous generations, including Bach, Beethoven and Schubert, and took a critical stance towards the aesthetics of postclassical virtuosos. However, his early life in Zwickau could not have been further from the fast-developing pianistic trends dominant across Europe: the amount of formal training which he received was negligible, some of the most popular works and composers at the time were completely unfamiliar to him, and virtually all of the music making which he enjoyed happened within the circles of the local amateur music scene. Not only does the early biography of Schumann portray an unusual upbringing for such a prominent musician compared to contemporary virtuosos such as Liszt, Mendelssohn and Clara Wieck, it also provides the key to understanding the significance of his move to Leipzig, and, not least, his acquaintance with Friedrich Wieck.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, although Schumann lived far from the circles of professional musicians, he grew up in a household in which both music and literature were important. Schumann's father, Friedrich August, was a book publisher, retailer and occasional editor, and his mother, Johanne Christiane, was similarly interested in poetry. Both parents sang, and two of Schumann's brothers, Julius and Eduard, received piano lessons. When the young Robert showed signs of musicality as a gifted boy soprano, it was natural for his mother to suggest piano lessons for him as well.⁴⁸ Consequently, in 1817—when Schumann was seven years old—he began lessons with the local organist at the Marienkirche, Johann Gottfried Kuntsch (1757–1855).⁴⁹

At this time, the population of Zwickau was no more than a few thousand inhabitants, and the opportunities for musical education and development were consequently very limited. Appointed as organist at the largest church of the town, Kuntsch was probably the most competent musician in the area and therefore the best option as a piano teacher for Schumann. As Eric Frederick Jensen notes, there is nothing to suggest that Kuntsch himself 'received any musical

47. Liszt, Mendelssohn and Clara Wieck began piano studies with established teachers before the age of ten: Liszt studied with Czerny (1791–1857) as a seven-year-old, Mendelssohn was introduced to Marie Bigot (1786–1820) at the age of seven and, as will be discussed later, Clara Wieck, was a student of her father, Friedrich Wieck from her early years, cf. Alan Walker, 'Liszt, Franz', in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed 1 April 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/48265pg1>; R. Larry Todd, 'Mendelssohn, Felix', in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed 1 April 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51795pg1>; Nancy B. Reich, 'Schumann, Clara', in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed 1 April 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/25152>.

48. While biographers at large have been quite harsh on Schumann's mother, Christiane, for her reluctance to support his musical studies, Eric Frederick Jensen notes that she 'took understandable pride in the fact that she was the first to suggest music lessons for Robert.' cf. Eric Frederick Jensen, *Schumann* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 6–7.

49. Georg Eismann, ed., *Briefe, Aufzeichnungen, Dokumente, mit zahlreichen Erstveröffentlichungen*, vol. 1 of *Robert Schumann: ein Quellenwerk über sein Leben und Schaffen* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1956), 12 (hereafter cited as Quellen).

training in depth', to the extent that he was more or less 'self-taught'.⁵⁰ However, Schumann thought of him as a 'loving, good man', and although he found Kuntsch to be no more than a 'mediocre' player himself, the relationship between teacher and pupil remained caring and warm.⁵¹

Aside from Schumann's own very generalised remarks on Kuntsch, there are practically no surviving records of the actual piano lessons. According to Frederick Niecks, the lessons may have 'consisted in little more than [Kuntsch] telling the pupil what to practise and the first elementary rules of fingering', a kind of 'happy-go-lucky' method 'without purposeful system'.⁵² Fellow student Friedrich August Piltzing studied with Kuntsch from 1821 onwards, and went to his house for lessons together with Schumann. Piltzing supported Niecks' claim by describing Kuntsch's advice as rather rudimentary: 'he let us play the pieces, and told us then about fingerings and performance rules'.⁵³ While Schumann had fond memories of Kuntsch's personality, according to Piltzing, his pedagogical methods were less loving, as the two students could never feel safe from having their cheeks slapped upon playing for him.⁵⁴ Occasionally, Schumann and Piltzing would play chorales on a small organ at Kuntsch's house, and were asked to improvise their own interludes. Schumann was rarely successful at this, and it was little help that Kuntsch did not teach harmony. Overall, Schumann felt a 'complete lack of guidance' during these years, particularly when it came to piano technique, but also in relation to auditory skills and theoretical knowledge.⁵⁵

Nevertheless, Schumann's commitment to music was passionate, and he felt a 'pathological longing for music and piano playing' if he had been away from the instrument for too long. While it is unclear how much and in which way he practised the piano, Schumann spent 'many hours daily' improvising with a 'fiery expression', and felt quite confident at his own ability in this discipline.⁵⁶ This was recognised by Piltzing, who found him to be a gifted improviser

50. Jensen, *Schumann*, 6.

51. Quellen, 12. 'Erster u. einziger Lehrer in Zwickau: Baccalaureus Kuntsch – ein guter, mich liebender Lehrer, der selbst nur mittelmäßig spielte'. From Schumann's *selbstbiographischen Aufzeichnungen*.

52. Frederick Niecks, *Robert Schumann* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1925), 31.

53. Joseph Wilhelm von Wasielewski, *Schumanniana* (Bonn: Emil Strauß, 1883), 74. 'Unser Unterricht bei Herrn Kuntsch bestand darin: er ließ uns Stücke spielen und gab dabei Applicatur und Vortragsregeln, wobei wir jedoch für eine sogenannte Dachtel nie ganz sicher waren.'

54. Specifically, Piltzing recalled that Schumann had difficulties keeping the time during the opening sextuplets of the overture to Giacomo Meyerbeer's (1791–1864) opera *Emma di Resburgo* (1819), and as a response, Kuntsch slapped Schumann with a 'heavy' Ziegenhainer-Stock—a walking stick made out of Cornelian cherry wood, cf. *ibid.*, 74–75. 'Den Takt hat er sogar Schumann einmal mit einem schweren Ziegenhainer-Stocke eingepöckelt, und was es in der Ouvertüre zu Emma von Resburg von Meyerbeer, wo Schumann in der Einleitung bei den Sextolen nicht in Takt kommen konnte.'

55. Quellen, 18. 'Gänzliche Mangel einer Leitung fühlbar: Gehör, Technik insbesondere, Theorie'.

56. Quellen, 18. 'Fertigkeit im prima vista Spiel, schon als Knabe, freilich ohne technische Vollkommenheit [...] Freies Phantasieren [täglich viele Stunden] [...] Krankhafte Sehnsucht nach Musik u. Clavierspiel, wenn ich lange nicht gespielt [...] Hinreißendes Feuer meines Vortrags'.

during these years, and Schumann's later pupil and first biographer Wasielewski noted that he entertained his friends by portraying their personal characters through music.⁵⁷ Schumann also thought of himself as a capable sight-reader—a skill which was also recognised by Piltzing.⁵⁸ Piltzing noted that if Schumann while playing by sight reached an overly difficult passage, he was able to quickly amend the pianistic texture without stalling.⁵⁹ Whether or not he engaged in more systematic practice, Schumann's efforts must have paid off, as he was recognised for his piano playing by his acquaintances.⁶⁰

Schumann probably established his reputation as a pianist on the local concert stage. Kuntsch was a driving force in Zwickau's musical life, occasionally organising concerts at the Marienkirche, in which Schumann began appearing from 1821 onwards, where he accompanied at the piano in a performance of Friedrich Schneider's (1786–1853) newly composed oratorio *Weltgericht* ('The Last Judgment') op. 46.⁶¹ In the same year, Schumann also began appearing in Kuntsch's *musical-declamatory soirées* ('Musikalisch-deklamatorischen Abendunterhaltungen') at the Lyceum, where Schumann had enrolled in 1820. These events were arranged on a more regular basis, and surviving programmes testify that these long evenings featured recitations, concertos, arias, as well as orchestral and chamber music, and Schumann appeared both as musician and reader.⁶² In 1821, he played a set of variations by Ignaz Pleyel (1757–1831) for four-hand piano with his schoolmate Geyer.⁶³ In the following years he performed solo works, many by composers of the early postclassical tradition, including works by Leutsch [?] (Variations on 'Liebes Mädchen, hör mir zu'), Johann Baptist Cramer (1771–1858; Variations on 'sur le Songe de Rousseau'), Hieronymus Payer (1787–1845; Variations on a Polonaise by Keller) and Moscheles ('Variations for piano trio' [?]), as well as Ferdinand Ries' *Introduction et variations sur l'air favori "Bekränzt mit Laub"* op. 75 and the *Fantasie* op. 92 no. 2 and Carl Maria von Weber's (1786–1826) *Aufforderung zum Tanz*.⁶⁴ Considering Schumann's youth these were demanding pieces, which gave him a good opportunity to showcase

57. Joseph Wilhelm von Wasielewski, *Robert Schumann: Eine Biographie* (Dresden: Rudolf Kunze, 1858), 13; Wasielewski, *Schumanniana*, 74.

58. Quellen, 18; Claudia Macdonald, 'Schumann's Earliest Compositions and Performances', *Journal of Musicological Research* 7, no. 2 (1987): 260. Schumann's own recollections on his sight-reading skills: 'Große Fertigkeit im prima vista Spiel, schon als Knabe, freilich ohne technische Vollkommenheit'.

59. Wasielewski, *Schumanniana*, 73.

60. Schumann's friend, Emil Fleschig (1808–1867), remembered the thirteen-year-old Robert as an 'accomplished pianist: 'Den Knaben Robert fand ich seinem 13. Jahre bereits als einen fertigen Klavierspieler vor', cf. Quellen, 15.

61. Wasielewski, *Robert Schumann*, 16.

62. Quellen, 20.

63. Bodo Bischoff, *Monument für Beethoven: Die Entwicklung der Beethoven-Rezeption Robert Schumanns* (Cologne: Dohr, 1994), 33.

64. Quellen, 21. There is no information as to whom Leutsch could have been. Various spellings of the name occur in different places: Eismann spells the name 'Leutsch', while Bischoff uses the spelling 'Leuttsch', cf. Bischoff, *Monument für Beethoven*, 33.

his nascent virtuosity.

Schumann's repertoire from these early years leaves an impression of a gifted and musically adventurous personality, who played any music he could get hold of but was somewhat out of touch with the developments and trends of the music world at large. At a time when approximately three-quarters of all programmed music at the Gewandhaus subscription concerts in the regional metropolis of Leipzig was written by living composers, the presence of composers from previous times on Schumann's list of favourite composers was remarkable: aside from Haydn, Mozart and Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia (1772–1806), the only living composers which he mentioned were Ferdinand Ries (1784–1838) and Ignaz Moscheles (1794–1870).⁶⁵ Of contemporary masters, the only works he knew by Beethoven were the string quartets, and he only heard about Schubert during his 'eighteenth year'.⁶⁶ In addition, Schumann never encountered or heard any famous performers during his youth, the closest being when he coincidentally sat in front of Moscheles at a concert in Karlsbad at the age of seven.⁶⁷ This leaves the impression that Schumann's lack of interest in the masters of his own time was not based on choice; the news of them may only have reached him sporadically during his Zwickau years.

This notion is supported by surviving programmes of informal orchestral concerts which Schumann organised at his house, the first being when he found the printed score for the overture to Vincenzo Righini's (1756–1812) opera *Tigrane* (1795) in his father's shop. Schumann gathered a small orchestra of friends, with two violins, two flutes, one clarinet and two horns.⁶⁸ Standing by the piano, Schumann conducted the band and filled in the remaining parts on the keyboard, most importantly the bass line.⁶⁹ Although the sole member of the audience was Schumann's father, the success of this first arrangement was followed up by a number of similar orchestral performances, now also featuring choral and chamber music numbers.⁷⁰ Two of these programmes survive, and give a broader insight into the scope of Schumann's musical world of the early 1820s. The first concert took place in the Schumann family's home at Amtsgasse on 7 December 1823 under the direction of Schumann and his friend Carl Praetorius, with the

65. William Weber, *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste: Concert Programming from Haydn to Brahms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 171. While there was a general tendency from the late eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century to include fewer living composers in the programming, Weber records only few dead composers in the concert programmes of the Leipzig Gewandhaus during the 1820s: 26% in 1820 and 23% in 1825.

66. Quellen, 17–18. Schumann sketches his early musical activities in his *selbstbiographischen Aufzeichnungen*. Wasielewski notes that Schumann played four-hand symphonies with Piltzing by Mozart, and later by Beethoven. This may be contradictory to Schumann's own statement that he knew so little of Beethoven during his youth, cf. Wasielewski, *Robert Schumann*, 16–17.

67. Quellen, 13. Now Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic. Seeing Moscheles made such an impression on Schumann that he kept the concert programme that the master had touched for the rest of his life. cf. Wasielewski, *Robert Schumann*, 15.

68. Wasielewski, *Schumanniana*, 73.

69. Ibid.

70. Wasielewski, *Robert Schumann*, 18.

following running order:⁷¹

- Ernst Eichner (1740–1777): *Sinfonie* (directed by Schumann)
- Joseph Haydn: Chorus and Fugue ‘Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes und seiner Hände’ from *Die Schöpfung* (directed by Praetorius)
- Carl Maria von Weber: Variations on a theme from *Silvana* for Clarinet and Piano op. 33 (Piltzing, clarinet; Schumann, piano)
- Conradin Kreutzer (1780–1849): Terzet from *Liedern des Frühlings*
- Ludwig Böhner (1787–1860): Piano Concerto op. 7
- Weber: Chorus ‘Die Sonn’ erwacht!’ from *Preciosa*⁷²
- Johann Wilhelm Wilms (1772–1847): Variations for Flute and Piano (Hoffmann[?], flute)
- Heinrich Leberecht Mühling (1786–1847): *Terzet*
- Jan Ladislav Dussek (1738–1818): Sonata for Piano and Violin (Praetorius, violin; Schumann, piano)
- Pierre Antoine Della-Maria (1769–1800): *Overture*

The following year, Schumann elaborated on this programme by publicly advertising a house concert with an admission fee and printed programmes, possibly to celebrate August Schumann’s recent acquisition of a Streicher grand piano for his son.⁷³ This time he was the sole conductor in the programme, and the band performed a few numbers which they had already played in the previous concert, including the Eichner *Sinfonie*, Weber’s chorus from *Preciosa* and *Variations* for clarinet and piano, as well as the *Overture* by Della-Maria. Other works in the programme were:⁷⁴

- Georg Christoph Grossheim (1764–1841): *Overture*⁷⁵

71. F. Gustav Jansen, ‘Aus Robert Schumanns Schulzeit’, *Die Musik* 5 (1905): 86–87; Claudia Macdonald, *Robert Schumann and the Piano Concerto* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 4.

72. Jansen erroneously titles the chorus ‘Die Sommernacht’. The correct title is supplied by Macdonald, cf. Jansen, ‘Schumanns Schulzeit’, 87; Macdonald, *Piano Concerto*, 4.

73. Thomas Synofzik, ‘...den ich nicht hätte herausgegeben sollen...’, in *Zwischen Poesie und Musik: Robert Schumann früh und spät*, ed. Ingrid Bodsch and Gerd Nauhaus (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld, 2006), 53. Macdonald suggests that the arrival of the Streicher grand piano may have been the occasion for this public event. The programme does not appear to feature the piano more nor less than the previous concert had, and there is no mention of a new piano in the printed programme. Schumann appears to have put together ensembles rather frequently, and the public announcement of the second concert may just have been a sign of confidence from Schumann’s side, cf. Macdonald, *Piano Concerto*, 4.

74. Quellen, 17. There is no composer associated the variations for clarinet and piano, but Piltzing and Schumann had played Weber’s *Variations* op. 33 in the previous programme, so it is likely that they repeated that number in the second concert. Although the year was missing in the printed programme, Schumann added it by hand later. Daverio erroneously estimates the year of this concert to be 1827, cf. John Daverio, *Robert Schumann: Herald of a New Poetic Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 29.

75. In 1822, Schumann made a piano reduction (RSW:Anh:O4) of Grossheim’s overture to *Titania, oder Liebe*

- *Andante* for two glasschords, flute, oboe and clarinet (composer unknown)⁷⁶
- W. A. Mozart: Aria from *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*
- Pierre Lecourt (b. 1755): Piano Concerto op. 1⁷⁷
- François-Adrien Boieldieu (1775–1834): Chorus from *Jean de Paris*

In the piano concertos, Schumann is not explicitly named as soloist, but there is good reason to assume that he played the solo part in both works: for the Böhrner concerto, he mentioned his own efforts as ‘tolerable’ in his running commentary to the first programme, and whilst Schumann left no commentary to the second programme, no players other than Schumann is credited as soloist, making it is almost certain that he played the Lecourt concerto as well.⁷⁸ Thus, these concerts must have been a good opportunity for him to get to play his own piano repertoire in front of an audience, however small.

It was not, however, the piano concertos which fascinated him the most; Weber’s Variations for clarinet and piano received more attention from Schumann. In his own opinion (‘without boasting’) he performed the piece ‘with seeming ease and skill’, although Piltzing played with ‘even more smoothness’.⁷⁹ Macdonald suggests that Schumann’s commitment to the Weber Variations over the piano concertos was due to the fact that it was ‘truly a display piece’.⁸⁰ Indeed, the *Variations* are far more expansive in scope and theatrical in their display than the two classically orientated piano concertos. Firstly, the rhapsodic nature of the third variation (‘Molto adagio, quasi fantasia’) and lead-in to the seventh variation (‘quasi Recit.’) betoken a more poetic-declamatory style of writing present in Schumann’s earliest works (particularly the

durch Zauberei (around 1792). While it would be bold to assume that this particular overture was performed in the concert, based on an earlier arrangement alone, it can, on the other hand, certainly not be ruled out that the piece in question was the *Titania* overture.

76. The glasschord is a keyboard instrument, invented by the Parisian instrument maker Beyer in 1785. It was originally named *fortepiano à cordes de verre*, and was probably given its current name by Benjamin Franklin. The instrument usually had a three-octave range and no dampers. It resembles the celesta (invented much later, in 1886), the difference being that in the celesta the sound is created by hammer striking metal plates; in the glasschord these plates are made of glass and the hammers are covered by cloth. Further to this, the name ‘glasschord’ has also been applied to the glass harmonica (also known as musical glasses), cf. Howard Schott, ‘Glasschord’, in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed 1 April 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/51553>; Alec Hyatt King, ‘Musical Glasses’, in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed 1 April 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/19422>.

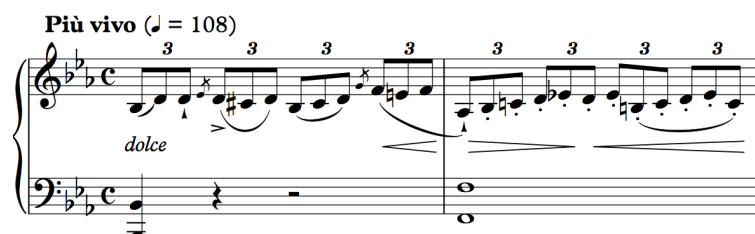
77. Schumann appears to have misspelled the name ‘Lecour’. Macdonald suggests that he must have referred to Pierre Lecourt, cf. Macdonald, *Piano Concerto*, 5.

78. Robert Schumann, ‘Blätter und Blümchen aus der goldenen Aue’, *Zusammengesucht und in einen Strauß verbunden von Robert Schumann* (Archiv des Robert-Schumann-Hauses Zwickau, D-Zsch 4871 I, 1 A3, 1823), 103–106. ‘Leidlich!’

79. Ibid., ‘Fast möchte ich sagen, hatte ich wie jener heute unsern beau jour, denn, um mich nicht eigen zu loben, ich spielte mit ziemlicher Leichtigkeit und Fertigkeit und ich möchte fast sagen mit noch mehr Gelindheit spielte P[iltzing] diese Variationen.’

80. Macdonald, *Piano Concerto*, 5.

Abegg Variations). Secondly, the instrumental writing in the Variations contains some challenges for the players in terms of technique and ensemble playing, for instance in the first variation, where the ‘ease and skill’ which Schumann refers to is essential:



Example 1.3. Weber: Variations on a theme from *Silvana* for Clarinet and Piano op. 33, Variation 1, bars 1–2 (piano part)

Further to this, the piano has two solo variations (Variation 2 ‘con grazia’ and Variation 4 ‘Animato e con fuoco’). The fourth variation, especially, sets the pianist to task, where the left-hand slurs in the 2nd bar are particularly fiendish, and are followed by diatonic thirds in the right hand, awkwardly marked *legato*:



Example 1.4. Weber: Variations on a theme from *Silvana* for Clarinet and Piano op. 33, Variation 4, bars 1–2 (piano part)

Overall, it is striking the degree to which the two concert programmes emphasise music by composers firmly rooted in the eighteenth century. Almost a quarter into the nineteenth century, the only works of the programme that were demonstrably composed in Schumann’s own lifetime were the Variations for clarinet and piano by Weber (1811), Böhner’s Piano Concerto (c. 1811–1814), the choruses from *Jean de Paris* (1812) and Weber’s *Preciosa* (1821). A majority of works were written before 1800, including the orchestral numbers by Eichner and Della-Maria, Haydn’s *Die Schöpfung* (1796–1798), and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1781–1782) by Mozart, as well as the Lecourt Piano Concerto (1786). Thus, many of the remaining works came from an age which predated the new masters, and were written in a musical style far behind the contemporary musical developments.

With Schumann’s ability to fill in missing parts in the orchestra score in mind, it is unlikely

that he would have selected older works just to accommodate the limitations of his ensemble in terms of instrumentation. However, it could certainly have been a hindrance that he lived in small-town Saxony; although August Schumann, a bookseller, frequently supplied Schumann with new piano music, orchestral scores with their instrumental parts might have been harder to obtain.⁸¹ The running order of the programmes somewhat resembled the ‘Sequence of Genres’ at the subscription concerts at the Leipzig Gewandhaus, and that aspect of Schumann’s programming thus superficially seems to follow the fashions of the day.⁸² One major difference, however, was that in Leipzig the music presented was fairly up-to-date, whilst the selection of old repertoire in Schumann’s programming was almost certainly a necessity rather than a deliberate expression of musical taste.⁸³ Schumann’s gradual discovery of the virtuosos and masters of his own time must have been a nothing less than a revelation to him—a fascination which in part caused the termination of his studies with Kuntsch.

It was around this time that Schumann became familiar with some of the more fashionable bravura piano music of the day. Piltzing remembers of two works of this kind, written by leading proponents of the Viennese and Parisian postclassicism respectively: Moscheles’ *Alexander Variations* op. 32 (1815/1822), and the *Variations de Bravoure sur la Romance de Joseph* op. 20 (c. 1818–1825) by Henri Herz.⁸⁴ It was the performance of these works which brought Schumann’s studies with Kuntsch to an end. He had, according to Piltzing, prepared them without the help of his teacher for a concert at the Lyceum.⁸⁵ Having heard the performance, Kuntsch was enraged and exclaimed that ‘Robert could now take care of his own education’.⁸⁶ Whether it was Schumann’s chutzpah or his choice of repertoire which provoked Kuntsch, the sheer fact that Schumann was able to bring his repertoire to performance standard without Kuntsch’s help suggests that the instructions he was able to provide were eclipsed by Schumann’s developing pianistic capabilities.⁸⁷

81. Wasielewski, *Robert Schumann*, 17.

82. The sequence of musical genres was written into the founding document of the Leipzig Gewandhaus—a format that the *Abonnement-Concerte* adhered to until the 1830s: overture or symphony—opera number—concerto—opera ensemble number—interval—overture or symphony—opera number—opera chorus—symphony or instrumental piece, cf. Weber, *The Great Transformation*, 43.

83. Ibid.

84. Wasielewski, *Schumanniana*, 75. Piltzing and Wasielewski refers to Herz’s op. 20 as ‘Variationen über “Ich was Jüngling noch an Jahren”’, pointing towards the title of the aria that set the theme of the work. The score leaves no information of a composition year, but the publications of other works by Herz suggest that op. 20 could not have appeared any earlier than 1818, cf. Henri Herz, *Fantasie et rondo pour le piano-forte sur la cavatine ‘Cara deh attendimi’ de l’opéra ‘Zelmire de Rossini’*, op. 12, 1st ed. (Leipzig: Fr. Hofmeister, n.d. [1818]); Henri Herz’s op. 12 was published around 1818, and his op. 31 appeared as early as 1825, so it is safe to assume that this variation set was rather up-to-the-minute when Schumann played it, cf. Henri Herz, *Saxon Air with Introduction & Variations for the Piano Forte*, op. 31, 1st ed. (London: J. B. Cramer, Addison & Beale, 1825).

85. Wasielewski, *Schumanniana*, 75.

86. Wasielewski, *Schumanniana*, 75; Wasielewski, *Robert Schumann*, 19–20.

87. Despite the confrontation, Schumann and Kuntsch must have reconciled, since Schumann continued to per-

August Schumann remained enthusiastic about his son's piano playing, and recognised the need for a more proficient instructor. Looking beyond of the constraints of Zwickau's musical life, he contacted no less than Weber himself, requesting him to teach Robert.⁸⁸ The negotiations with Weber were extensive and were still not settled by Weber's departure to England in February 1826—the journey on which he died in June the same year.⁸⁹ August Schumann, too, died during this summer, putting Schumann's quest for a new teacher on hold for the remainder of his time in Zwickau. The result was that Schumann was self-taught as pianist from the early 1820s until the summer of 1828.

On his own, Schumann found an environment for pianistic development and musical learning amongst the amateur musicians of the town. Thus, he became a regular guest at the families of Johann Georg Schlegel (n.d.) and Karl Erdmann Carus (1775–1842) while in his early teens.⁹⁰ These were cultivated homes which welcomed the artistically minded, providing a setting in which amateur musicians could gather for chamber music sessions.⁹¹ They had access to music which was new to Schumann: at these gatherings he was first introduced to original scores of string quartets by Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven, and not just the piano arrangements which he had been used to.⁹² The backbone of these sessions was a string quartet consisting of violinists K. E. Carus and Karl Gottlob Meissner (n.d.) alternating between first and second parts, viola player Karl Christian Heinrich Siebeck (1784–1846), and a 'Herr Schröder' on the cello.⁹³ To this end, Schlegel would join this group in piano quartets and quintets. In that pro-

form at the Lyceum concerts. Also, the two stayed in touch throughout their lives: for the 1847 Robert Schumann Festival in Zwickau, Kuntsch played a part in organising the event, and Schumann wrote 'a charming note' to Kuntsch on the fiftieth anniversary of Kuntsch's installation as a teacher. Further to this, Schumann also dedicated his *Studien für den Pedal-Flügel* op. 56 to his former teacher, cf. John Worthen, *Robert Schumann: Life and Death of a Musician* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2007), 407 n. 25.

88. Later in life, Schumann noted: 'Tägliches Vorspielen nach Tisch der Vater', cf. Quellen, 18. On Schumann's prospects of studying with Weber, cf. Schumann's own account from 1840, and testimony from his friend, Emil Fleschig in Quellen, 15–16.

89. Michael C. Tusa, 'Carl Maria von Weber', in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed 1 April 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40313pg9>; . A letter from Schumann to Hummel of 20 August 1831 describes the events around the negotiations with between August Schumann and Weber, cf. F. Gustav Jansen, ed., *Robert Schumanns Briefe: Neue Folge*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1904), 31.

90. Johann Georg Friedrich Wilhelm von Schlegel was postmaster in Zwickau between 1812 and 1840, living with his wife Caroline Auguste and their two daughters Johanna Henriette Auguste and Caroline Friederike. Karl Erdmann Carus was a merchant, and the brother of Dr Ernst August (1797–1854). Dr August and his wife Agnes (1802–1839) in particular would become important figures in Schumann's life. For further biographical information, cf. Robert Schumann, *1827–1838*, vol. 1 of *Tagebücher*, ed. Georg Eismann (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1971), 488–489, 527 (hereafter cited as TB1).

91. Schumann noted that frequent visitors to Carus' house included 'musicians, actors, recitors, singers etc.', cf. Eva Weissweiler and Susanna Ludwig, eds., vol. 2 of *Briefwechsel* (Basel: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1984), 27.

92. Worthen, *Robert Schumann*, 6; Schumann and Schumann, *Briefwechsel*, 27.

93. The roster of the chamber groups were published in Jansen, 'Schumanns Schulzeit', 85–86. Jansen suggests that Schröder may have been a military musician.

vincial setting, this circle became an important influence on the adolescent Schumann: besides being music director in Zwickau and registrar at the local court, Meissner occasionally also played the viola at the chamber music sessions and gave Schumann flute and cello lessons.⁹⁴ Siebeck was cantor at the Marienkirche between 1818 and 1833, and Schumann may have sung under his direction in the Lyceum choir.⁹⁵ The hosts of the musical gatherings were also highly esteemed by Schumann: in his 1843 obituary of Carus, Schumann ‘tied’ his name to the most ‘priceless memories of youth’, and Schlegel was the dedicatee of the early versions of Schumann’s *Exercice fantastique en double-sons* (later to be published as *Toccata* op. 7, dedicated to Ludwig Schunke).⁹⁶ Although the musical skills of this group were a far cry from the professional music life of the larger cities, Schumann doubtlessly found an audience whose taste in music was more sophisticated than at the Lyceum, and the fact that he found his musical peers among adult amateur musicians clearly suggests that he was far superior to the local students his own age.

As to the proceedings of the chamber music sessions, Schumann recorded the programmes for two of these gatherings at Schlegel’s in his notebook, *Blätter und Blümchen aus der Goldene Aue*: in the first of these sessions, on 11 November 1823, the group played Mozart’s Piano Quartet in G minor K. 478, a string quartet by Rothe [Pierre Rode? (1774–1830)], a piano quintet by Prince Louis Ferdinand, and a string quartet by Mozart. The second meeting on 27 November featured an all-Mozart programme, where Schumann played the piano part in the Piano Quartet in E^b major K. 493, and the strings followed, playing two string quartets.⁹⁷ There is no reason to believe that this was the only time Schumann featured as pianist with the group. Schumann noted in his obituary for Carus that he ‘often’ participated at the piano during these sessions, and in a celebratory poem for the Carus’ silver wedding in 1838, Schumann remembers how he as a child was part of the family’s circle, and ‘above, beneath and in the middle / bashed your piano’.⁹⁸

Aside from the chamber-music making at Schlegel’s and Carus’, little information survives regarding the musical side of Schumann’s artistic pursuits until 1828. Between 1824 and 1826 there are no compositions, sketches, diaries or concert programmes to document any musical activity. Most of Schumann’s first diary, *Tage des Jüngling-lebens* (‘Days from the Adolescent

94. Quellen, 18; TB1, 514–515.

95. Jansen, ‘Schumanns Schulzeit’, 84; Macdonald, *Piano Concerto*, 2.

96. Schumann and Schumann, *Briefwechsel*, 27. Schumann kept in touch with Schlegel, and received letters from him between 1837 and 1842 with new compositions by Schlegel and news from musical life in Zwickau, cf. Jansen, ‘Schumanns Schulzeit’, 85.

97. Jansen, ‘Schumanns Schulzeit’, 85–86.

98. Schumann and Schumann, *Briefwechsel*, 27. The opening two stanzas of the original poem reads: ‘Der einst in Eurem Kreise / Wie Kind vom Hause war, / Bringt heut’ so innig wie leise / Euch seine Wünsche dar. // Ihr habt ihn gern gelitten, / Wenn er im kindischen Flug / Nach oben, unten und mitten / Euch das Clavier zerschlug’, cf. Wasielewski, *Schumanniana*, 215–216.

Life'), which he kept throughout the month of January 1827, reflect on his past crush on Nanni Petsch and the current love for Liddy Hempel, two local Zwickau girls; the mentions of piano playing in this first diary are restricted to a single note that he played the piano while he had his three friends over for a visit.⁹⁹ However, judging by his musical activities on record from the years 1827 and beginning of 1828, the lack of mention of music in this first diary may have been more a sign of his preoccupation with his adolescent romances rather than a long-term neglect of music. During 1827, Schumann composed a number of songs, of which five survive ('Lied für xxx', 'Sehnsucht', 'Verwandlung', 'Die Weinende' and 'Verwandlung'), and his few diary entries and letters also show traces of at least sporadic musical activities. On his journey to Leipzig and Prague in the summer of the same year, he noted that he played the piano while stopping by in Teplice (now in the Czech Republic) on 3 and 4 August, and in a letter to Fleschig, Schumann told the story of arriving at a tavern in Hazlov (now Czech Republic) with a few friends, where he improvised on the folk song 'Fridolin' to the astonishment of the local peasants.¹⁰⁰ He made one last appearance before moving to Leipzig, when he played the solo part in the first movement of Kalkbrenner's Piano Concerto no. 1 op. 61 at one of Kuntzsch's Lyceum concerts on 25 January 1828.¹⁰¹ Despite the fragmentary nature of the sources from this period, piano playing appears to have been integral to his daily life. Nevertheless, it also indicates that he paid little systematic attention to his pianistic development.

At this time, Schumann was still known among his friends as a capable pianist, and he must have been among the finest in Zwickau. His achievements were, however, a far cry from the leading concert pianists of his generation. By this age, Liszt was already a seasoned touring pianist and Thalberg was on the verge of his international breakthrough. Schumann, on the other hand, had only given concerts with fellow students and amateur musicians in his home town, far from the educated audiences of the European cultural capitals. Schumann must have been well aware that his talents were not being fulfilled in Zwickau, as he confessed to Fleschig that he needed proper guidance. In a letter of 7 March 1828, just a few days before moving to Leipzig, Schumann wrote: 'now my better self must take the lead and show what it is made of. Thrown into life, flung into the night of the world, without guide, teacher or father'.¹⁰² There is no evidence that Schumann had made any attempts to find a new piano teacher himself. However, a few months after relocating to Leipzig, he was introduced to the well-respected piano teacher, Friedrich Wieck, which would mark the beginning of a new and decisive phase

99. TB1, 31. '[...] die drey Freunde waren da: ich spielte Clavier' (28 January 1827).

100. TB1, 55. 'Clavier'. Clara Schumann, ed., *Early Letters of Robert Schumann*, trans. May Herbert (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1888), 11–12. (Hereafter cited as Letters); Clara Schumann, ed., *Jugendbriefe*, 4th ed. (1886; Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1910), 11–12. Letter to Fleschig of 1 December 1827. (Hereafter cited as Briefe).

101. Quellen, 20. At this event, Schumann also recited a monologue from Goethe's *Faust*.

102. Letters, 13; Briefe, 13. 'Nun muß der innere, wahre Mensch hervortreten und zeigen, wer er ist: hinausgeworfen in das Dasein, geschleudert in die Nacht der Welt, ohne Führer, Lehrer und Vater'.

in Schumann's musical education.



This overview has shown the extent to which Schumann grew up far from the leading trends of musical Europe. Firstly, he was born in a region where competition from the capitals of England and France was growing in musical culture. Their pianos were transformed through a series of innovations, and the sound ideals and new virtuosic idioms rose in popularity—even within German-speaking countries. Secondly, Schumann's native Zwickau was situated so remotely from the currents of musical fashion that there could be little exposure to trained piano teachers, access to new music or exposure to travelling virtuosos. The combination of the two form the preconditions by which Schumann must be measured in the chapters to follow.

Chapter 2

Schumann's Piano Practice 1828–1831: An Overview

This chapter seeks to provide an overview of the events which initiated Schumann's transition from pianist to non-performing composer, during his years of studies with Wieck. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, there was a chasm between the increasingly professional attitudes of the musical establishment in the European cultural capitals and the somewhat isolated provincial environment of Zwickau, where Schumann grew up. Following his move to Leipzig, Wieck introduced Schumann to prominent figures in musical life and provided him with the most fashionable piano works in the literature. However, his greatest impact on Schumann was the transformation of his daily work at the piano, initially through the introduction of dedicated technical materials including scales, études and finger exercises. Although his practice of musical works continued to be sporadic at best, except when preparing for a specific concert appearance, he nevertheless gave a successful performance of Moscheles' *Alexander Variations* at a concert in Heidelberg in January 1830. Combined with the experience of hearing Paganini in concert, Schumann made the decision to forfeit his law studies to pursue a career as piano virtuoso. After some discussion, Wieck agreed to support his aspirations and laid out an ambitious practising plan for him.

The change of career path brought significant changes to Schumann's piano practice. Firstly, Wieck assigned him new works to learn even without a specific performance on the horizon. Up to this point, the exclusive practice of technical work had given Schumann a confined space to cultivate his touch through the study of scales and finger exercises; as Wieck's full-time student, he had to put everything he had learned about touch and tone production into practice, so that he could apply his ideals of musical expression to his interpretations of musical compositions. Secondly, his new role as an up-and-coming virtuoso profoundly influenced his self-perception

as pianist: with higher ambitions came higher expectations, not least from himself. At first, this does not appear to have been a problem. The first entries, from May 1831, following a long break from diary keeping, attest to a contentment with his own playing, the quality of touch in particular ('it really sparkles and flashes').¹ However, after only a few weeks he began noticing technical insecurities, and despite transient improvements, these persisted over the following months. Baffled by its cause and frustrated by his inability to reproduce his artistic ideals in performance, he plunged into a major crisis. He nevertheless made a wholehearted attempt to remedy the issue by continually refining his practising methods, notably through the introduction of a new practice diary, the *Uebungstagebuch*. However, the efforts turned out unfruitful, as he felt unable to recreate the 'magic' and 'freshness' of his ideal performance, which he experienced so rewardingly from his improvisations. Schumann never recovered from his crisis. An injury to the third finger of the right hand eventually proved so detrimental to his playing that by 1832 he had to give up any hope of fulfilling his plans to become a pianist.

By producing a chronological overview of Schumann's piano practice during 1828–1831, this chapter traces his development as pianist during the period from his first lessons with Wieck to the peak of his crisis. This includes a survey of his piano studies in the years before the crisis, his artistic ideals and his subsequent inability to reproduce them in his performances, as well as his attempts at remedying his technical limitations. This will identify the imaginative use of sound as a core value of his artistry, and demonstrate how his struggles with realising it was an important contributor to the crisis.



In order to receive an annual allowance of 200 thaler, Schumann was required by his father's will to complete a three-year university course, and on 29 March 1828 he enrolled as a law student at the University of Leipzig.² With the exception of a stay in Heidelberg between May 1829 and October 1830, Leipzig was his home for the next decade or so. While his diary keeping remained sporadic, this relocation marked the beginning of a better documented period of his life. Thus, diary records, letters, musical sketches and compositional fragments provide a reasonably reliable body of evidence which offers a more nuanced picture of Schumann's pianistic development during his student years.

Following his admission to the university, it quickly became evident that the study of jurisprudence was of little interest to Schumann. Despite reassuring his mother that he attended

1. Robert Schumann, 1827–1838, vol. 1 of *Tagebücher*, ed. Georg Eismann (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1971), 329. '[...] es funkelt u. blitzt ordentlich drinnen' (hereafter cited as TB1).

2. Georg Eismann, ed., *Briefe, Aufzeichnungen, Dokumente, mit zahlreichen Erstveröffentlichungen*, vol. 1 of *Robert Schumann: ein Quellenwerk über sein Leben und Schaffen* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1956), 28, 45 (hereafter cited as *Quellen*).

university 'as regular as clockwork', Schumann only signed up with the professor of philosophy, Wilhelm Traugott Krug (1770–1842), and the professor of pedagogy and catechetics, Karl Eduard Otto (b. 1795): that was 'his entire participation at the academy', 'he never set foot in an auditorium', Fleschig recalled.³ Schumann's diaries leave no trace of university attendance whatsoever, and his two professors only rarely received any mention.⁴ Instead, he spent an increasing amount of time on music, playing an 'excellent instrument' which he had acquired shortly after moving to Leipzig.⁵

The encounter with the regional metropolis gave Schumann a broader range of opportunities for pianistic endeavours than he had seen in Zwickau, both in terms of domestic performances as well as in education. Nevertheless, his contact with the music world still remained within the private homes of amateur musicians and musically interested people, including music retailer and publisher Heinrich Albert Probst (1792–1846), as well as the brother of the aforementioned Karl Erdmann Carus, Dr Ernst August Carus and his wife Agnes. As a gifted amateur singer, the latter was the dedicatee of some of Schumann's early songs and was the subject of his unrequited love for a period of time. Therefore, not only was his musical network similar to that of Zwickau, he rather quickly settled into somewhat similar musical routines, principally based on sight-reading and improvisation. Thus, he found partners in four-hand piano playing in fellow piano students Clara Wieck (1819–1896) and Emilie Reichold (before 1818–after 1830), as well as August Nathanael Böhner (b. 1809), a student of cadastral surveying and later theology.⁶ More importantly, however, was his acquaintance with three amateur string

3. Clara Schumann, ed., *Jugendbriefe*, 4th ed. (1886; Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1910), 28. 'Uebrigens gehe ich regel- und maschinenmäßig in die Kollegien'. Letter to his mother of 29 June 1828. (Hereafter cited as Briefe); Translated in Clara Schumann, ed., *Early Letters of Robert Schumann*, trans. May Herbert (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1888), 27. (Hereafter cited as Letters); As to Fleschig's recollections, cf. Quellen, 43. '[Schumann] ließ sich als Jurist inskribieren, ich kaufte eine Mappe für ihn, und er schrieb sich bei Krug und Otto auf die Hörerliste, das ist seine ganze Teilnahme an der Akademie geworden und geblieben. Einen Hörsaal hat er sonst nie betreten.' Fleschig, a fellow Zwickauer, had enrolled as theology student in Leipzig the previous year, and was by this time Schumann's flatmate, cf. TB1, 495.

4. TB1, 105–106, 125, 128, 138, 150. While this is by no means evidence that he did not see his professors, it does nevertheless attest to a generally careless attitude towards his law studies. Still, he managed to receive a proof-of-study from the university in 1829 for the first completed year of studies, and Krug provided a reference to Schumann for his studies in fundamental philosophy, logic and metaphysics during the second half of 1829, cf. Quellen, 45–46.

5. Briefe, 26. 'Das Pianoforte, welches ich mir gemiethet habe, kostet monatlich einen Dukaten: ich möchte aber doch, obgleich dieses gemiethete ganz vortrefflich ist, zu Michaeli meinen alten, theuren, geliebten Flügel hier habe'. Letter to his mother of 13 June 1828. Translated in Letters, 25.

6. Schumann was fond of Reichold's playing and found it 'graceful' ('Die Reichold entwickelte viel Grazie beym Clavierspiel'), cf. TB1, 110. She appeared at the Leipzig Gewandhaus a number of times between 1827 and 1830 to positive reviews, notably in Ferdinand Ries' Piano Concerto op. 42 in 1826, and in 1828 at Clara Wieck's first public concert in Kalkbrenner's *Variations brillantes sur la marche de 'Moïse'* op. 94 for piano duet, cf. Cathleen Köckritz, *Friedrich Wieck: Studien zur Biographie und zur Klavierpädagogik* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2007), 128–129. While studying with Wieck, Reichold acted as supporting teacher to Clara and, more important, Schumann played four-hand piano duets with her on a number of occasions, cf. Letters, 32; TB1, 109. Following her marriage to Gustave

players—philology student and violinist Johann Friedrich Täglichsbeck (1808–1862), medical student and cellist Friedrich Glock (d. 1860), and theology student and violist Christoph Sörgel (b. 1804)—with whom he formed a piano quartet, the *Quartettgesellschaft*.⁷

In total, the *Quartettgesellschaft* met seventeen times over a period of four and a half months, between 14 November 1828 and 28 March 1829, usually playing for a small select audience.⁸ The repertoire consisted predominantly of piano trios, quartets and occasionally quintets, with two of Schumann's childhood favourites as the primary composers in the early sessions: Ferdinand and Ries and Prince Louis Ferdinand. Subsequently, the group explored piano trios by Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert, as well as a number of works which are only rarely, if ever, heard in concerts today. Considering that the ensemble met relatively few times, the programmes for each *Quartettunterhaltung* were extensive, and consistently included at least three full works. It was rare to see the same work being played on more than two occasions and, given minimal time allotted to each composition, it is unlikely that the study of their repertoire went beyond mere run-throughs. The relaxed attitude showed in his preparations towards each session: while Schumann avidly recorded his musical activities in his diary, there are no traces of any practice towards these gatherings. To Schumann, the piano quartet as well as the four-hand playing was probably first and foremost an opportunity for him to familiarise himself with a large body of new music, more than a determination to perfect a selected repertoire.

Even more importantly than sight-reading, improvisation continued to be a primary means of musical expression, and during his student years he appears to have spent countless hours extemporising, in company as well as in solitude. Throughout his student days, improvisation—or 'fantasy' ('fantasie') as he referred to it in his diaries—was integral to his musical activities. Often his diary recorded extemporisations without further commentary ('fantasy'; 'fantasy at the pianoforte'; 'early fantasy'; 'fantasy in the evening').⁹ However, when putting his experience of improvising into words, Schumann described these sessions with joy, for instance: 'fantasy and quiet happiness' (24 August 1828), 'wonderful piano fantasy at home' (8 July 1829), 'happy

Werner, another pupil of Wieck, Reichold settled in France as a piano teacher. After the birth of a daughter in 1831, her name disappeared into oblivion. In his diary, Schumann recorded the following four-hand repertoire, which he played with Böhner: Polonaises by Schubert ('Polonaisen von Schubert mit Böhner'; 19 August 1828), Variations by an unknown composer ('Böhner u. betrunke Variationen', 'ich war's wenigstens u. spielte ziemlich lustig'; 21 August 1828), unknown works for four-hand piano ('4hdges Clavierspiel mit Böhner' (25 January 1829), cf. TB1, 116, 117, 120, 170.

7. Quellen, 44. According to Fleschig, Schumann's piano quartet consisted of Täglichsbeck, Sörgel and Glock, with Wieck, Carus and Probst as regular listeners. Daverio claims Ernst August to be the nephew of Karl Erdmann, and not his brother, cf. John Daverio, *Robert Schumann: Herald of a 'New Poetic Age'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 30.

8. Schumann numbered each of these sessions, thus informing about the exact number of gatherings. In addition, he carefully kept record of the proceedings of each session.

9. TB1, 57, 146, 148, 149, 153, 159, 179, 180, 186, 198, 226, 235. 'Fantasien' (11 March 1829); 'Phantasie am Pianoforte' (3 May 1828); 'Früh fantasie' (6 April 1829); 'Fantasie Abends' (27 November 1828).

fantasy' (9 March 1830), 'warm fantasy' (1 July 1831).¹⁰ Schumann's occasional unease about his improvisations was often linked to frustrations with life in general: 'very lame fantasy at home' (18 June 1829); 'not very happy fantasy' (26 November 1829); 'conventional fantasy' (7 February 1830).¹¹

Improvisation remained a refuge to him, and on many days his diary made no mention of any other musical activity than improvisation. In combination with sight-reading and only the occasional informal performance of concert repertoire, Schumann's love of improvisation demonstrates a *con amore*-approach to piano playing, in which curiosity, reflection and self-expression were principal values. However, despite his inner ear being the prime audience of his extemporisations, he must nevertheless have felt a desire to hone his pianistic skills.

Friedrich Wieck: The Introduction to Systematic Practice

This changed with the encounter with Wieck, who was a champion of well-planned and attentive practice. Many of the developments in Schumann's working methods in the years to come trace back to Wieck's principles and approaches. As will be demonstrated, Schumann's general pianistic development was closely tied to the evolution of his practising methods. Therefore, the appreciation of Schumann as pianist begins with the understanding of Wieck's pedagogy.

Schumann was introduced to Wieck through Ernst August Carus during the spring of 1828, and piano lessons began by mid-August.¹² Wieck was also largely self-taught. Apart from a few lessons with the aforementioned Milchmeyer, he received no tuition during his early years, and, like Schumann, his career path was at first laid in a field other than music.¹³ However, it was the craft of teaching which brought Wieck into the music profession. As an unemployed graduate of theology from the University of Wittenberg, he took up positions as private teacher in Dresden, Bautzen, Querfurt and Glauchau, before settling in Leipzig in 1813 or 1814, where he opened an instrument and music rental shop in 1818.¹⁴ In Leipzig, he continued his self-study at the piano, and soon after began taking in piano students himself,

10. TB1, 117, 205, 233, 344. 'Fantasie u. stummes Glück'; 'Schöne Fantasie auf d. Klavier'; 'glückliche Fantasie'; 'Dann warme Fantasie'.

11. TB1, 201, 209, 226. '[...] zu Hause sehr Lahme Fantasie u. Zorn über mein Clavierspiel'; 'nicht sehr glücklicher Fantasie'; 'conventionelle Fantasie'.

12. TB1, 109. While this is the first mention of Wieck in Schumann's diaries, it is not completely certain that this was their first lesson; Schumann's diary keeping had been inconsistent up to this point, and previous lessons may therefore not have been recorded. However, the first time Schumann mentioned his new teacher to his mother was in a letter of 22 August 1828, noting that he was 'very often with [Wieck], who teaches me at the piano' ('Bei Wieck, der mein Klavierlehrer ist, bin ich sehr oft', cf. Briefe, 32–33; Translated in Letters, 31–32).

13. Köckritz, *Friedrich Wieck*, 61–62. Wieck himself later recalled the number of lessons with Milchmeyer to be between six and eight.

14. Eberhard Wolfgang Möller, ed., *Briefwechsel Robert und Clara Schumanns mit der Familie Wieck*, vol. 2 of *Schumann Briefedition*, 1 (Cologne: Dohr, 2011), 29.

inspired by Johann Bernhard Logier's (1777–1846) newly introduced teaching method which incorporated the *Chiroplast* mechanism.¹⁵ As his teaching career thrived, this became a full-time occupation to the extent that he taught a class of about ten students during the 1828–1829 season, giving each student two or three lessons per week.¹⁶ He was also deeply engaged in the training of his own children, his shop remained open for business and he organised regular musical soirées. With the growing success of his precocious daughter Clara, Wieck intensified his efforts with her musical education and travelled with her on concert tours, while reducing his piano teaching. Thus, as his travelling schedule got busier, he only took in six students between 1831 and 1834.¹⁷ Apart from his two most famous pupils, Clara Wieck and later Hans von Bülow (1830–1894), Friedrich Wieck also taught the moderately successful Emilie Reichold, Schumann's frequent co-player in four-hand piano music, as mentioned above.

On a personal level, Schumann's collaboration with Wieck was riddled with disagreements from early on. Their mutual first impressions predicted a tempestuous relationship which would develop over the following years. Wieck found Schumann to be a 'hothead at the piano', and conversely Schumann spotted a temperamental character underneath Wieck's gentle surface: 'Wieck is fiery by contrast—a Vesuvius covered with flowers; but when flowers fade, he erupts and spews lava'.¹⁸ Schumann recalled having 'frequent quarrels' with Wieck in 1829, and by the summer of 1831 this resulted in major disagreements.¹⁹ That Schumann lived at Wieck's house for a year after his return from Heidelberg must only have exacerbated the situation.²⁰ However, in relation to his pianistic development, Wieck's influence on Schumann cannot be underestimated.

Considering Wieck's importance to Schumann, there is strikingly little evidence of the early period of their collaboration. In Schumann's diaries there are only twelve surviving records of lessons during the period of August 1828 and April 1829, and apart from the occasional listing of practising assignments from Wieck, Schumann left no remarks on the pedagogical contents of these lessons.²¹ Still, Wieck's influence on Schumann is detectable on a number of levels. Firstly, having contacts among the musical establishment of Leipzig, Wieck broadened

15. Schumann, *Briefwechsel mit der Familie Wieck*, 29.

16. Köckritz, *Friedrich Wieck*, 130.

17. *Ibid.*, 131–132.

18. TB1, 110. 'Wieck is feurig vor Contrast – ein Vesuv mit Blumen bepflanzt; aber die Blumen sterben, bricht er aus u. steigt seine Lava hervor' (16 August 1828). Fleschig remembers Wieck giving Schumann this nickname: 'Er nahm Klavierunterricht bei Wieck, der ihn immer "engragé auf dem Piano" nannte', cf. Quellen, 44.

19. Robert Schumann, 'Materialien [–1829]' (Archiv des Robert-Schumann-Hauses Zwickau, D-Zsch 4871 VII, B, 3 A3), 3. 'ofterer Streit mit F. Wieck'.

20. Schumann, *Briefwechsel mit der Familie Wieck*, 30.

21. The twelve lessons took place on 15 and 19 August 1828, 27 October, 20 November, 11 and 15 December, 3 and 13 February 1829, 2 and 26 March, and on 2 and 9 April. To this end, Schumann recorded a visit at Wieck's on 13 December 1828 ('Nachmittags bey Wieck'), cf. TB1, 109, 116, 128, 147, 153, 155, 157, 172, 174, 177, 183, 185, 187.

Schumann's network significantly. As a student of Wieck, Schumann was thus introduced to a number of resident and travelling musicians, including Professor Karl Traugott Zeuner (1775–1841) from St Petersburg, the music director at the Leipzig Theatre, Heinrich August Marschner (1795–1861), as well as conductor, composer and later Schumann's teacher in music theory, Heinrich Dorn (1804–1892).²² Wieck also helped Schumann acquire a grand piano by Viennese maker Franz Bayer (active c. 1817–c. 1851) in November 1828.²³

Secondly, because of Wieck's position as piano teacher and retailer, he was fairly up-to-date with the most recent developments in the music world. Thus, during his studies with Wieck, Schumann was introduced to the music of Chopin and Field, and he learnt of new piano works as they arrived 'hot off the press', including Moscheles' *Etudes* op. 70 (1827), Charles Mayer's (1799–1862) *Grand Toccata* in E major (c. 1828) and Herz' *Variations brillantes sur la Cavatine favorite de la Violette de Carafa* op. 48 (1829).²⁴ A letter of 6 November 1829 demonstrates that he trusted Wieck as his eyes and ears when it came to familiarising himself with the most recent publications on the market. Whilst away from the cultural hub of Leipzig, Schumann wrote to Wieck from Heidelberg:

I am also going to ask you to send me all Schubert's Waltzes, and put them down to my account. I think there are ten or twelve books of them. Moscheles's G minor Concerto and Hummel's B minor Concerto without the parts; and further I should like sent on approval, so that I can return what I do not like, all Schubert compositions which have appeared since op. 100, and do not forget the Quintet [Trout], as I want to have a look at it. Likewise any compositions for the piano which have appeared in Leipzig in my absence, and which you think I might like. You know my taste pretty well. I might also have a few new things by Herz and Czerny, as I visit several families here.²⁵

The third and arguably the most important contribution to Schumann's piano playing came with

22. A student of Clementi, Zeuner was Professor at the St Petersburg Conservatory, and later became teacher of Mikhail Glinka (1804–1857). Marschner later became *Hofkapellmeister* in Hannover. Dorn was music director at the Leipzig Hoftheater in 1829–1832, cf. TB1, 149, 170, 308, 492, 513, 540.

23. TB1, 149.

24. Schumann played two of the Moscheles *Etudes* op. 70 in 1831, Mayer's *Toccata* in 1828, and Herz' *Carafa Variations* in 1831.

25. Briefe, 84–85. 'Bitten von kleinerem Belange sind, mir zu schicken auf feste Rechnung / Alle Schubert'schen Walzer (es sind glaub' ich 10–12 Hefte) / Moscheles G-moll Konzert / Hummel's H-moll Konzert / und auf lockere Rechnung, d. h. auf Bedingung, davon zurücksenden zu können, was mir nicht gefallen sollte: alle Schubert'schen Kompositionen (die seit op. 100 erschiene sind); bitte, vorzüglich das Quintett nicht zu vergessen, das ich gerne kennen lernen möchte, sodann: Alles, was seit meiner Abwesenheit von Leipzig Interessantes für Klavierkomposition erschienen ist und was Sie glauben, daß es mir gefallen könnte, da Sie meine Geschmack kennen: Etwas Neues von Herz und Czerny kann, auch mit dabei sein, da ich hier in—Familien eingeführt bin.' Letter to Wieck of 6 November 1829. Translated in *Letters*, 82–83.

the introduction of a methodical technical practice regime. As his engagement with sight-reading and improvising suggests, there was little, if any, structure to his practice before the studies with Wieck. Coinciding with their first lessons, Schumann produced his first continuous series of daily diary entries, recorded between 13 and 25 August 1828. This log gives an impression of Schumann's music-making activities before coming under the influence of Wieck, and demonstrates how little attention Schumann seems to have given to his own learning and pianistic development at this stage. Apart from two lessons with Wieck, the diary shows Schumann playing—possibly sight-reading—large-scale works for the piano: Schubert's *Wanderer Fantasy*, D760, a 'Fantasy' by Carl Banck (1809–1889) and a *Sonate melancholique*, presumably the one by Moscheles op. 49. Schumann was also involved in four-hand playing with Reichold and Böhner in works by Czerny and Schubert, a piano and violin duet with Täglichsbeck, performances of his own songs with Agnes Carus, as well as frequent improvisations.²⁶ Compared to his later diaries, the records of these two weeks are unusually detailed and the daily entries are even supplemented with 'sententious commentaries' ('Sententiöser Commentar')—reflections on the events of the day. Considering this level of detail, it is notable that there is not a single mention of piano practice, neither in the logs themselves nor in the commentaries.²⁷

In contrast to Schumann's casual attitude, Wieck demanded a completely different attention to pianistic and technical development. Wieck's pedagogy was based on a firm belief in structured and attentive practice—an approach upon which he repeatedly insisted in a number of pedagogical documents which he produced. Unlike other prominent piano pedagogues at the time, Wieck did not write any tutors or treatises as such. Instead, he published his views

26. TB1, 108–123. 13 August: '[...] Fr. Schubert – [Wanderer] Fantasy in *C major* – [...] Evening improvisation in *X major*'; 14 August: '[...] Evening improvisation – Lieder, mine 15 August: [...] Wieck – Letter from C. M. Weber — Rondeau – Mdle. Reichold – [...] Czerny's Double Concerto [op. 153] — Wieck's Lieder – [...] Improvisation á la Schubert – Banck's Fantasy with chorals and bird song'; 16 August: '[...] Lieder: *Erinnerung, Hirtenknabe, Klage*'; 17 August: '[...] Duet with Täglichsbeck at 1 o'clock – [...] *F^b* minor improvisation'; 18 August: No mention of music; 19 August: '[...] Piano lesson with Wieck – Polonaises by Schubert [D599 or D824] with Böhner'; 20 August: '[...] Schubert's Variations [D908?] – [...] Agnes [Carus] and [my] Lieder'; 21 August: '[...] *Sonate melancholique* [Moscheles op. 49?] at Carus' – [...] Böhner and drunk variations'; 22 and 23 August: No mention of music; 24 August: '[...] *Hirtenknabe* and Polonaises by Schubert – Improvisation and quiet happiness'; 25 August: No mention of music.

27. In the letters to his mother, Schumann conveyed a greater sense of purpose and consistency with his piano playing than the diary leaves: on 13 June he claimed to 'play the piano for two hours daily' ('spiele des Tags zwei Stunden Klavier'), and on 29 June and 22 August he still played 'a great deal' ('spiele viel Klavier'), cf. Briefe, 25, 28, 32; Translated in Letters, 24, 27, 31. Based on the diary records, the consistency of Schumann's two hours of daily piano playing may be questionable, but throughout his studies he did have a tendency to paint a rosy picture of his everyday life in the letters to his mother, particularly when it came to his university attendance. Apart from piano playing, Schumann noted that he went for long walks, reads, fence at the fencing school, but only rarely visited the tavern. All of this is in accordance with his diary records, except that there is no evidence that he went to 'lecture as regular as clockwork' (29 June). Whilst there are no mentions of the university whatsoever during the period 13–25 August, Schumann nevertheless claimed his letter of 22 August that he 'often' attended lectures. This may very well have been an attempt from Schumann's side to appease his mother, cf. Letters, 27, 31. On the other hand, piano playing was but one out of many pastimes, and surely not anything he was singularly focussed on.

on piano pedagogy and playing in the essay collection, *Klavier und Gesang* (1853), and his children Marie and Alwin released his teaching materials posthumously in the *Materialen zu Friedrich Wieck's Pianoforte-Methodik* (1875) and *Pianoforte Studien* (1900).²⁸ Whilst the pianistic landscape evolved between Schumann's studies with Wieck and the publication of these volumes, Wieck's musical taste seems to have change little. In *Klavier und Gesang* he lamented the 'modern scene-screaming' of contemporary singers, which had 'so widely deviated from the old school which was so fruitful in brilliant results,—that of [Francesco Antonio] Pistocchi [(1659–1726)], [Nicola] Porpora [(1686–1768)], and [Antonio] Bernacchi [(1685–1756)]'.²⁹ He was similarly disgusted by the piano virtuosos of the day, whose 'soft-pedal sentiment' he could not bear:³⁰

When the foot-piece to the left on the piano is pressed down, the keyboard is thereby moved to the right; so that, in playing, the hammers strike only two of the three strings, in some pianos only one. In that way the tone is made weaker, thinner, but more singing and more tender. What follows from this? Many performers, seized with a piano madness, play a grand bravoura piece, excite themselves fearfully, clatter up and down through seven octaves of runs, with the pedal constantly raised,—bang away, put the best piano out of tune in the first twenty bars,—snap the strings, knock the hammers off their bearings, perspire, stroke the hair out of their eyes, ogle the audience, and make love to themselves. Suddenly they are seized with a sentiment! They come to a piano or pianissimo and, no longer content with one pedal, they take the soft pedal while the loud pedal is still resounding. Oh, what languishing! what soft murmuring, and what a sweet tinkling of bells! what tenderness of feeling! what a soft-pedal sentiment!—The ladies fall into tears, enraptured by the pale, long-haired young artist.

The playing style which Wieck advocated and taught belonged most likely that of previous decades. Therefore, while Wieck's essays are vague on the technical details of playing the piano, these volumes serve as a valuable reference to Wieck's teaching philosophy and approach to learning the piano during the period of Schumann's piano studies.

Wieck's teaching was driven by a striving for efficiency in the daily practice. He valued

28. Friedrich Wieck, *Klavier und Gesang: Didaktisches und Polemisches* (Leipzig: F. Whistling, 1853); Friedrich Wieck, *Materialen zu Friedrich Wieck's Pianoforte-Methodik*, ed. Alwin Wieck (Berlin: Simrock, 1875) (hereafter cited as *Materialen*); Friedrich Wieck, *Pianoforte Studien*, ed. Marie Wieck (New York: Schirmer, 1901) (hereafter cited as *Studien*). The *Materialen* is, according to the preface, a collection of teaching materials which Wieck collected over the years, including those used in the instruction of Clara.

29. Friedrich Wieck, *Piano and Singing*, trans. Mary P. Nicholls (Boston: Lockwood, Brooks & Company, 1875), 100 (hereafter cited as PS).

30. PS, 65.

quality over quantity, and found it important to always practice ‘with unexhausted energy’, prescribing brief practising sessions of ten minutes rather than hour-long sittings.³¹ These short bursts of practice, Wieck thought, would ensure consistent daily routines, so that even on busy days the student would be able find time to get at least some work done. Because the student would never feel the fatigue caused by long sessions, the the clarity of mind thus gained would lead to focused, attentive and eventually more efficient learning.³² The success of Wieck’s own daughters was to prove the advantages of this strategy: whilst Wieck was unable to ‘count up the finger movements and the stray ten minutes’ of piano practice over the years, he was convinced that they practised ‘fewer hours in the day than [the] many thousands who learn nothing’ due to faulty and inefficient working methods.³³ However, he insisted that some of the daily practice should be dedicated to technical work, but unless the student had ‘stiff fingers’ or an ‘unpractised or ruined structure of the hand’ a quarter of an hour on scales would suffice.³⁴

As a general principle, Wieck believed in dedicated technical practice as the best and most efficient way to develop the mechanical aspects of piano playing, and thought that ‘except with the most careful selection’ of pieces, one would ‘waste a great deal of time’ trying to ‘produce the mechanical dexterity essential for piano performance’.³⁵ Instead, the student should ‘endeavour, by scales and exercises’, to give the hand and fingers enough ‘firmness, decision, and dexterity’ that he or she could play with ‘a certain distinct tone and a tolerable touch’.³⁶ The solution was to appropriately study both performing repertoire and technical work with a goal in mind which was appropriate to each of them. Thus, he advised the student to ‘combine the study of musical pieces with the study of exercises, in order that the cultivation of the taste may go hand in hand with mechanical improvement’.³⁷ Over the winter months of 1828–1829, Wieck’s trust in the practice of technical material would materialise in Schumann’s work at the piano, as he was gradually being introduced to a practice regimen including scales, études and finger exercises.

Early Technical Practice: Scales, Etudes and Five-Finger Exercises

In contrast to the somewhat random nature of Schumann’s work at the piano up to this point, a new term was introduced in his diary during the autumn of 1828: piano practice (‘Clavier-

31. PS, 134–135.

32. PS, 135, 141–142. ‘If you are obliged to omit your regular “hour’s practice”, you have, at any rate, accomplished something with your ten minutes before breakfast, or before dinner, or at any leisure moment. [...] It is certain that [my daughters] practise fewer hours in the day than many thousands who learn nothing, for they never practise and never have practised wrongly, but always correctly and advantageously.’

33. PS, 142–143.

34. PS, 35.

35. PS, 82.

36. PS, 81.

37. PS, 20.

übung').³⁸ Following the aforementioned streak of daily diary entries during August, there are no entries from 26 August for nearly two months, partly due to his travels to Schneeberg and Zwickau. The return to Leipzig around 24 October marked the beginning of a new period of technical work, with Schumann practising 'finger exercises like a beginner', as his roommate Fleschig recalled.³⁹ At the following lesson on 27 October, Schumann began working on scales with Wieck, and they continued this work at the following lesson on 20 November, after Schumann's return from his travels.⁴⁰ In the beginning, little seemed to change in his practising habits. Following ten days with no mention of piano playing, records attest that he at least began playing from 8 November, and after a slow start there are reports of music making nearly every day for almost five months, from 18 November 1828 until his last lesson prior to leaving for Heidelberg on 9 April 1829.⁴¹ Thus, Schumann's piano playing continued to revolve around sight-reading and improvisations, as well as four-hand playing and chamber music sessions with his newly formed *Quartettgesellschaft*. However, on 25 November he reported to be practising; the session must have gone well, as it was followed by 'happy improvisation, the happiest of my life'.⁴² He stayed at home and continued practising the following day; again, he worked on scales, and he must have worked with great dedication during these days, as he summed his existence in his diary: 'a musical hermit- and scale-life'.⁴³ Schumann's initial dedication to scale practice faded after a few days, but reappeared in his practising programme from time to time.⁴⁴ There is nothing to explain this sudden loss of interest in scales, but around this time his focus shifted towards the practice of études.

In December, Schumann commenced work on Charles Meyer's (1799–1862) *Toccata* in E major, as well as an unspecified etude by Johann Baptist Cramer (1771–1858).⁴⁵ Although

38. TB1, 148–149.

39. Quellen, 44. 'Er nahm Klavierunterricht bei Wieck, [...] und mußte wieder Finger-übungen wie ein Anfänger treiben [...]'. Schumann had been away since the beginning of October, if not earlier. A letter to fellow student William Götte was dated 2 October 1828 in Schneeberg, and he wrote his mother from Leipzig on 24 October. A note in Schumann's diary confirms that he left Zwickau on the 21st, cf. Letters, 34, 37; TB1, 126.

40. TB1, 128, 146. 'Der musikalische Wieck – Scalen' (27 October 1828); 'Clavierstunde bey Wieck – Tonleitern u. Lob' (20 November 1828).

41. TB1, 144–187.

42. TB1, 148. 'Übungen auf Clavier – glückliche Fantasie, die Glückichste meines Lebens' (25 November 1828).

43. TB1, 149. 'Clavierübungen – Ein musikalischer Einsiedler u. Tonleiterleben' (26 November 1828).

44. While preparing for a performance of Moscheles' *Alexander Variations* in the beginning of 1830, Schumann practised scales on 26, 27 and 30 November 1829; one and a half year later, on 12 May 1831 scales reappear again. Schumann had only taken up regular diary keeping again the day before, where he had had a 'wonderful practice in the morning' ('Des Morgens schön geübt [...]'). This might suggest that he had already kept up with his scale practice during the period leading up him restarting his diary keeping, cf. TB1, 209, 329–330.

45. Prussian pianist and composer Charles Meyer (Schumann spelled his surname *Mayer* in his diaries) grew up in Russia, studying with John Field in Moscow and St Petersburg. He was a prolific composer, who published no less than 351 opus numbers, and as a teacher in St Petersburg and later Dresden he taught 800 pupils, including Mikhail Glinka, cf. Franz Gehring and John Warrack, 'Mayer, Charles', in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford

the *Toccata* is not categorised as a technical study by its title, its contents certainly suggest an element of technical aim, with its light passagework and repeated notes. Schumann, too, most likely perceived this work as an *étude*, as Meyer's *Toccata* may have served as an early inspiration for Schumann's own *Toccata* op. 7, which was titled *Exercice pour le Pianoforte* in its earliest incarnation from the following summer. Schumann practiced Meyer's *Toccata* on 6, 7 and 9 December 1828, and again for five days over Christmas between the 22nd and 28th. His practice on this work seems to have sparked a short-lived infatuation with this now-forgotten composer: on 8 December he played his *Nocturne* no. 3, and at a family gathering at his sister Emilie's in Zwickau on 22 December, Schumann played a set of variations by Meyer together with the *Toccata* and *Nocturne*.⁴⁶

A few months later, Schumann received Hummel's tutor, *Ausführliche theoretisch-practische Anweisung zum Piano-Forte-Spiel* ('A Complete Theoretical & Practical Course of Instructions on the Art of Playing the Piano Forte'). To an even greater extent than scales and *études*, Schumann's practice during February and March 1829 suggests an almost obsessive, albeit brief, engagement with the *Anweisung*. Following its arrival on 13 February, Schumann was deeply preoccupied with the exercises during the following days. Thus, he played the 'finger exercises' daily between 17 and 20 February, and again regularly between 4 and 16 March, noting as much as five hours of practice on Hummel's tutor alone on 18 February.⁴⁷ Despite initially only appearing in short bursts, the practice on scales and finger exercises in particular had a profound impact on Schumann's understanding of piano technique, especially in relation to the cultivation of touch. As will be demonstrated in the next chapter, this was one of the foremost values in Wieck's pedagogy, and as Schumann's own technical and pedagogical output shows, these principles were passed on from Wieck to Schumann.

What continued to be conspicuously absent from Schumann's practice routines during the first years of his studies with Wieck was the work on performing repertoire, which only seemed to occur in conjunction with the few concert appearances he made. Neither Wieck nor Schumann ever suggested why this could have been the case. However, given Wieck's insistence on a cultivated touch as the *sine qua non* of piano playing combined with Schumann's general lack of pianistic training, Wieck may have found it necessary for Schumann to establish a technical foundation before venturing into the study of performing repertoire. This would most likely have suited Schumann's preference for sight-reading and improvising. Without investing time in fully digesting the piano literature with which he engaged, Schumann would have benefitted

University Press), accessed 1 April 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/18156>.

46. For Schumann's practice on the *Toccata* and other works by Charles Mayer, cf. TB1, 152–153, 158–160.

47. TB1, 174. 'Fingerübungen aus Hummel 7–12 Uhr'. For other mentions of the *Anweisung* during February and March 1829, cf. TB1, 174–175, 178–181.

from developing a set of basic technical skills—tools upon which he could depend in his daily musical life. This approach is somewhat parallel to the practice of the jazz musician of today, who may hone his playing skills through scales and exercises to achieve technical freedom when performing.

Early Practice on Piano Literature: Concert Preparations

While Schumann began the study of technical work at an early stage of his studentship with Wieck, it was his practice on works from the piano literature which underwent the most significant transformation during the following years. Before he made the decision for a musical career in the spring of 1830, his work on concert pieces was restricted to his preparations towards the only two concerts he gave during his studies with Wieck: one in his hometown of Zwickau on 28 April 1829 and one in Heidelberg on 24 January 1830, the latter being the only publicly advertised piano concert performance of his career.⁴⁸ Despite the lack of any purposeful continuous practice of concert pieces during his first year of studies with Wieck, surviving diary records nevertheless demonstrate that he at least did practice in the periods up to these performances. Schumann thus began preparing for his concert in Zwickau nearly two months before the performance, starting his practice on Hummel's Piano Concerto in A minor op. 85 on 4 March, and Moscheles's *Alexander Variations* on 17 March.⁴⁹ After a period of consistent records of practice, during the period from 6 April until a rehearsal of the Hummel Concerto on the 23rd, Schumann only recorded practising his concert repertoire on 15 and 18 April, and between this rehearsal and the performance five days later, no records of actual piano practice survive.⁵⁰

His preparations towards the other concert—the publicly advertised performance of the *Alexander Variations* in Heidelberg on 24 January 1830—were somewhat similar. According to a letter to his brother Julius, written after the event had taken place, Schumann reported that he had been practising this work for eight consecutive weeks prior to the concert, and on the day of the performance he felt that he 'played really well'.⁵¹ This is supported by his diary, which

48. Schumann recorded these two events in his diary, cf. TB1, 192, 221.

49. Schumann only mentioned Hummel's Piano Concerto in A minor on 4 and 5 March, but without any other repertoire projects underway his mentions of 'Clavier' (6 March) and 'Clavierübungen' (11, 12, 14 and 16 March) most likely referred to practising the Hummel concerto. After commencing work on the *Alexander Variations* on 17 March, he recorded practising Hummel on 21, 23, and 26 March and Moscheles on 3 April, as well as sessions of unspecified piano 'practice' ('Übungen') on 2 and 5 April, cf. TB1, 178, 180–183, 185–187.

50. While Schumann does not seem to have practiced much after 5 April, he practiced the Hummel Concerto and had a lesson with Wieck on the 9th and 'exchanged ideas on Hummel's Concerto' ('Austauschung der Ideen über d. Hummelsche Concert') with Schlegel. On 15 April, Schumann practiced Hummel and on the 18th he recorded 'sober piano playing' ('nüchternes Clavierspiel'), cf. TB1, 189.

51. Briefe, 104. 'Ich hatte aber auch acht Wochen darüber studirt und wirklich gut gespielt'. Translated in

shows him practising on 27 November 1829 in preparation for the ‘first concert rehearsal’ on the 30th.⁵² Following this, records of work on the *Alexander Variations* are scattered over the coming months in his diary: on 1 December, Schumann celebrated that he was now ‘properly able to play the first variation’, feeling joy over ‘conquering it’; and between 28 December 1829 and 6 January 1830 there are almost daily reports of progress: ‘beautiful, wonderful piano playing’ and ‘very good finger exercises’ on 29 and 30 December, ‘wonderfully studied’ piano on 2 and 3 January 1830, and again ‘wonderful playing’ on 6 January.⁵³ After a few days of focus on reworking his Piano Quartet as a symphony—a composition which he had been working on since the days of the *Quartettgesellschaft* in Leipzig, Schumann admitted on 10 January that his piano playing was ‘lagging’, with the result that he felt like ‘no solo player’ at the orchestra rehearsal at the museum.⁵⁴ Following practice on the 14th, a ‘good’ rehearsal on the 17th, and ‘morose’ chord playing on the 18th, there is a complete absence of records on practice until the concert day. Based on the diary entries alone, it could appear that he refrained from practising in the days up to the most important event in his musical career at this time.

However, he may have been working more diligently than his diaries would lead to assume. As stated in the Introduction, one of the most important reasons for his occasional lack of diary keeping was busyness and general preoccupations with life (see page 23). Nevertheless, the time in Heidelberg away from Wieck proved otherwise less productive than the previous year in Leipzig. Despite continuous diary records between his arrival on 21 May 1829 and an extended diary pause from 15 July onwards, the piano is only mentioned very sporadically, as his practice was impaired by his newly acquired grand piano by Mannheim-based maker Karl Ferdinand Heckel (1800–1870) being out of tune until the piano tuner arrived on 29 June.⁵⁵ After having spent more than five months in Heidelberg, Schumann summed up the situation in a letter to Wieck, admitting that he had been ‘improvising a good deal, but not playing much from the page’ with the result that although his touch had ‘become more powerful in the *fortes*

Letters, 101. Letter to Julius Schumann of 11 February 1830. In his diary, Schumann noted that he ‘stumbled’ in the beginning (‘mein Stolpern am Anfang’), but recovered so much that the final variation was ‘complete’ (die letzte Variat[ion] vollendet gespielt’), cf. TB1, 221.

52. TB1, 209–210. ‘Tonleitern – Studium der Alexandervariationen’ (27 November 1829); ‘Alexandervariationen – [...] Klavier – Nichts’ (28 November); ‘Tonleitern – Alexandervariationen – Abends erste Konzertprobe’ (30 November).

53. TB1, 210, 213–214. ‘Ordenliches Können der 1sten Var[iation] – Freude über Gedult u. Besiegung’ (1 December 1829); ‘Abends Probe im Museum’ (28 December 1829); ‘Alexandervariationen – schönes, herrliches Klavierspiel – sehr guten Fingerübungen’ (29 and 30 December); ‘Klavier, schön studirt’ (2 and 3 January 1830); ‘Clavier – schönes Spiel’ (6 January).

54. TB1, 214–215. ‘Schleppen an’s Clavier’ (10 January 1830); ‘Abends Probe im Museum – kein Solospieler’ (11 January).

55. TB1, 198, 201, 203. ‘Aerger über’s verstimmte Clavier’ (21 May 1829); ‘zu Hause sehr Lahme Fantasie u. Zorn über mein Clavierspiel’ (18 June); ‘Klavier u. düstere Fantasie’ (20 June); ‘keine Cigarren, verstimmte Clavier, verstimmtes Wetter, kein Geld, keinen Freund, keinen Spas[sic]’ (28 June); ‘Clavierstimmer’ (29 June).

and more tender and eloquent in the *pianos*, he may have had 'lost some' of his 'accuracy and execution', the sum being that his development was 'almost equivalent to standing still'.⁵⁶

After the Heidelberg performance in January 1830, his practice seemed similarly irregular: it had begun well, with 'proper piano study' on 29 January, but after an idle period which included the 'most disgraceful week' of his life in which he 'smashed' his own piano, Schumann only managed to do a 'little piano study, after four weeks of complete neglect' on 5 March.⁵⁷ The records on piano practice picked up again, with daily accounts between 21 and 25 March and again on the 30th.⁵⁸ In general, it is characteristic of the diaries from this period that, although they show Schumann practising, little information remains on what he played. Aside from his concert pieces and Kalkbrenner's Fantasy on *Femmes sensibles* op. 12, which he recorded playing on 14 and 25 March 1830, there is practically no information about his repertoire between 1828 and 1830.⁵⁹ If he had learnt new works for the benefit of his pianistic development or to expand his concert repertoire, there is no evidence. Regardless of the inconsistencies in Schumann's diary keeping, surviving records leave the impression of a rather erratic attitude to practice: in his technical work, he seemed unable to maintain a consistent routine, and he rarely practised concert pieces without a particular event in sight. It certainly did not help that he was away from Wieck.

The Decision for a Career in Music

The turning point came in April 1830. On Easter Sunday, Schumann heard Paganini in a concert in Frankfurt and around the same time he met a student of Paganini's, Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst.⁶⁰ Despite his acquaintance with Leipzig's concert life, Schumann had not yet encountered a virtuoso of Paganini's stature—a musician whose artistry made a deep and lasting impression on Schumann. Concurrently, he was beginning to receive external recognition for his playing, which must have boosted his confidence. As he wrote to Wieck, he was 'modestly conscious' of his 'superiority over all the other Heidelberg pianists', and others, too, praised his pianistic skills: local musicians and music lovers commended his playing, including music

56. Briefe, 79. 'und so hab' ich, wie ich glaube, weder große Rückschritte noch Vorschritte gemacht, was freilich so viel wie Stillstand wäre'. Letter to Wieck of 6 November 1829; Translated in Letters, 77–78.

57. TB1, 224–225, 227–228, 232. 'Ordenliches Klavierstudium' (29 January 1830); 'Dies ist die liederlichste Woche meines Lebens' (8 February 1830); 'Klavier zerhauen' (13 February); 'kleine Clavierübungen, seit 4 Wochen g[an]z vernachlässigt' (5 March).

58. TB1, 235–237, 239.

59. On 14 March 1830, Schumann played 'Kalkbrenners Op. 12', and although diary records on the days 21–24 March only contain various notes of 'Clavier', he recorded 'piano and Kalkbrenner' ('Clavier u. Kalkbrenner') on the 25th, cf. TB1, 235, 237.

60. Claudia Macdonald, 'Schumann's Piano Practice: Technical Mastery and Artistic Ideal', *The Journal of Musicology* 19, no. 4 (2002): 532; TB1, 282.

director Hofmann ('and this wonderful, quiet fire'), a Professor Morstadt ('superb') and a music teacher Faulhaber ('I see in you an extraordinary master').⁶¹ In addition, he had received 'endless applause and congratulations' to the extent that he felt 'uncomfortable' for his Heidelberg performance in January 1830, with the grand duchess clapping 'like anything'.⁶² It was probably the combination of these factors—the experience of hearing Paganini plus praise for him as a pianist amongst Heidelberg's cultural elite—which inspired him to consider abandoning his law studies for a prospective career as piano virtuoso. With the support of Wieck, Schumann introduced the idea in a letter to his mother on 30 July 1830.⁶³ She was eventually convinced by Wieck's promise to turn Robert into one of 'the greatest living pianists, more spirited and warmer than Moscheles and more magnificent than Hummel' within just three years. Schumann only had to fulfil Wieck's demands of fully subjecting himself to a specific practice regime.⁶⁴

The decision for a career in music made a deep impact on Schumann's piano practice. Töpken recalled Schumann practising seven hours daily during their time in Heidelberg, and upon his return to Leipzig in October 1830, Schumann kept up this habit by setting aside a similar number of hours daily for practising—six to seven hours by his own estimate.⁶⁵ The change in attitude was noted by others, too; Dorn, Schumann's theory teacher between July 1831 and April 1832, remembered him as a 'tireless worker', noting that 'if I gave him one assignment, then he always returned several'.⁶⁶ While Schumann may have exaggerated his practising efforts—he recalled having practised consistently for three to four hours every day for twelve weeks in a letter of 25 September 1830 to Dr Carus—he had established a routine which appears to have been far more stable than ever before.⁶⁷

61. Briefe, 79. 'Ohne mich im Geringsten zu überschätzen, so bin ich mir meiner Ueberlegenheit über alle Heidelberger Klavierspieler recht gut und bescheiden bewußt'. Letter to Wieck of 6 November 1829. Translated in Letters, 78. TB1, 210–211. Quotes taken from Schumann's list of praises titled 'Complete Talk on my Piano Playing', written down between 1 and 24 December 1829.

62. Briefe, 104. 'Die Großherzogin klatschte bedeutend'. Letter to Julius Schumann of 11 February 1830. Translated in Letters, 100–101; TB1, 282. '[...] unendlicher Applaus, Gratulationen [...]'].

63. Letters, 112–116.

64. Berthold Litzmann, ed., *Clara Schumann: Ein Künstlerleben*, Nach Tagebüchern und Briefen, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1902–1909), 21. 'Ich mache mich anheischig, Ihren Herrn Sohn, den Robert, bei seinem Talent und seiner Phantasie binnen 3 Jahren zu einem der größten jetzt lebenden Klavierspieler zu bilden, der geistreicher und wärmer wie Moscheles und großartiger als Hummel spielen soll.'

65. Quellen, 55, 77. Töpken: 'Oft sahen ihn schon die frühesten Morgenstunden am Instrumente, und wenn er mir sagte: "Heute morgen habe ich sieben Stunden Klavier gespielt, ich werde heute Abend gut spielen, wir müssen zusammenkommen".' Schumann: '1830 ging ich nach Leipzig zurück. Fleißige, fortgesetzte Studien; ich spielte täglich über 6–7 Stunden.'

66. Quellen, 74. 'Schumann was während seiner Lehrzeit ein unverdrossener Arbeiter, und wenn ich ihm Ein Beispiel aufgab, lieferte er dann immer mehrere'.

67. Siegfried Kross, ed., *Briefe und Notizen Clara und Robert Schumanns*, 2nd ed. (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1982), 28. 'Im Sommer bin ich aber wieder prächtig hineingekommen und habe mich die letzte zwölf Wochen hindurch jeden Tag regelmäßig drey-vier Stunden gut und mit Nutzen geübt.' (25 September 1830).

In contrast to his almost exclusive focus on technical work during the winter of 1828–1829, Wieck's new working plan made Schumann study new works without a specific performance on the horizon. Thus, when Schumann began his new diary, the *Leipziger Lebensbuch*, he was already deeply engaged with the new practising programme—an ordeal which combined technically demanding concert pieces with études and exercises: the Rondo of John Field's Piano Concerto in E^b major H29; Chopin's Variations on *Là ci darem la mano* op. 2; Rondo on a theme from Rossini's *Moses* op. 37 and *Variations brillantes sur la Cavatine favorite de la Violette de Carafa* op. 48 by Henri Herz; Hummel's Piano Sonata op. 81; a *Rondeau* by Karl Winkhler (1795–1846); the first movement of Schumann's own (unfinished) Piano Concerto in F major, as well as a *Mittelsatz*, presumably from the same piano concerto (now lost). The technical work came from Czerny's op. 151 ('Trilleübungen'), Hummel's *Anweisung* ('Fingerübungen') as previously observed, Moscheles's *Studien für das Pianoforte* op. 70 nos. 3 and 19, as well as scales.⁶⁸

Initially, Schumann made solid progress. Thus, he opened his new diary on 11 May 1831 with 'wonderful practice' on the *Rondo* from Field's third Concerto. The following days he 'played much piano', continuing his work on Field, as well as practice on Moscheles' Étude op. 70 no. 3 and the *Mittelsatz* from his own Piano Concerto, feeling 'satisfied' that his sobriety 'had paid off'.⁶⁹ However, following another diary pause things changed for the worse. On 25 May, he gave voice to his frustrations with the Moscheles Étude, as it still remained 'anxious and insecure' after fourteen days of study.⁷⁰ He asked himself:

How can this be? It seems as if in the first [week] the mere life, fresh spirit and charm elevate the mechanics above themselves; later, when [the spirit] fades and [the charm] weakens, only the dry, cold keys remain for a long time. But shouldn't the time come when the piece plays [the spirit]? It ought to be so complete. To be sure, I have an ideal, and it is also attainable. If I continue like this I won't tremble.⁷¹

68. Bodo Bischoff, *Monument für Beethoven: Die Entwicklung der Beethoven-Rezeption Robert Schumanns* (Cologne: Dohr, 1994), 115–116. For further discussions of the exact titles of Schumann's repertoire from this period, cf. Macdonald, 'Piano Practice', 536 n. 23.

69. TB1, 330–332. 'Viel Clavier gespielt. Field's Rondeau, Moscheles dritte Etüde, mein Mittelsatz' (12 May 1831); 'Früh auf – meine Nüchternh[eit] belohnt sich; sehr schön gespielt' (13 May). 'Clavierspiel gestern recht zufrieden u. Fortschritte' (14 May).'

70. TB1, 333. 'Die Moschelessche Etüde ängstlich u. unsicher – Woher kommt das? vierzehn Tage daran gespielt, aufmerksam u. beharrlich studirt'.

71. TB1, 333. 'Woher kommt das? vierzehn Tage daran gespielt, aufmerksam u. beharrlich studirt – es scheint, als ob in der ersten das bloße Leben u. der frische Geist u. Reiz die Mechanik über sich selbst hinaushöbe: später wie dieser verlischt u. jener schwächer wird, bleibt dann Zeit lange die trockne, kalte Taste; Aber sollte dann nicht die Zeit kommen, wo dann das Stük ihn spielt, so ganz müßte es seyn. Ich habe wohl ein Ideal u. es ist auch zu erreichen. Fahr' ich so fort, zittre ich nicht.' Translated in Macdonald, 'Piano Practice', 537.

Schumann did not disclose what this ideal could have been. However, over the following weeks he developed a host of fictional characters, based on people from his immediate musical circles, including Friedrich Wieck ('Meister Raro'), Clara Wieck ('Cilia'), and Dorn ('Musicdirector'), as well as himself—presumably—as 'Florestan, the improviser'.⁷² This turned into a vaguely defined intention to write a novel, *Wunderkinder* ('Prodigies').⁷³ Whilst the details of the story remained unclear it revealed the duality between technique and artistry as an underlying theme. In the novel, Paganini embodied the confluence of two musical 'ideals': the 'ideal of skill' and 'mechanics' as characterised by Hummel with that of expression.⁷⁴ Paganini—or the character representing his persona—would have a 'wonderful' impact on Clara, as the novel was to portray her striving towards the ideal performance which he represented. Overall, Schumann found Clara's playing to be 'childish' at times, and he must have thought that she could benefit from the expressive powers of Paganini.⁷⁵ For Schumann, however, the primary obstacle in his own striving towards his Paganinian ideal was mechanical. Over the following months, this became an overshadowing issue.

Two days after his initial discouragement with the Moscheles Etude, his spirits were still low: 'In the morning everything went miserably—completely miserablinsky', he wrote on 27 May.⁷⁶ In his lesson, Schumann had played Herz' *Carafa Variations*, which he had begun studying two days earlier; Wieck had—by Schumann's judgement—'correctly characterised' his performance as tossing the piece out 'like a dog': 'I cannot possibly dissemble or people will notice the pretense in a moment—to Clara it comes from within'.⁷⁷ Schumann did not provide any explanation as to what Wieck's statement that he 'tossed the piece out like a dog' meant. Macdonald argues that Schumann may have given his teacher 'the brilliant performance he desired,

72. TB1, 339. 'Von heute an will ich meine Freunden schönere, passende Namen geben. Ich tauf' Euch daher folgendermaßen: Wieck zum Meister Raro – Clara [Wieck] zur Cilia – Christel zur Charitas – Lühe zum Rentmeister Juvenal – Dorn zum Musikdirector – Semmel zum Justitiar Abrecher – Glock zur medicinischen alten Muse – Renz zum Studiosus Varinas – Rascher zum Student Fust – Probst zum alten Maestro – Fleschig zum Jüngling Echomein' (8 June 1831).

73. TB1, 342. Nothing ever came of this novel.

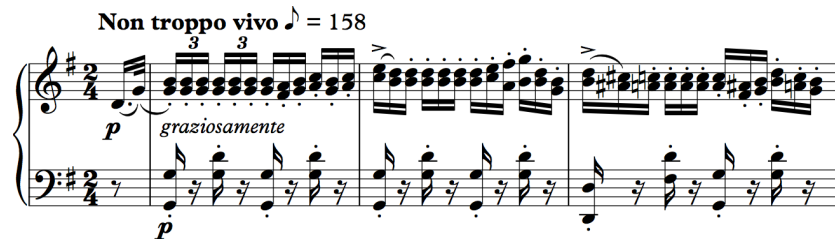
74. TB1, 342. 'Unterwegs entstand in mir die Idee zu den "Wunderkindern"; Charaktere u. Personen fehlen mir nicht, aber Handlung u. Verbindung der Fäden. Paganini muß wunderbar mit auf Cilia einwirken. Vorläufige Personen sind Florestan, der Improvisator – Paganini, unter andern Namen – Wieck – Clara (Zilia) – Hummel als Ideal der Mechanik – [...] Ideal der Fertigkeit – Ideal des Ausdruck's – Verbindung beyder in Paganini – das Streben Claras' (15 June 1831).

75. TB1, 350. 'Zilia spielt sie kindisch u. zu brilliant.' Schumann's observation of Clara's performance of the Chopin Variations (17 July 1831).

76. TB1, 334. 'Des Morgens ging Alles miserabel – ganz miserablinsky' (27 May 1831). Translated in Macdonald, 'Piano Practice', 537.

77. TB1, 333–334. 'Var.[iationen] v. Herz. Op. 48 mir zum Einstudiren' (25 May 1831); 'Ich würfe die Herzschen Variationen wie einen Hund hin – charakterisirt richtig – 'Ich kann ohnmöglich heucheln oder die Leute merken die Vorstellung im Augenblicke – bey Clären kommt es von innen heraus' (27 May 1831). Translated in Macdonald, 'Piano Practice', 537–538.

but at the sacrifice of artistic quality'.⁷⁸ However, this statement could also be interpreted as the exact opposite: that Schumann gave a performance in accordance with his musical convictions at the expense of technical accuracy. If he was unable to conquer the Moscheles Étude within a fortnight, how could he possibly master the difficulties of an elaborate work such as the *Carafa Variations* in two days?⁷⁹ Even bringing the first variation to a technical standard which would allow him to carelessly toss it out 'like a dog' seems questionable:



Example 2.1. Herz: *Variations brillantes sur la Cavatine favorite de la Violette de Carafa* op. 48, Variation 1, bars 1–3

The problem was a matter of technique, and Schumann sought to find a solution with the introduction of a separate practice diary: the *Uebungstagebuch*.

Three Stages of Learning: Improvisation, the *Uebungstagebuch* and the Realisation of 'True Music'

Following his lesson with Wieck on 27 May, there was no immediate progress: 'piano nothing, entirely bad—also no strength to study further', he reported on the 29th.⁸⁰ The following day he inaugurated the *Uebungstagebuch* ('Practice Diary'). A series of concise exercises freely based on excerpts from his practising programme, the *Uebungstagebuch* consists of a total of 103 exercises written on four manuscript pages of his *Skizzenbuch I*, spanning the period from 30 May 1831 to 6 April 1832. Each exercise is carefully numbered, some are dated and a few exercises carry a reference to the work it originated from, at least with a composer's name. Subsequently, Bodo Bischoff and later Matthias Wendt identified a great number of the sources behind the unreferenced exercises.⁸¹ Schumann produced all of the 43 identifiable exercises over the summer of

78. Macdonald, 'Piano Practice', 538.

79. *Variations brillantes sur la Cavatine favorite de la Violette de Carafa* op. 48 by Henri Herz consists of an introduction, seven variations and an extended *Finale alla Militare*.

80. TB1, 335. 'Clavier nichts, g[an]z schlecht – auch keine Kraft zum fortstudiren'. Translated in Macdonald, 'Piano Practice', 538.

81. Bischoff, *Monument für Beethoven*, 117–118; Robert Schumann, *Studien- und Skizzenbuch I und II*, vol. 1 of *Neue Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Matthias Wendt, Neue Gesamtausgabe 3 (Mainz: Schott, 2011), 184–191.

1831: one exercise from Herz's *Carafa Variations*, three from each of Moscheles' *Études* op. 70 nos. 3 and 19 respectively, five from Hummel's Piano Sonata in F# minor and finally one exercise from Beethoven's Piano Sonata in C minor op. 10 no. 1. The remaining 30 exercises were based on Chopin's *Variations* op. 2; covering more than two-thirds of the identifiable exercises, this clearly illustrates the obstacles that this work would present to him.

Schumann began serious practice on the Chopin *Variations* around the time he inaugurated the *Uebungstagebuch*. He had been introduced to the work after his return to Leipzig in the autumn of 1830, when his friend Theodor Töpken (1808–1880) remembered Schumann playing 'several pieces [variations]' from this opus.⁸² Over the course of the following year, Schumann's interest flared up again, and on 27 May 1831 he decided to write a review of the work.⁸³ The Chopin *Variations* first appeared in his practice on 6 June after continued struggles with the Moscheles *Études*, with only little progress.⁸⁴ Thus, 2 June was a 'dog day', he felt 'no desire to play' on 4 June, and his frustrations culminated on the 5th: 'music, you are disgusting to me and odious to death'.⁸⁵ Similarly to his work on the Moscheles *Études*, his progress on this work would turn out to be painfully slow, worsening the crisis he was going through. Although Schumann was 'revelling in Chopin' on 19 June, Wieck was by no means impressed with his progress, and was beginning to lose patience with his student: 'Dear Robert, I beg you—get something finished finally. Before your eyes I'll tear it to pieces'.⁸⁶ Schumann acknowledged that the fault was his own, suffering from a 'terrible penchant for the half-finished, for waste and destruction'.⁸⁷ Aside from his proneness to drinking, this could possibly have been his tendency to improvise or sight-read at times when he had to deliver a focussed effort. Yet again, he was sinking back into 'into the old sludge', and he summed up the following ten days as 'mad days'.⁸⁸ Not even the arrival of his new Melzer grand piano on 15 June seemed to have made

82. F. Gustav Jansen, *Die Davidsbündler* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1883), 71. Töpken visited Schumann in Leipzig during the autumn of 1830.

83. Schumann's review, titled *Ein Werk II* appeared in *Allgemeinen Musikalische Zeitung* on 7 December 1831. This was his first published article.

84. TB1, 337.

85. TB1, 336. 'Der zweite Juni was ein Hundetag' (2 June 1831); 'Keine Lust zum Spielen' (4 June 1831); 'Musick, wie bist Du mir ekelhaft und in dem Tod zuwider!' (5 June 1831). Translated in Macdonald, 'Piano Practice', 538–539; The *Uebungstagebuch* shows several exercises on études from Moscheles' op. 70: he practiced *Étude* no. 3 on 2 and 4 June, and *Étude* no. 19 on 3 June, cf. Robert Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch I' (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn, D-Bnu NL Schumann 13, 1831–1832), 93, accessed 1 April 2017, <http://digitale-sammlungen.ulb.uni-bonn.de/ulbbnhans/content/titleinfo/1043463> (hereafter cited as SB1).

86. TB1, 344. 'Schwelgen im Chopin – Lieber Robert, ich bitte dich – bring endlich etwas raus und fertig. Vor ihren Augen zerreiße ich's, sagte Wieck.' (19 June 1831). Translated in Macdonald, 'Piano Practice', 538.

87. TB1, 344. 'Ein schrecklicher Hang zum Halben, zur Verschwendung u. zur Zerstörungssucht liegt doch in mir, die sich auch im Trunk zeigen' (19 June 1831).

88. TB1, 344. 'Ich sinke, ich sinke in den alten Schlamm zurück' (20 June 1831); 'Böse Tage, die mir Gott u. mein Herz vergeben möge!' (21–30 June 1831).

the slightest difference to his spirits during these weeks.⁸⁹

However, on 1 July he announced a 'new beginning': 'new resolutions—well begun as usual; eight hours of study on the Chopin [Variations]—with fire and gains'.⁹⁰ Schumann produced a work plan, which he managed to maintain for the following nine days:

From 7–10 [a.m.] exclusive study of [the Variations by] Chopin with the greatest possible stillness of the hand; I pursue my plan from page to page, but then choose from among them places for practice. At 11 o'clock I usually begin with Czerny's trill studies, which cannot be played relaxed, quietly and lightly enough. Then come the Hummel finger exercises in the 4 classes according to the compass of their intervals, to each of which I add every day five new ones. The afternoon I give over entirely to the inclination of my mood, but all the same, I always continue with the F# minor Sonata by Hummel.⁹¹

Compared to his practice during the first year in Leipzig, Schumann had come a long way in planning and structuring his work days. In addition, his practising methods had evolved just as significantly since his admission to Wieck's class. Going back to January 1830, he had recorded the details of his efforts while preparing for his concert performance in Heidelberg:

2 hours of finger exercises—the *Toccata* 10 times—6 times finger exercises—20 times the variations themselves—and tonight the *Alexander Variations* are simply not working—feeling regret about it—really deeply.⁹²

While this appears to have been merely repetitive run-throughs, he could at the time not grasp *why* the *Alexander Variations* remained unsatisfactory, despite all his hard work. However, while still in Heidelberg, this was beginning to change. Töpken recalled Schumann being 'discontented' with the pace of his technical improvement. Consequently, the two sought all 'means and ways to shorten the [learning] process' and at first believed they had succeeded, although

89. TB1, 342. 'Klavier schlecht' (15 June 1831).

90. TB1, 344. 'Neuer Abschnitt – Neue vorsätze – Gut angefangen wie gewöhnlich; acht Stunden im Chopin studirt – mit Feuer u. Nutzen' (1 July 1831).

91. TB1, 348–349. 'Von 7-10 alleiniges Studium im Chopin mit möglichster Ruhe d. Hand; meinen Plan verfolge ich von Seite zu Seite, nehm' aber dan[n] Stellen zu Uebung mitten heraus. Um 11 Uhr fing ich gewöhnlich mit Czerny's Trillerübung [an], die nicht loker, leise u. leicht genug gespielt werden kann. Dann kamen die Hummelschen Fingerübungen in den 4 Classen ihren Intervallenumfang nach, denen ich jeder an jeden Tage fünf neue hinzugab. Den Nachmittag hab' ich ganz zur Disposition meiner Laune bestimmt, fahre aber doch sicher u. regelmäßig in der Fis moll Sonate von Hummel fort.' Translated in Macdonald, 'Piano Practice', 548; In addition, Schumann noted practising eight hours on Chopin on 1 July itself, followed by hours daily on this work alone until 5 July, cf. TB1, 344, 346.

92. TB1, 213. '2 St.[unden] Fingerübungen – 10 mal die Toccata – 6 mal Fingerübung – 20 mal die Variat.[ionen] selber – u. Abends ging's doch nicht mit Alexandervariationen – Aerger drüber – wirklich tiefer' (4 January 1830).

Schumann later ‘acknowledged his error’, Töpken recalled.⁹³ While Schumann may have forced his technical development at this time, the intention of developing methods to aid the learning process could be useful enough, as it was something which may have helped him during the crisis which sparked the introduction of the *Uebungstagebuch*.



Figure 2.1. Schumann: *Uebungstagebuch*, 1 (Skizzenbuch I, 93)

Pressed to meet his own ideals, Schumann had developed a more analytical approach to the study of musical works by 1831. He reduced technically challenging sections to their essence, focussing on a short sequence of notes or a single change of hand position. In accordance to his belief in the dedicated study of technical material, Wieck was sceptical towards the notion that the practice of piano literature could replace rigorous work on finger exercises. Although Schumann at the time was still deeply engaged in the exercises from Hummel's *Anweisung*, the *Uebungstagebuch* shows the first steps away from Wieck's methodology: a year later, he had thus come to the conclusion that 'advanced students' rarely play 'exercises from piano methods', but 'invent exercises of their own devising and incorporate them into their improvisations somewhat

93. Quellen, 55.

in the manner of preludes', as one's playing would become 'more varied and lively'.⁹⁴ While it would be speculative to assume that Schumann incorporated the exercises of the *Uebungstagebuch* into his own improvisations, the development of exercises based on his performing repertoire would most likely have been a step towards this realisation. However, this approach turned the acquisition of technique into a creative act in itself, and ensured that the striving for brilliancy would not interfere with the freshness of the player's inspiration.

This inspiration was paramount to the success of the performance—an intangible quality which goes beyond the dexterity of execution or the intellectual powers of musical interpretation. Having experienced the loss of this particular quality numerous times during his study of new works, Schumann formulated his experience of learning as a three-stage process during the month of July 1831. In the vein of a classic *thesis-antithesis-synthesis* model, Schumann elaborated on the 18th:

In the first [period] of studying, the spirit and the charm of the object keeps one fresh and cheerful, the fingers moving one after another. At the second [stage] the blossom of fantasy gradually fades away: only the notes remain, they must be grasped, the keys fall, the tones are absent, much does not work; this is the period of despair [...]. What can I say about the third [period], where spirit and form, mechanics and fantasy flow into one another, when one becomes true music? Let me see your paradise!⁹⁵

The *Uebungstagebuch* seemed to be his best solution to overcome the second stage. On the surface, its focus on solving purely mechanical problems could suggest an approach to piano practice far removed from the inspired performance which he evidently sought to produce. However, the distribution of exercises reveal an attempt to systematically nurture this curiosity and inspiration.

Schumann's methods focussed on selecting portions from across the work, as he now understood that merely studying the work from beginning to end would result in carelessness and

94. Robert Schumann, *Etudes pour le Pianoforte d'après les Caprices de Paganini*, op. 3, 1st ed. (Leipzig: Friedrich Hofmeister, [n.d.]), 2–3. 'Er räth sogar vorgerückten Spielern an, nur selten Uebungen aus Clavierschulen zu spielen, lieber eigenen zu erfinden und etwa als Vorspiele im freien Fantasiren einzuflechten, da dann Alles viel lebendiger und vielseitiger verarbeitet wird.' (Hereafter cited as RS3-Hof); Translated in Robert Schumann, *Paganini-Etuden*, op. 3, ed. Ernst Herttrich (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2009), xiii (hereafter cited as RS3-Henle).

95. TB1, 354. 'Mir dünkt' es gibt drey Perioden bey Künstlern, die schon auf einer Stufe stehen: in der ersten des Studiums hält einen der Geist u. der neue Reiz des Objects frisch u. mun[ter] u. hebt die Finger über sich selber, in der zweiten fallen nach u. nach die Fantasieblumen weg, es stehen Noten da, es muß gegriffen werden, die Tasten fallen, es bleiben Töne aus, Vieles paßt nicht; das ist die Periode zum Verzweifeln, die ich nun zweymal in meinem Leben überwunden habe, bey dem A moll Concert, u. bey den Alexandervariationen. Was soll ich aber von der dritten sagen, wo Geist u. Form, Mechanik u. Fantasie ineinander fließen, daß man leibhafte Musik ist? Laß mich deine Paradiese sehen!' (18 July 1831).

mental fatigue—in other words, a loss of the ‘spirit and the charm’ of the first stage. His advice on the study of the *Paganini Studies* could just as well apply to the study of the Chopin Variations or any other large-scale work:

The editor advises against studying these capriccios, or large-scale works of any sort, one after the other. Instead, the student should set them aside from time to time, extracting particular passages, playing them in context, and finally polishing them from the beginning until he considers it advisable to give the work its finishing touches. For just as the loveliest of things will meet with indifference or satiety when displayed improperly or enjoyed to excess so only moderate yet sensitive study will prove capable of facilitating the progress of the student, keeping his powers in balance, and preserving that magic that will always remain the soul of art.⁹⁶

Schumann used this exact method of ‘extracting particular passages’ in his piano practice during early July 1831, where he set time aside to ‘choose from among [The Chopin Variations] places for practice’. The *Uebungstagebuch* demonstrates how he picked specific sections scattered across the work: on 5 and 8 July he produced one exercise from the ‘Alla Polacca’ on each day, and on 7 July he left one exercise from the *Introduction*, six exercises from Variation 1, as well as one exercise from Variation 3.⁹⁷ During his struggles with the Moscheles Étude in May and June of 1831, Schumann had formulated his ideal performance, embodied by Paganini as the union of mechanics and expression. While Hummel represented the idealised figure of mechanics, Schumann refrained from defining his ideal of expression. Based on his practice from the time, it can be deduced that it contained the element of ‘magic’, that he was pursuing to preserve this ‘soul of art’ in his performance of Chopin.

Whilst Schumann systematically structured his practice to reproduce this ‘magic’ in his performances, he did not disclose what this concept specifically entailed. However, in his ‘Advice to Young Musicians’, an appendix to *Album für die Jugend* op. 68 (1848), he used a similar term to describe the experience of improvising. Thus, in this piece of reflection on his own youth, Schumann elaborated on the joys and dangers of extemporisation:

If Heaven has bestowed on you a fine imagination, you will often be seated at your piano in solitary hours, as if attached to it; you will desire to express the

96. RS3-Hof, 9. ‘Der Herausgeber rath kaum dazu, diese Capricen, wie überhaupt grössere Stücke, hintereinander zu studiren. Lieber lege man sie von Zeit zu Zeit weg, nehme einzelne Stellen heraus, spiele diese im Zusammenhang, feile dann wieder von vorne an, bis man es für rathsam hält, die letzte Hand an’s Werk zu legen. Denn wie das Schönste, steht es an der unrechten Stelle oder wird es übertrieben genossen, endlich Gleichgültigkeit oder Ueberdruß erzeugt, so wird auch nur ein mässiges, dann aber mit Wärme fassendes Studium das Fortschreiten erleichtern, die Kräfte im Gleichgewicht halten und der Kunst ihren Zauber bewahren, der nun immer die Seele bleibt.’ Translated in RS3-Henle, xxii.

97. SB1, 93.

feelings of your heart in harmony, and the more clouded the sphere of harmony may perhaps be to you, the more mysteriously you will feel as if drawn into magic circles [magische Kreise]. In youth these may be your happiest hours. Beware, however, of abandoning yourself too often to the influence of a talent that induces you to lavish powers and time, as it were, upon phantoms. Mastery over the forms of composition and a clear expression of your ideas can only be attained by constant writing. Write, therefore, more than you improvise.⁹⁸

What Schumann in later years dismissed as mere 'phantoms' were an important emotional outlet in his youth. Thus, as a student, Schumann did exactly what he later warned against. Without any significant training in counterpoint or composition, he lacked the necessary theoretical means—or the desire for that matter—to articulate his artistic intentions away from the instrument.

Instead, improvising provided a way to bypass the mandatory theoretical layer of form and counterpoint—i.e. the compositional equivalent to the second stage of learning—allowing him to express his innermost feelings through music. It was the power of inspiration alone that fuelled the musical expression, or as he expressed it himself: 'tones in and of themselves cannot actually mill anything which has not already been ground by the feeling'.⁹⁹ Going back to the early Leipzig days in 1828, a diary entry of 14 August describes how memories of life materialise as sound through extemporisation:

When I think of my childhood or the year 1826 I fall upon A-minor tonalities etc.: when I think of last September harsh dissonances in pp. pp. are automatically unleashed. Whatever thoughts come in the moment will seek expression in tones. The heart has already felt each tone on its keys, just as the keys on the piano must first be touched before they sound. In the moments when one thinks of nothing or of trivial things, the fantasy becomes flatter and the playing paler; when one thinks of music itself, contrapuntal phrases and fugues come forth easily.¹⁰⁰

98. Robert Schumann, *Album für die Jugend*, op. 68. 'Mit einem Textanhang vermehrte Auflage', 2nd ed. (Hamburg: Schuberth, 1849), appendix, 4. 'Verlieh die der Himmel eine rege Phantasie, so wirst du in einsamen Stunden wohl oft wie festgebannt am Flügel sitzen, in Harmonien dein inneres aussprechen wollen, und um so geheimnisvollen wirst du dich wie in magische Kreise gezogen fühlen, je unklarer dir vielleicht das Harmonienreich doch ist. Der Jugend glückliche Stunden sind diese. Hüte dich indessen, dich zu oft einem Talente hinzugeben, das Kraft und Zeit gleichsam an Schattenbilder zu verschwenden dich verleitet. Die Beherrschung der Form, die Kraft klarer Gestaltung gewinnst du nur durch das feste Zeichen der Schrift. Schreibe also mehr, als du phantasirt.' Translated in Robert Schumann, *Advice to Young Musicians* (Leipzig: J. Schuberth & Co., 1860), 28, 30.

99. TB1, 111–112. 'Abendfantasie; die Dämmerungsstunde ist der eigentliche Feenstaub, der aus der Seele Fantasie entlockt, sie ist an sich phantastisch u. das Opiat der Stürme. [...] Endfantasie pp. – Töne an u. für sich können eigentlich nichts mahlen, was das Gefühl nicht vorher mahlt' (14 August 1828).

100. TB1, 112. 'Wenn ich an den letzten September denke, so löst es sich wie von selbst in harten Misstönen auf

As the quote testifies, the manipulation of sound was an important expressive agent in Schumann's improvisations, including explorations of various dynamics, colours of harmony and characteristics of tonalities.

In particular, the playful exploration of sonority through ambiguous tonalities seemed to have triggered his imagination. In this vein, Schumann insisted on using the key of F^b major and not the enharmonic E major in another improvisation from the same period: 'F^b major improvisation; [...] F^b is the truly favourite key of the Grim Reaper'.¹⁰¹ Because of its enharmonic relationship to E major, F^b major only sounds like F^b major inside the mind of the player, and since the key only exists within the boundaries of its performance and not in a score, using such a key is without any tangible meaning to the music. Still, to the improviser it can be of great significance, since it is exactly the *feeling* of this key which evokes the impression of Death and not necessarily its aural materialisation. In his own mind, he could even ignore the conventional rules of harmony, and let any association with an actual key or tonality dissolve. As he wrote the following night at the piano on 13 August 1828: 'improvisation this evening in X major; the highest in music unite in the free fantasy, which is lacking in the strict musical composition'.¹⁰² What seemed to matter during such an improvisation was Schumann's own *experience* of the music; to others, the sound of 'X major' may have been no different than any other conventional key.

Although a highly intangible parameter, Schumann used sonority in a similar capacity to judge the quality of his own performance. In May 1831—shortly before the first signs of crisis appeared—he celebrated the success of his practice in the first entries from the *Leipziger Lebensbuch*. In particular, he was pleased with the tone he produced, playing with 'soft, pearly touch and pearly fantasy': 'it really sparkles and flashes inside with a thousand eyes, peacock eyes, heaven-eyes, girl's eyes, May eyes'.¹⁰³ Schumann's use of such flowery language to describe the brilliance of his touch, demonstrates how important his own experience of the tone was to his overall satisfaction his performance. This imagery could very well have been the 'magic' which came forth so naturally in his improvisations, and that he systematically tried to nurture in his

pp. pp. Was einem gerade einfällt, sucht man mit den Tönen auszudrücken. Jeden Ton hat aber schon das Herz auf ihren Tasten gefühlt, wie die Tasten am Clavier erst berührt werden müssen, ehe sie klingen. In den Minuten, wo man an nichts oder Geringes denkt, wird auch die Fantasie matter u. das Spiel fader; wenn man an die Musik selbst denkt, so kommen leicht contrapunktische Sätze u. Fugen hervor.' (14 August 1828). Translated in Dana Gooley, 'Schumann and Agencies of Improvisation', in *Rethinking Schumann*, ed. Roe-Min Kok and Laura Tunbridge (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2011), 129. Schumann's father died in 1826.

101. TB1, 117. Original italics. 'Fesdurfantasie; [...] Fes dur die eigentliche Favorittonart des Sensenmannes' (17 August 1828).

102. TB1, 112. 'Fantasie aus X dur Abends; in der freyen Fantasie vereint sich das Höchste in der Musik, was wir noch in Compositionen d. reinen Satzes vermießen' (13 August 1828).

103. TB1, 329, 331. 'Des Morgens schön geübt u. gespielt – Field's drittes Rondeau – es funkelt u. blitzt ordentlich drinnen mit tausend Augen, Pfauenaugen, Himmelsaugen, Mädchenaugen, Mayaugen' (11 May 1831); '[...] weicher Perlenanschlag u. Perlenfantasie' (13 May 1831).

daily practice.

Despite his best intentions, the magic remained elusive. Thus, on 17 July, Chopin 'went well', but Schumann was still unable to realise his inner 'ideal' of the work.¹⁰⁴ In his study of Chopin, the second stage of his three-stage learning process continued to be an insurmountable obstacle, similar to his struggles with the Moscheles Etude and Herz's *Carafa Variations*. While he had managed to overcome this hardship twice before—in preparing Hummel's A minor Concerto and Moscheles' *Alexander Variations* for his performances in 1829 and 1830—there was no resolution in sight this time, and once again he gave way to frustration, crying 'from rage' on the 20th.¹⁰⁵ Wieck was away for a few weeks from 21 July, and despite the temptation to fill the 'void' with 'the beer glass', he stood firm on his plans to compose, and to work on Chopin.¹⁰⁶ Upon Wieck's return, composing had gone well enough for Schumann to play the first movement of his own Piano Concerto to a group of friends on 9 August. However, the Chopin Variations had been trailing, and he felt that they were supposed 'to sound differently', but concluded that perhaps 'the spirit no longer resonated' in him.¹⁰⁷



This chapter has traced the evolution of Schumann's attitude to piano practice in the years surrounding his decision to pursue a career in the musical profession. During this period, Schumann's piano practice underwent a significant transformation. Even in the first years of his studies with Wieck, his piano playing was primarily based on sight-reading and improvisations, and he only practised musical works when preparing for concert performances, applying methods which were repetitive at best. Ignited by his change of career plans, Schumann began building a concert repertoire, which he practised diligently for the purpose of his own pianistic development. However, during the spring and summer of 1831, it became increasingly evident that his practising methods were inadequate to meet the demands of his teacher, and, not least, himself. To remedy the technical shortcomings he perceived, Schumann inaugurated the *Uebungstagebuch* in late May 1831, applying a more systematic approach to piano practice. Little did it help; despite his best efforts he could see Clara Wieck—still a child—master the Chopin Variations and other taxing works in a prodigiously short time. Despite glimpses of

104. TB1, 350. 'Mit Chopin ist's immer gut gegangen, wie mit Allen. Aber das Ideal, das ich zu seiner Darstellung in mir trage, kann ich nicht so bald erreichen. Zilia spielt sie kindisch u. zu brilliant.' (17 July 1831).

105. TB1, 354. 'Mit dem Clavier ging's ein Paar Tage herzlich miserabel; gestern weint' ich vor Wuth! Abends wurd' es schöner.' (21 July 1831).

106. TB1, 355. 'Nun Meister Raro fort ist, fühl' ich doch eine Leere, die seit einigen Tagen das Bierglas ausfüllen sollte. Doch bin ich immer bey mir geblieben und weiß die Schranke. Es drängt mich zum Componiren! – Und doch mächt' ich meinen Chopin nicht lassen. Mo'gen geht's wieder Seite für Seite' (25 July 1831).

107. TB1, 358. 'Mit Chopin hab' ich zum drittenmal angefangen. Es geht u. geht nicht – ich weiß selbst nicht; mir ist's als müßte es andert klingen oder sollte das vielleicht der Geist seyn, der nicht mehr klingt' (30 July 1831).

improvement over the summer of 1831, the feelings of despair and resignation returned.

What seemed to frustrate Schumann the most was his inability to produce the ideal ‘true music’ of his self-defined three-step learning process. This was the technically secure performance, which nevertheless preserved an element of ‘magic’ and ‘spirit’ of the first stage that he only seemed able to recreate in his improvisations. An important agent of expression in these improvisations was his imaginative use of piano sonority. Although testimonies from Schumann’s diaries describe his own highly subjective experience of the sonorities he produced when improvising, there is no direct evidence as to what these sessions sounded like; or, in other words, it is only possible to establish sonority as fundamental to his ideal performance, albeit with no tangible sense of the sonority he was aspiring to produce. Thus, to answer the question what ‘true music’ was to Schumann and *why* he was unable to reproduce it in his interpretations, Schumann’s concept of piano sound must first be studied in the most concrete manner possible. The following chapters will therefore examine the core of his sound concepts and ideals, to establish the ideals, principles and techniques of the most basic, irreducible unit of the pianistic vocabulary: the production of a single tone.

Chapter 3

Tone Ideals: Schools of Touch

To establish the fundamental principles of tone production in Schumann's piano playing, the underlying issue of his sound ideals must first be addressed: what sort of sound did he aspire to produce? This is primarily a question of his ideological position between the European piano traditions, which naturally requires two answers—one reflecting on touch, and one examining his preference of instrument. As these two topics lead to very different conclusions, they shall be reviewed separately in the following two chapters.

Schumann's position on touch is somewhat ambiguous. On one hand he seemed to wholeheartedly comply with Wieck and the English singing tone ideal; on the other hand, his engagement with the Viennese Hummel would suggest a diametrically opposite position. By examining his technical practice and pedagogy in detail, this chapter seeks to account for this conflict. The outcome suggests a flexible, more universal stance, which embraced a variety of tone ideals.

On the surface, the identification of ideals in relation to tone production appears to presuppose that it is possible to alter the timbre of a single note on the piano by the means of touch alone. Such an assumption would doubtlessly challenge Rosen's conclusion that 'there is nothing one can do with a piano except play louder, softer, faster and slower'.¹ He elaborates: 'a single note on the piano cannot be played more or less beautifully, only more or less *forte* or *piano* and longer or shorter'. However, there is not necessarily a conflict between such ideals of tone production and Rosen's sober observation. The present task is not to grasp an objectively measurable difference of timbre between a variety of touches, but to capture Schumann's ideal piano tone on a conceptual level. The tone which Schumann sought to produce may indeed not have been audibly different from any other piano tone, but the very *idea* of a given tone would affect its musical context. Thus, the notion of a singing tone would encourage the melodic

1. Charles Rosen, *Piano Notes: The Hidden World of the Pianist* (London: Penguin Books, 2002), 23–24.

shaping of a phrase, just as the experience of a sparkly touch in the Viennese style could infer a light, slightly detached style of playing. These tone concepts would, in turn, inform the player when selecting an appropriate playing technique for a given passage: whether one should use flatter or more curved fingers, apply pressure (i.e. 'weight') from the hands or arms, or assist the finger action with movements from the shoulders, elbows or wrists. As will be shown, Schumann was clearly in accordance with 'the generations of many thousands of piano teachers' who believe that 'pushing down the key more gracefully' will make a perceivable 'difference to the sound', as Rosen states.² Whether he and the piano pedagogues in question were right is not pertinent here. Conversely, a belief in the variation of tone through touch was a defining trait of Schumann's pianism.

That Schumann believed in the ability to vary a single tone through the sole means of touch is evident in an entry in Herlossohn's *Damen-Conversationslexicon* of 1834. Classifying the leading schools at the time, he reveals his outlook on the various types of tone, and their relation to the pianistic landscape at the time:

Touch: the way keyboard instruments produce tones. The one who produces the most beautiful touch, produces the most beautiful tone. One differentiates between pleasant, full, soft, precise, heavy, hard, stiff [tones] etc. [...] Despite their perfect, beautiful touch, the piano virtuosos ['Klavervirtuosinnen'] Szymanowska, Belleville and others never formed their own school [of playing], as the virtuosos Field, Moscheles and Hummel did; the former [Field] as the representative of the grand manner with a full and heavy tone, Hummel as the model of the light, clear style of playing, and Moscheles (also Kalkbrenner, although he is more in between Moscheles and Field) is to be considered between the two former [Field and Hummel]. Every piano player leans more or less to this or the other school, yet almost everyone possesses a different touch. This [the touch] could be called the face of the tone's soul ['Gesicht der Tonseele'].³

According to Schumann, touch was the primary factor in distinguishing one school of playing

2. Rosen, *Piano Notes*, 24.

3. Robert Schumann, 'Anschlag (Musik)', in *Damen-Conversations-Lexicon*, ed. Karl Herlossohn (Leipzig: Fr. Bolckmar, 1834), 233. 'Anschlag, die Art, auf Tasteninstrumenten Töne hervorzubringen. Den schönsten Anschlag wird der haben, der den schönsten Ton auffindet. Man unterscheidet netten, vollen, weichen, präzisen, schweren, harten, steifen u.a. [...] Die Klavervirtuosinnen Sczmanowska[!], Belleville u.a. konnten sich trotz ihres vollkommenen, schönen Anschlags keine eigene Schule bilden, wie unter den Virtuosen Field, Moscheles, Hummel gethan, von denen der erstere als Repräsentant des großartigen Genres, mit vollem schweren Ton, Hummel als Muster in der leichten, netten Spielart, Moscheles (auch Kalkbrenner, obwohl er mehr die Mitte zwischen Moscheles und Field halt) als der zu betrachten ist, der beide Erstere begrenzt. Jeder Klavierspieler neigt sich mehr oder weniger zu dieser oder jener Schule, dennoch besitzt fast jeder einen verschiedenen Anschlag. Man könnte ihn das Gesicht der Tonseele nennen.' Schumann refers to Maria Szymanowska (1790–1832), together with Belleville among Europe's leading pianists at the time.

from the other, or as he expressed it once in his diary: ‘touch is the discovery of the perfect tone’.⁴ These playing traditions were represented by specific personalities rather than by a country or region. Only the grand masters of the day qualified as bearers of such schools. Thus, great virtuosos, including Hummel, Moscheles, Kalkbrenner and Field developed a touch distinct enough for each of them to attract a following of pianists who emulated their style, even amongst those who had never heard them perform, Schumann included. Unfortunately, nowhere did Schumann disclose his own position regarding these masters. However, whilst these schools of playing primarily represented a variety of aesthetics and sound ideals, their realisation depended on different approaches to piano technique. Understanding which type of piano technique that Schumann was striving to achieve is key to evaluating his affiliations with the leading pianistic ideologies.

Wieck: The ‘Great Field-ish School’ and Melodic Shaping

Because of Wieck’s belief in the production of a beautiful tone as quintessential to piano playing, it is by no means coincidental that Schumann’s first year of studies with Wieck had an exclusive focus on scales, études and finger exercises. However, rather than reducing the student’s technical practice to mere finger gymnastics, Wieck’s aim was to cultivate the student’s touch—a prerequisite for the realisation of his tone ideal: the singing tone. In *Piano and Song*, Wieck repeatedly emphasised the ability to imitate the qualities of the singer’s voice as ‘a necessary foundation for piano-playing’.⁵

When I speak in general of singing, I refer to that species of singing which is a form of beauty, and which is the foundation for the most refined and most perfect interpretation of music; and, above all things, I consider the culture of beautiful tones the basis for the finest possible touch upon the piano. In many respects, the piano and singing should explain and supplement each other.⁶

As previously observed, it was the sound ideal modelled on the singer’s voice which brought forward the emerging preference for the *legato* touch and later the continuous syncopated pedal, supported by the increasingly resonant English pianos. The playing style which Wieck supported was most likely based on the singing tone ideal of the English and French schools, embodied by some of their most prominent advocates: Field, Kalkbrenner and Moscheles. Thus, he

4. Robert Schumann, 1827–1838, vol. 1 of *Tagebücher*, ed. Georg Eismann (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1971), 337. ‘Anschlag ist Auffindung des vollkommensten Tones’ (5 June 1831) (hereafter cited as TB1).

5. Friedrich Wieck, *Piano and Singing*, trans. Mary P. Nicholls (Boston: Lockwood, Brooks & Company, 1875), 13 (hereafter cited as PS).

6. PS, preface.

thought his pianistic training of Clara to be in the ‘great Field-ish school’, and having heard performances of Moscheles and Kalkbrenner, he enthusiastically commended their ability to produce a beautiful singing tone.⁷ Upon hearing Moscheles in 1831—by this time a London resident for nine years—he observed:

He drew from the Conrad Graf (for the past seven years he had only played on English instruments) the most beautiful tone—he never hurt [the piano]—but sounded always full—clear and satisfying.⁸

Similarly, Wieck admired the fullness of Kalkbrenner’s tone, whose playing he considered to be more or less his ‘ideal’:

A solid technique, evenness of playing, skill and clarity [...] and draws from the pianoforte the most beautiful and greatest possible tone, and sings through a correct touch [...] The principal representative today of such a great and in every way complete style of playing is the knight, Friedrich Kalkbrenner.⁹

What is remarkable here is not so much Wieck’s praise of Kalkbrenner’s ability to produce a beautiful tone as it is the observation of his ‘correct’ touch as the primary means to make the instrument sing. In Wieck’s pedagogy, touch was first and foremost a mechanical skill which could be trained, and he therefore saw the technical mastery of tone production as prerequisite to the realisation of the singing tone ideal: ‘until a correct touch has been acquired, it is of no use to talk about a fine singing tone’.¹⁰ Thus, the cultivation of what he described as a ‘broad, healthy, full’ and ‘distinct tone’ in the English and French schools relied on a craft, which could only be learnt through systematic study.¹¹

The first step in this process was the study of scales, as Wieck found ‘a good scale’ to be the ‘foundation of fine technique’.¹² According to Wieck, the student should begin practising scales ‘with each hand separately’, first ‘slowly, and gradually faster’, ‘*staccato*, *legato*, fast, slow,

7. Cathleen Köckritz, *Friedrich Wieck: Studien zur Biographie und zur Klavierpädagogik* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2007), 468, 472.

8. Clara Wieck, ‘Jugendtagebücher, vol. 1’ (Archiv des Robert-Schumann-Hauses Zwickau, D-Zsch 4877,1/2/4/7–A3, Zwickau), 238–239. ‘Er zog aus dem Conrad Graf (seit 7 Jahren hatte er nur englische Instrumente gespielt) den schönsten Ton – that ihm niemals weh – er klang aber immer voll – deutlich und höchst befriedigend.’

9. Friedrich Wieck, ‘Ankündigung über ein Konzert von Fr. Kalkbrenner’, *Leipziger Tageblatt*, 1833, 1238. ‘Eine solide Mechanik, Egalität des Spiels, Fertigkeit und Deutlichkeit [...] auch den schönsten und möglichst größten Ton aus dem Pianoforte zu ziehen, und durch einen regelrechten Anschlag auf demselben zu singen [...] Der erste Repräsentant so eines großartigen und in jeder Hinsicht vollendeten Spiels ist nun der Ritter Friedrich Kalkbrenner.’

10. PS, 26.

11. PS, 68, 81.

12. Friedrich Wieck, *Pianoforte Studien*, ed. Marie Wieck (New York: Schirmer, 1901), 27 (hereafter cited as Studien).

forte, piano [...] according to the circumstances'.¹³ Later on, the practice of scales should be expanded to also comprise double-stops, including octaves, thirds, sixths and tenths, 'at first through two and then through four octaves'.¹⁴ Wieck's own technical exercises demonstrate a variety of ways in which scales could be practised:



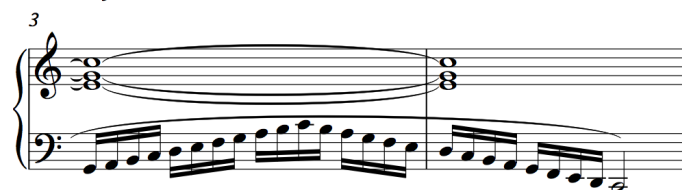
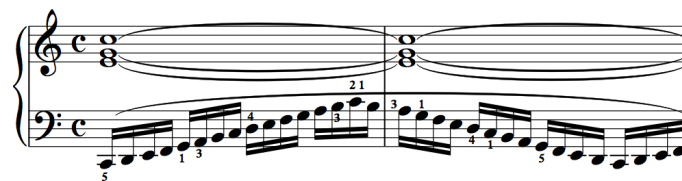
a. Exercise 11



b. Exercise 12



c. Exercise 19



d. Exercise 31

Example 3.1. Wieck, *Materialen*, 74–88. Scale exercises, part II, chapter C

This free-form type of work seemed to spark Schumann's imagination, and over the following years he refined his working methods on scale practice to an extent which eventually surpassed that of his master, demonstrating a long-term dedication to Wieck's principles, and even more

13. Studien, 27; PS, 35.

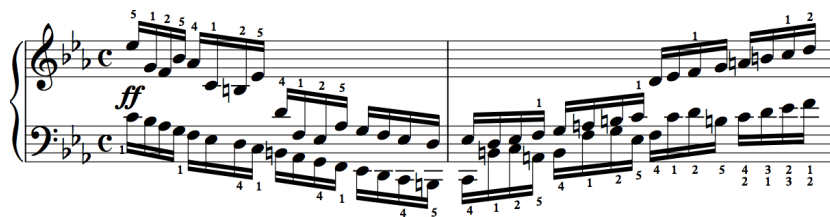
14. Studien, 27.

importantly a willingness to nurture a singing style of playing. This level of inventiveness is demonstrated by his own advice on scale practise in the preface to the *Paganini Studies* op. 3, and in his *Klavierschule*. In these two pedagogical works, he advocated scales and passage work to be practised ‘in *legato* with a strong emphasis on certain notes’ as a ‘particularly effective means of accentuating dissonances’, and in his *Klavierschule* there is a suggestion to play scales in triplets and sextuplets as well.¹⁵



Example 3.2. Schumann, *Paganini Studies* op. 3 1st ed., 8

Scales could also serve as a starting point for more elaborate two-part playing. In Example 3.3, the left hand plays the descending C minor scale with a counterpoint in the right hand, until the roles of the hands are swapped in the second bar:



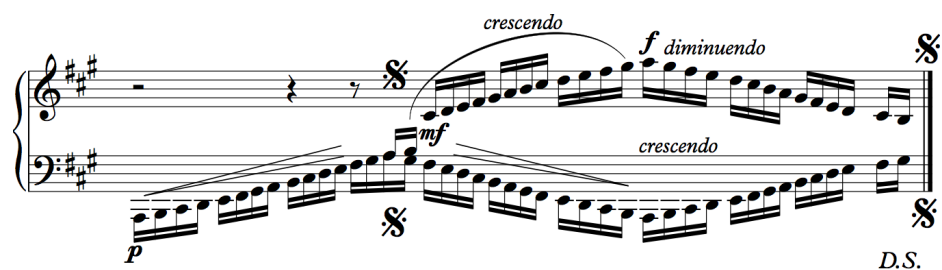
Example 3.3. Schumann, *Paganini Studies* op. 3 1st ed., 4

This provided a variety of ways to study the scales from a purely mechanical and coordinative perspective. However, it was when working on scales with a particular attention to touch and tone colour that they assisted the development of a singing tone.

Thus, the practice of scales was used as pedagogical means to develop two technically important prerequisites for a successful production of a singing tone on the piano. Firstly, there

15. Robert Schumann, *Etudes pour le Pianoforte d'après les Caprices de Paganini*, op. 3, 1st ed. (Leipzig: Friedrich Hofmeister, [n.d.]), 7. 'Mit dieser Caprice übe man auch Tonleitern oder Passagen mit scharfer Betonung einzelner Noten im Legato. Namentlich ist diese Art der Accentuation auf Dissonanzen mit guter Wirkung zu gebrauchen.' (Hereafter cited as RS3-Hof); Translated in Robert Schumann, *Paganini-Etuden*, op. 3, ed. Ernst Herttrich (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2009), xx (hereafter cited as RS3-Henle); Robert Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch I' (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn, D-Bnu NL Schumann 13, 1831–1832), 106. 'Die Tonleitern können auch in Triolen u. Sextolen geübt werden', accessed 1 April 2017, <http://digitale-sammlungen.ulb.uni-bonn.de/ulbbnhans/content/titleinfo/1043463> (hereafter cited as SB1).

was the fullness of tone which Wieck admired in the playing of Field, Moscheles and Kalkbrenner, and in line with Wieck's warnings against 'hurting' the piano, Schumann was aware of the quality of tone in his scale-playing; thus, he warned against playing accented notes with a 'harsh' or 'wooden' tone.¹⁶ The second technical aspect was the production of a *legato* which convincingly mimicked the phrasing and inflections of a singer. This requires a sensitivity to dynamic nuances as well as a fine control of touch, which Wieck clearly recognised when he advised students to practise scales and double-stops 'with every possible variety of light and shade'.¹⁷ Schumann put this principle into practice by suggesting that the student play scales 'in contrasting shades of colour', by applying different dynamic patterns to each of the two hands, as shown in a preliminary exercise to the *Paganini Studies*:



Example 3.4. Schumann, *Paganini Studies* op. 3 1st ed., 3

The mix of *crescendos* with *diminuendos* reinforces these scales as two-part textures, whose phrases require a well-developed ability to precisely nuance the touch of each hand respectively. In the same vein, Example 3.5 shows a more advanced variation, with the right hand playing ascending scales buried within a three-part texture, accompanied by sequentially descending five-note scales in the left hand:



Example 3.5. Schumann, *Paganini Studies* op. 3 1st ed., 5

The addition of counterpoint provides a layer of harmony, which in turn encourages the player to dynamically shade each step of the scale. What appears to be dry technical work is turned

16. RS3-Hof, 7. 'Achte aber der Spieler darauf, dass der Ton weder grell, noch hölzern werde.' Translated in RS3-Henle, xx.

17. Studien, 27.

into a study of melodic expression—an expression fundamental to the realisation of Wieck's singing tone ideal.

Wieck introduced a technical practice regime with the intent for Schumann to cultivate his touch, which in turn provided a greater variety of tone and thereby a more colourful, sonorous palette for Schumann to apply to his improvisations. As an advocate of Field and the English tradition of piano playing, Wieck's aim was for Schumann to develop a resonant singing tone, with a touch which could be finely nuanced to mimic the minute inflections of a singer's phrasing. Little information has survived on Schumann's work on scales during this period. However, the pedagogical materials which he produced in later years confirm that, like Wieck, he adopted scales as a method to cultivate melodic playing.

Hummel: Schumann's 'Ideal of Skill'

It would have been natural to assume that Schumann had a certain allegiance to Field and the English singing tone ideal, had it not been for his escalating conflicts with Wieck and his subsequent request for piano lessons with Hummel. This happened following a final attempt to reinvigorate his practice, for which he laid out an ambitious plan on 14 August 1831:

Some study on Chopin and Hummel can also not hurt—so in the following week I will take on the study of the first movement of my Concerto, the last one by Chopin, and the first of [Hummel's] F# minor Sonata, until I can play them: I will leave space below to write of my progress in eight days from today:

Niente

[...] I will also take on the task to play through all of Hummel's finger exercises, one after another, to have a complete overview. I will leave further space to write if I have done what I have set out to do:

*Niente*¹⁸

There was evidently tension between Schumann's pianistic ambitions and his simultaneous feeling of resignation, and consequently he became increasingly uneasy about participating in musical life in general. As a talented amateur, he received praise for his performances, but as a budding professional he felt uncomfortable at the musical gatherings at Wieck's house. Schumann

18. TB1, 360–361. 'Etwas ans Studiren von Chopin u. Hummel kann auch nichts schaden – so nehm' ich mir denn vor, in folgender Woche, den ersten Satz meines Concertes, den letzten von Chopin, u. den ersten aus der Fis moll Sonate schön zu studiren u. bis dahin zu können: ich lasse daher Platz, daß ich heute über acht Tage herschreiben kann / *Niente* / [...] Auch nehm' ich mir vor, Hummels sämtliche Fingerübungen einmal hintereinander zu spielen, um das Ganze einmal zu Ober-schauen, lasse daher wieder Platz, um herschreiben zu können, ob ich's gethan habe: / *Niente*'.

thus avoided playing at these events, and when friends wanted to promote him by introducing new connections, he rarely took up the offers.¹⁹ In addition, he was constantly confronted with Clara Wieck, whose pianistic accomplishments went far beyond what he could realistically ever hope to achieve. Wieck often attempted to stir up competition among his students by giving them similar pieces to learn, and it must have aggravated Schumann to see Clara learning the Chopin Variations in just eight days.²⁰ While he would admit to the beauty of Clara's playing at times, he believed that she—nine years younger than he was—had by no means developed the same artistic maturity and independence as he.²¹

Wieck, however, was gradually turning into the incarnation of soulless music making, to which Schumann had such an aversion. Schumann was even beginning to doubt Wieck's intentions as a teacher, following a shocking experience of Wieck punishing his son Alwin during a piano lesson.²² Wieck's interest in his children was by Schumann's conclusion only financial, and he even suspected that Wieck's love for Clara was 'not pure'. By this time, Schumann had completely lost faith in his teacher, confessing that the glimpses of Paganini that he had seen in Wieck turned out to be nothing more than mere 'charlatanry'.²³ Consequently, he contacted Hummel with the prospect of studying with him in Weimar. The idea of leaving Wieck and Leipzig to study with a celebrity teacher was not new; as early as July 1830 he had voiced interest in going to study with Moscheles, and by December of the same year he introduced the plan to his mother of becoming a student of Hummel.²⁴ Coinciding with Wieck embarking on a seven-month tour with Clara, Schumann eventually wrote to Hummel on 20 August 1831.²⁵

Considering the increasing dominance of the English and French schools on the European

19. Claudia Macdonald, 'Schumann's Piano Practice: Technical Mastery and Artistic Ideal', *The Journal of Musicology* 19, no. 4 (2002): 541–542.

20. *Ibid.*, 543.

21. Schumann probably thought Clara was even younger than she really was, as Wieck publicly lied about her age, claiming she was one-and-a-half years younger than her true age, cf. TB1, 337–338.

22. TB1, 364. 'Ich sah gestern einen Auftritt, dessen Eindruck unauslöschlich seyn wird. Meister Raro ist doch ein böser Mensch; Allwin [Wieck] hatte nicht ordentlich gespielt "Du Bösewicht, Bösewicht, ist das die Freude, die du Deinem Vater machen solltest["] – wie er ihn auf den Boden warf, bey den Haaren zaufte, selbst zitterte u. schwankte [...] Meister Raro! ich erkenne dich – dein Treiben ist weiter nichts als ein jüdisches Benehmen, deine Begeisterung nichts, wenn sie kein Viergroschenstück in der Tasche herumdrehen kann, dein feuriges Auge ist nicht ruhig u. schielt nach der Geldkassse, selber deine Liebe zu Zilia ist nicht rein — Du wärest der erbärmlichste der Schurken, hätte Zilia kein Talent' (21 August 1831).'

23. TB1, 363. 'Der Meister [Raro] setzt mit seiner poetischen Charlatanerie die Leute oft in's Erstaunen. Paganini hat mächtigen Einfluß auf ihn gehabt sein Gesicht, Haltung des Körpers haben sich jene angeeignet, ob bewußt, oder unbewußt weiß ich nicht. Jedenfalls zeugt's von wenig Originalität oder Production' (19 August 1831).

24. Clara Schumann, ed., *Early Letters of Robert Schumann*, trans. May Herbert (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1888), 115, 130. Letters to his mother, 30 July and 12 December 1830. Schumann planned to remain a student of Wieck for period of time before going to Vienna to study with Moscheles, unaware that Moscheles had moved to London five years earlier. (Hereafter cited as Letters).

25. F. Gustav Jansen, ed., *Robert Schumanns Briefe: Neue Folge*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1904), 31–32; Schumann mentioned writing Hummel on 14 August 1831, and eventually sent the letter off on the 22nd, cf. TB1, 362, 364–365.

piano scene, Schumann's choice of teacher was curious. As an influential figure in the early nineteenth-century the piano world, Hummel became one of the most prominent exponents of the Viennese postclassical tradition. Born in Bratislava in 1778, he was able to read music at the age of four, and started learning the violin and piano at five. At the age of eight Hummel and his family moved to Vienna, where he became a pupil of Mozart before embarking on a four-year tour through northern Europe and Britain.²⁶ Although his public performances became less frequent after his return to Vienna in 1793, Hummel built a solid reputation in Viennese musical circles during the following decade. He also took counterpoint lessons with Salieri and, most importantly, he became a friend and pupil of Haydn and later his successor at Esterházy in 1804; it was due to their friendship that Hummel managed to stay in this position until 1811, despite animosities between him and Prince Nikolaus Esterházy. After a short period of touring and an unsuccessful stint as Hofkapellmeister in Stuttgart, he was appointed Kapellmeister in Weimar in 1818—a position he held until his death in 1837. This period gave him time to compose, teach and tour until health problems in the 1830s reduced his concert activities. Despite the brevity of his performing career, he was highly regarded as a pianist, and as Sachs notes, reviewers were consistently praising 'his clarity, neatness, evenness, superb tone and delicacy, as well as an extraordinary quality of relaxation and the ability to create the illusion of speed without taking too rapid tempos'—combined with his restrained character, these were all virtues of the Viennese postclassical style.²⁷

A champion of Field and the emerging *bel canto* tradition, Wieck was by no means in favour of Hummel's approach to piano playing, and not surprisingly he 'took it ill' when Schumann in December 1830 for the first time mentioned his 'plan about Hummel [...] in a light and airy kind of way' to him.²⁸ Wieck's resistance to Hummel was probably partly due to the pedantry of his pedagogical method, which Wieck later referred to as 'schoolmasterly', partly because of his playing style which was in stark contrast to Field and the English school that Wieck admired so much.²⁹ A conversation between Wieck and Kalkbrenner from 1832 illustrates their common dislike of Hummel's Viennese style, which Wieck on a different occasion characterised

26. There have been claims that Hummel studied with Clementi while in London, which, according to Hummel biographer Mark Kroll, remain 'not substantiated', cf. Mark Kroll, *Johann Nepomuk Hummel: A Musician's Life and World* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 153 n. 52.

27. Joel Sachs, 'Hummel, Johann Nepomuk', in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed 1 April 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13548>.

28. Clara Schumann, ed., *Jugendbriefe*, 4th ed. (1886; Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1910), 137–138. 'Ich warf neulich bei Wieck den Plan wegen Hummel leicht und forglos hin—er nahm's aber übel'. Letter to his mother of 15 February 1831. (Hereafter cited as Briefe); Translated in Letters, 143.

29. TB1, 333. 'Wieck am 23sten: in zwey Jahren erklär ich öffentlich das ganze Hummel'sche Clavierspiel für ein Schulmeisterspiel' (24 May 1831).

as ‘subordinate’.³⁰ In a letter to his wife Clementine, Wieck reported from his encounter with Kalkbrenner:

Kalkbrenner: Forgive me, Sir, in Germany everyone plays in a manner—that is Hummel’s Viennese quick and tickling fashion—similar to Moscheles, before he improved from four years of studies with me and by Cramer in London. The same can be said of Czerny, Ciblini, Blahetka, Pixis, Hiller, in other words everyone who comes from Germany. Me: I must kindly ask to make the first exception. I am the worst enemy of this manner and know the Field-ish playing style very well. I would never teach my daughter and my students by other principles [than Field’s], and I could let my Clara prove this, if she had fourteen days to accustom herself to your grand piano.³¹

In this light, it could seem somewhat contradictory that Wieck himself originally supplied Schumann with the *Anweisung*. However, it is necessary to consider a number of circumstances which would have given him good reason to do so. Firstly, Schumann received Hummel’s tutor in February 1829 shortly after its publication, and the *Anweisung* was probably just as new to Wieck as it was to Schumann; although Wieck had his reservations about Hummel’s pianistic style, he probably knew too little about the actual contents of the *Anweisung* at this time to pass judgment on it. Secondly, there is no documentation that Wieck oversaw Schumann’s practice on the *Anweisung*; as already noted, Wieck obtained a variety of music for Schumann to explore on his own, and the work on this tutor could very well have been an independent initiative of Schumann’s. Thirdly, despite its roots in the Viennese school, the *Anweisung* contains much universally accepted pianistic advice about the mechanics of piano playing with which Wieck undoubtedly would have agreed, and Schumann’s engagement with the exercises of this tutor may not have problematic in itself. Lastly, Wieck seemed to have been concerned with Hummel’s performing style and not his abilities as composer. Thus, Wieck continued to use Hummel’s compositions in his own teaching, assigning Schumann the Piano Concerto in A minor op. 85 as well as the Piano Sonata in F# minor op. 81. Schumann was indeed well aware

30. Wieck, ‘Jugendtagebücher 1’, 112. ‘[...] daß ich Clara gleichmäßig musikalisch in der großartigen Fi[e]ldschen Schule, der die so genannte Wierische Spielart mir sehr untergeordnet scheint [...]’. Letter of 20 October 1831 to Baurat Saelzer in Eisenach.

31. Friedrich Wieck, ‘Letter to Clementine Wieck of 20 February 1832’ (Archiv des Robert-Schumann-Hauses Zwickau, D-Zsch 389-A2, Zwickau), . ‘Kalkbrenner[:] Verzeihen Sie, mein Herr, in Deutschland spielen alle nach einer Manier, d.h. nach der Wiener Hummelschen Hopp- u. Krabbelmanier so Moscheles früher, ehe er es vor 4 Jahren besser von mir u. Cramer in London gelernt, so Czerny, Ciblini, Blahetka, Pixis, Hiller, mit einem Worte alle, welche aus Deutschland hierherkommen. Ich[:] ich muß sehr bitten, bei mir die erste Ausnahme zu machen. Ich bin der größte Feind dieser Manier, kenne die Fieldsche Spielart genau, habe meine Tochter u. meine Schüler nie nach anderen Grundsätzen unterrichtet u. werde Ihnen das mit meiner Clara beweisen nach 14 Tagen, wo sie sich an ihren Flügel gewöhnt haben wird.’

that he was aspiring to study with a conservative among pianists, admitting to his mother that 'everyone advises me not to go to Hummel at Weimar, as they say he is ten years behind the times'.³²

Well acquainted with the singing tone ideal of Field as well as the fashionable French virtuoso composers, it seems puzzling that Schumann would contact a prime representative of a playing style in rapid decline. Jensen suggests that 'to Schumann, Hummel's greatest attraction was neither his skill as performer—he never heard him perform—nor skill as composer, but his celebrity', and continues:

Hummel had taught a number of distinguished pupils of Schumann's generation, including Hiller, Adolph Henselt, Rudolph Willmers, Sigismond Thalberg, and Julius Benedict. Having been a student of Hummel had been of benefit to each, and had enabled them to begin their performing careers by drawing on their teacher's fame. Schumann also hoped that the lustre of being associated with Hummel would open doors for him and make his start in music less arduous. That Hummel's name would be of more service to him than Wieck's was indisputable.³³

As he explained to his mother, the 'deep reason' for going to study with Hummel was that he could call himself 'a pupil of his'.³⁴ While there was probably some truth to this statement, there is also evidence to suggest that Schumann's principal reason for contacting Hummel was for him to remedy the technical problems he faced.

Schumann may have perceived Hummel as pedagogically qualified to solve issues which he believed to be out of Wieck's reach. Still unable to get past the second stage of his self-defined three-step learning process, Schumann thus blamed Wieck for his carelessness with technique. As Schumann wrote to Hummel, Wieck had been 'transformed' after Schumann's return from Heidelberg, no longer caring whether he played well or badly, with no attention to touch or fingerings.³⁵ Instead, everything had to be 'spirited and Paganinian'. According to the letter,

32. Briefe, 176. 'Alle Welt rät mir ab, nach Weimar zu gehn, der zehn Jahre zurück wäre.' Letter to his mother of 5 May 1832). Translated in Letters, 169.

33. Eric Frederick Jensen, 'Schumann, Hummel, and "The Clarity of a Well-Planned Composition"', *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 40, nos. 1/3 (1999): 62.

34. Briefe, 134. [...] 'geh' ich künftige Michaelis nach Weimar zu Hummel, um des pfiffigen Grunden wegen, nur ein Schüler von ihm zu heißen.' Letter to his mother of 12 December 1830. Translated in Letters, 130.

35. Schumann, *Briefe: Neue Folge*, 32. 'Aber wie fand ich meinen alten Lehrer verwandelt! Statt daß sonst jeder Ton wie auf die Goldwage gelegt, jeder Satz Seite für Seite aus das Gewissenhaftste studirt ward, ließ er mich jetzt Gutes u. Schlechtes bunt durcheinander spielen, bekümmerte sich weder um Anschlag, noch Applicatur—da sollte alles geistreich und Paganinisch vorgetragen werden, da konnt' ich nicht lebhaft u. huschelich[?] genug spielen. Mein Lehrer wollte mich dadurch über ein gewisses ängstliches, fast[?] mechanisches u. herausstudirtes Spiel heben; ich sah auch, daß seine Methode bei seiner Tochter, die in der That Ausgewöhnliches verspricht, besser aufschlagen mußte als bei mir, da ich mir eine so freie Behandlung noch nicht getrauen durfte. Aber dennoch bemerk' ich leicht, daß ich in diesem ganzen Jahre meines Leipziger Aufenthaltes vielleicht freiere Ansichten über Vortrag,

Wieck attempted to lift Schumann out of an ‘anxious, almost mechanical and over-studied’ style of playing. Despite gaining more freedom when performing, the overall result, Schumann believed, was loss of ‘mastery’ over the piano. As Jensen argues, this criticism of Wieck seems unfounded.³⁶ Throughout their collaboration, Wieck persistently insisted on daily technical work, and even during the spring and summer of 1831, Schumann continued working on technical materials, including studies by Czerny and Moscheles. For the same reason, Schumann’s claim that Wieck solely worked towards the ‘spirited’ performance with no attention whatsoever to the technical execution seems unlikely. Indeed, Schumann continued to hold Paganini in such high regard that he would publish two sets of piano adaptations of the Violin Caprices over the next two years. The true problem was probably not Wieck’s lack of attention to piano technique, nor was it his proclaimed infatuation with the ‘spirited’ performance; Wieck must have fallen victim to Schumann’s frustrations with his lack of technical progress.

The practice of five-finger exercises offered a solution to Schumann’s technical problems and, to an even greater extent than his work on scales, this type of exercise came to dominate his technical work during the years as piano student. While Wieck clearly acknowledged their utility and even produced a fair number of exercises himself, he was aware of how harmful the mindless practice of such exercises could be when studied insensitively: ‘it is sad to see how, engaged in artificial formalisms and in erroneous mechanical studies, players have forgotten the study of tone and of correct delivery’.³⁷ Schumann, however, did not seem to find finger exercises problematic, and along with the work on scales he even saw them as useful for the cultivation of touch. While in Heidelberg, he ascribed the ‘noisiness, slap-dash and terrible feebleness’ of his pianist colleagues’ playing styles partly to a lack of attention to technical work:

They have no notion of cultivating ‘touch,’ and of bringing a fine tone out of the instrument; and as to regular practice, finger-exercises, and scales, they don’t seem ever to have heard of anything of the kind. The other day one of them played me the A minor Concerto [by Hummel]. He performed it very correctly and without mistakes, keeping a sort of rhythmical march-time, and I could conscientiously praise him. But when I played it to him, he had to admit, that though his rendering was quite as correct as mine, yet somehow I made the whole thing *sound* different; and then how in the world did I get such a *violin-like* tone, etc.? I looked at him with a smile, put Herz’s finger-exercises before him, and told him to play one every day for a week, and then come and try the Concerto again. This he did, and in due

Auffassung u. dgl. bekommen, aber an eigentlicher Meisterschaft des Spieles wenig gewonnen hatte.’ (Letter of 20 August 1831).

36. Jensen, ‘Schumann, Hummel, and “The Clarity of a Well-Planned Composition”’, 64.

37. PS, 67.

time came back enchanted and delighted, and called me his good genius, because my advice had helped him so much. And he actually did play the Concerto ten times better.³⁸

Schumann did not explain exactly how these finger exercises would improve one's tone. Finger exercises in general—and certainly the ones by Hummel described below—trained the fingers' agility. A byproduct of such practice would be an increased firmness of the fingers and a more distinctive attack, which would ultimately lead to a greater clarity of execution and brilliance of tone. Far more than Wieck's singing tone ideal, this mode of tone production was related to the Viennese school of playing—in Schumann's practice embodied by Hummel and the *Anweisung*.

The *Anweisung* methodically goes through the principles of piano playing, from the basic concepts of musical notation to advanced playing techniques and issues of performance practice. The tutor is filled with technical exercises, short études and concert pieces, demonstrating that Hummel truly attempted to make a complete start-to-finish method for learning to play the piano. Organised in three main parts, the first part goes through the basics of piano playing and notation, including a comprehensive catalogue of various types of finger exercises; the second part introduces more advanced fingering patterns as well as the passing of the thumb, including exercises on scales, arpeggios and double stops; the final part is dedicated to various questions on performance, such as trills and ornaments, expression, pedalling, instruments and, not least, improvisation. Across its 444 pages, the tutor contains no less than 1868 exercises; for a student to follow this course from beginning to end surely required hours of daily work.³⁹

38. Briefe, 'Sie haben keine Idee von der Liederlichkeit und Rohheit des Vortrags und von dem Stechen, Wimmern und Poltern und der ganzen ungeheuren Mattigkeit ihres Spiels; an Anschlag und Ton und Gesang ist nicht zu denken und von Einstudieren: Fingerübungen und Tonleitern u. haben sie in ihrem Leben nichts gehört. Neulich spielte mir einer das A-moll Konzert vor; er trug es treu, fehlerfrei und altväterlich-präcis und in gewissenhaft-rhythmischem Marsch-takt vor, aber so, daß ich ihn lobte und er es verdiente; wie ich es ihm aber sodann vorspielte so meinte er: daß er es doch auch so richtig wie ich spielte aber bei mir klänge Alles viel anders und woher denn der Violinenton käme u. ich sah ihm darauf lächelnd in die Augen, suchte die Herz'schen Fingerübungen und sagte ihm: er möchte jeden Tag eine Stunde Fingerübungen spielen und nach acht Tagen wiederkommen und mir das Konzert vorspielen—er that es und kam nach einiger Zeit entzückt und begeistert und nannte mich seinen "guten Genius", so viel hätte ihm dies geholfen—er spielte dann das Konzert wahrlich zehnmal besser.' Letter to Wieck of 6 November 1829. Translated in Letters, 78; Schumann is most likely referring to Herz's *24 Exercices et Préludes* op. 21, as this was the only work about technique which Herz had published by this time. Rather short in duration, these pieces are best defined as a hybrid between an étude and a technical exercise: instead of treating one specific technical issue in each piece, each of Herz' *Exercices et Préludes* present a continuous series of technical exercises compiled into a single piece. For instance, the opening piece begins with a series of arpeggios across two hands, followed by parallel sixths played in two hands, then repeated notes, parallel thirds, a *leggiere* passage in *toccata*-style, octaves marked *staccato*, a chordal texture under a trill played by the fourth and fifth fingers of the right hand, and finally a slower melody played by the fifth finger in the right hand, accompanied by repeated triplet chords. All this is achieved within just two pages of music, cf. Henri Herz, *24 Exercices et Préludes*, op. 21, 1st ed. (Paris: Richault, 1830), 2–3.

39. The number of exercises is based on a count provided in Marion Phyllis Barnum, 'A comprehensive performance project in piano literature and an essay on J. N. Hummel and his treatise on piano playing' (PhD, The

It was first and foremost the methodology of the *Anweisung* which struck a chord with Schumann. Over the course of his piano studies, he was repeatedly attempting to digest, and even reimagine, Hummel's systematic approach to technique in his own practice and pedagogical output. This is particularly evident in a number sketches from 1831 in his *Skizzenbuch I*. A mix of transposed exercises from the *Anweisung* and fragments from his unfinished *Klavierschule*, these demonstrate how vigorously Schumann believed in Hummel's method, to the extent that around this time he came to refer to Hummel as his 'ideal of mechanics'.⁴⁰

Two years after initially receiving the tutor, Schumann revisited the *Anweisung* over the summer of 1831, and the 'finger exercises in four classes of intervals' in particular. According to a diary entry of 9 July, he described his plan to learn five new exercises every day; by this time he had managed to maintain this routine for nine days.⁴¹ The exercises in question form a series of five-finger exercises—predominantly one bar long—designed to be practised one at a time in a loop.⁴² Adding up to 616 exercises in total, this chapter is located in the opening part of the tutor and is divided into four sections, beginning with exercises spanning a fifth—in Hummel's terminology the 'first class of intervals'—increasing to a full octave in the fourth section, i.e. the 'fourth class'.⁴³ As the intervals increase, so do the number of possible combinations of notes; thus, not all fingers are assigned to the same note in a given exercise, but they have to constantly change position:

University of Iowa, 1971), 47. The original edition *Anweisung* was published by Haslinger in Vienna in 1828, and was the only German version available at the time of Schumann's piano studies. As a side note in his later review of Hummel's Etudes op. 125, Schumann noted that he played from 'Haslinger's edition of the work', suggesting that he played from the German version. In the following, any reference to Hummel's *Anweisung* given is to this edition, cf. Martin Kreisig, ed., *Music and Musicians: Essays and Criticisms by Robert Schumann* (London: William Reeves, 1877), 196; Johann Nepomuk Hummel, *Ausführliche theoretisch-practische Anweisung zum Piano-Forte-Spiel*, 1st ed. (Vienna: Tobias Haslinger, 1828); Later, the *Anweisung* appeared in a 'zweite auflage' (second print) in 1838—in reality a second edition due to its enhancements which include a longer section on extemporisation. Barnum erroneously assumes the second edition to have been published in 1828. Later research by Hulbert has shown that this edition was not published until 1838, one year after Hummel's death, cf. Barnum, 'Essay on J. N. Hummel', 45; Jarl Hulbert, 'The Pedagogical Legacy of Johann Nepomuk Hummel' (PhD, University of Maryland, 2006), 17; Johann Nepomuk Hummel, *Ausführliche theoretisch-practische Anweisung zum Piano-Forte-Spiel*, 2nd ed. (Vienna: Tobias Haslinger, 1838).

40. TB1, 342. 'Hummel als Ideal der Mechanik' (15 June 1831).

41. TB1, 348–349. 'Beyläufig ein Schema meines Studierens, wie ich es heute den 9ten Tage fortsetze: [...] Dann kamen die Hummelschen Fingerübungen in den 4 Classen ihren Intervallenumfang nach, denen ich jeder an jeden Tage fünf neue hinzugab.' (9 July 1831).

42. Hummel, *Anweisung*, 40–55.

43. As per Schumann's terminology, each group of exercises spanning the same interval will be referred to as 'classes'.



Example 3.6. Hummel, *Anweisung*, 52–53. ‘Uebungen im Oktav-Umfange, wobei die *Quinte* in der rechten Hand mit dem dritten, und in der linken mit dem zweiten Finger genommen wird.’

In addition, the third finger of the right hand and the second finger of the left act as a central pivot points to the hand on a fixed note, i.e. the fifth on the G. The remaining fingers change notes throughout each exercise, requiring the hand to constantly reshape itself, which makes it an exercise in hand flexibility and lateral movement of the fingers.

During July 1831, Schumann kept up with his goal of studying five new exercises every day, and by the end of the month he had managed to exceed this target: on 18 July he reached ‘no. 130’, by the 21st he played exercise ‘no. 160’, and after three ‘great days’ he managed to finish his work on this part of the *Anweisung* on 30 July 1831.⁴⁴ The result showed in an improved touch, which Schumann referred to as ‘fully great’ or ‘fully soft’. That he believed in the utility of these exercises is seen in a series of fragments in his *Skizzenbuch I*, in which he copied portions of Hummel’s exercises verbatim and transposed them across all major keys through the circle of fifths:⁴⁵

44. TB1, 353–354. ‘Heut komm’ ich schon bis 130 in allen Hummel’schen.’ (18 July 1831); ‘Heute komme ich 160 in Hummel.’ (21 July 1831); ‘Die drey großen Tage sind vorbei; Juvenalis und ich haben schön gefeiert durch Fingerübungen und den Anschlag könnt’ ich vielleicht vollgroß oder vollweich nennen. [...] Heute werd’ ich mit Hummels Fingerübungen ganz fertig.’ (30 July 1831).

45. SB1, 53–54, 79, 65–66. In all of these transposed exercises, Schumann has consistently left out G major. This is probably due to the layout of this key being very reminiscent of C major, the original key of these exercises. Transposing the exercises to G major would simply be of too little gain.



a. Nos. 10r9–110



b. Nos. 118–119



c. No. 127



d. No. 133

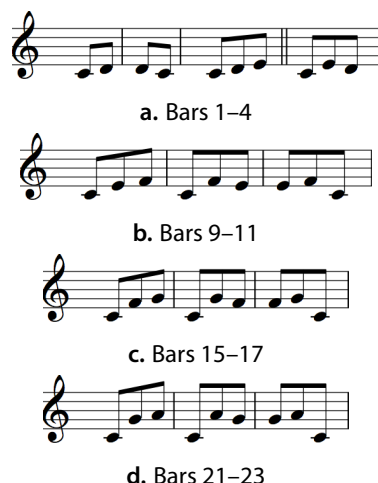
Example 3.7. Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch I', 53. Transposed exercises from Hummel's *Anweisung*

By practising the same exercises in various keys, the hand is trained to adopt a variety of positions, some of them unconventional and at times even uncomfortable.⁴⁶ Schumann did not transpose every single exercise to every possible major key; instead he would dedicate a number of exercises—ranging from two to nine—to a certain key, before progressing to the next key in the circle of fifths. Example 3.7a exemplifies exercise 109–117 of the 'first class of intervals', spanning a fifth, transposed to D major, followed by the exercises 118–126 in A major (Example 3.7b), then exercise 127–132 in E major (Example 3.7c) and B major from exercise 133 onwards (Example 3.7d). The transposed exercises found in *Skizzenbuch I* do not cover the entirety of the chapter from the *Anweisung* which Schumann was working on during July 1831. Nevertheless, compared to Hummel's counterparts, the broad representation of transposed exercises suggests that the practice on transpositions was integral to his work on this chapter.⁴⁷

46. When transposed, the exercises are naturally laid out differently on the keyboard than in the original key of C major. The fingerings, however, remain the same, which causes the player to take hand positions normally to be avoided, for instance by using the thumb on a black key, or having uneasy stretches between the third, fourth or fifth fingers.

47. Of all the exercises in 'four classes of intervals' from Hummel's *Anweisung*, Schumann has transposed a significant portion in his *Skizzenbuch I*: in the *first class* (fifths), Schumann transposed exercises 109–156 (out of 170); exercise 1–137 (out of 145) of the *second class* (sixths) survive, as well as exercises 1–53 (out of 60) from the *third class*, but none from the *fourth class*. To this end, the flyleaves of the sketchbook refer to transposed exercises from Hummel on pages 27 and 28, which are now missing. Based on the chronology of the surviving exercises in the sketchbook, these pages could very well have contained the first 108 exercises from the *first class*, cf. SB1, flyleaf, 53–54, 65–66, 79.

Schumann conveyed his belief in the thoroughness of Hummel's pedagogy to his own *Klavierschule*, where many of the finger exercises are modelled after Hummel's system.⁴⁸ While fewer in number, there is a considerable resemblance between Schumann's transposed exercises copied from the *Anweisung* (Example 3.7 on page 103) and these exercises from the *Klavierschule*.⁴⁹



Example 3.8. Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch I', 4. *Klavierschule* RSW:Anh:F5, 'Einstimmig'

As with the *Anweisung*, the exercises of the *Klavierschule* progress through different 'classes' of intervals, beginning with a range of a second and expanding up to a ninth. Also, the *Klavierschule* introduces similar two-part exercises:



Example 3.9. Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch I', 4. *Klavierschule* RSW:Anh:F5, 'Zweistimmig'

48. Friedrich Wieck's son, Alwin, published a collection of technical exercises after his father's death, which Alwin claimed had been used in Friedrich Wieck's teaching, including the training of his daughters. While these exercises demonstrate a systematic approach to technical development overall, the exercises are by no means as repetitive, nor as exhaustive, as Hummel's finger exercises which Schumann was so preoccupied with. Thus, the finger exercises in Schumann's *Klavierschule* appear to be modelled after Hummel and not Wieck, cf. *Materialen*, 1.

49. Whereas each 'class' of intervals spanned at least 60 exercises in the *Anweisung*, Schumann limited this to only six exercises per 'class'. This is mainly due to Schumann's exercises being significantly shorter than those by Hummel. In the *Klavierschule*, each exercise only consists of three notes, while Hummel's exercises typically contain as many as sixteen notes. This opens up considerably more possible combinations of notes, thus the difference in the number of exercises.



Example 3.10. Hummel, *Anweisung*, 48. 'Übungen im Sext- und Septim-Umfange, wobei die *Quinte* in der rechten Hand mit dem vierten, und in der linken mit dem zweiten Finger genommen wird.'

However, surviving fragments suggest that Schumann himself tried to come up with new ways of applying Hummel's 'classes of intervals' system to his *Klavierschule*.⁵⁰

In his *Klavierschule*, Schumann thus used Hummel's system as a template to build custom-made exercises fitted to his own needs.⁵¹ Firstly, his experience with transposing Hummel's exercises appears to have influenced the order of progression in his own tutor by introducing exercises on white keys only to begin with:



Example 3.11. Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch I', 13. *Klavierschule* RSW:Anh:F5

The aforementioned exercises in Example 3.8 on page 104 are categorised 'without upper notes' ('Ohne Obertasten', i.e. without black keys), suggesting that he had planned a subsequent separate category involving black keys. These exercises would invariably have reinforced hand positions less straightforward than the ones found in Example 3.8, and Schumann must have found it appropriate to introduce these at a later stage in his unfinished tutor. Secondly, other fragments of the *Klavierschule* show traces of variants on Hummel's system. The exercises in Example 3.11 display four-note scales, which gradually introduce wider intervals, first between the thumb and the second finger, then between the second and third fingers, and lastly between the third and fourth fingers. That Schumann produced such variants on Hummel's system not only demonstrates an intimate knowledge of the *Anweisung*, it also attests to his belief in its methodological approach by reproducing some of its core principles in his own pedagogy.

50. In his editorial remarks to the *Skizzenbuch I*, Matthias Wendt notes that it is 'somewhat difficult' to distinguish untitled exercises for the *Klavierschule* with jottings from Wieck's teaching. However, the concept of categorising exercises in 'classes of intervals' is unique to Hummel. That the following exercises should be passed down from Wieck is therefore unlikely, cf. Robert Schumann, *Studien- und Skizzenbuch I und II*, vol. 1 of *Neue Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Matthias Wendt, Neue Gesamtausgabe 3 (Mainz: Schott, 2011), 264.

51. These variants catered to specific technical issues which Schumann was struggling with at the time. The nature of these problems will be investigated further in Chapter 6.

While Schumann evidently trusted Hummel's method at the time, his focus on the mechanical aspects of the *Anweisung* suggests that his interest in the tutor was purely technical. Unlike his imaginative use of scales to facilitate the realisation of the singing tone ideal, the transposed exercises from the *Anweisung* as well as the five-finger exercises from the *Klavierschule* primarily served the purpose of training the fingers' agility and dexterity, with any improvement to his tone as a welcome side effect.

Consequently, Hummel seems to have been most interesting to Schumann as a piano instructor who could remedy his technical shortcomings. After waiting eight months without reply from Hummel, Schumann sent another letter on 29 April 1832, enclosing his two first published works, the *Abegg Variations* op. 1 and *Papillons* op. 2.⁵² When Hummel eventually responded on 24 May, he commented on Schumann's compositions, but did not address the original request for piano lessons. In his second letter, Schumann had not clearly communicated his intentions of going to Weimar, and Hummel—who was very selective about the students he accepted—may simply have ignored or forgotten about Schumann's original proposal. Schumann was at the time suffering from the increasing symptoms of his hand injury, which caused a deterioration of his piano playing so severe that he could no longer maintain a regular practice schedule, and continuing to pursue a career as pianist seemed pointless. Had he gone to Weimar at this point, it should therefore have been for composition lessons. However, Hummel was not convinced by Schumann's compositions. Hummel did indeed recognise Schumann's talent, but he remained critical of the 'swift changes of harmony' and especially Schumann's originality, which Hummel found somewhat 'bizarre'. Above all things, Hummel valued the 'beauty, clarity and unity of a well-planned composition', and wished for Schumann to uphold these virtues in his own compositional work.⁵³ There was evidently a stylistic and generational gap between the two, and Schumann never followed up on the correspondence.

52. Claudia Macdonald, 'Robert Schumann's F-Major Piano Concerto of 1831 as Reconstructed From His First Sketchbook: A History of Its Composition and Study of Its Musical Background' (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1986), 44. Hummel figured on Schumann's list of recipients of *Papillons*, dated 18 April 1832, cf. TB1, 377, 381. 'Briefe sind fort an Hummel, Rellstab, Castelli, Dorn, die Familie.' (29 April 1832).

53. Wolfgang Boetticher, ed., *Briefe und Gedichte aus dem Album Robert und Clara Schumanns* (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1979), 91. 'Ich habe Ihre zwei letzteingesandte Werke mit Aufmerksamkeit durchgesehen und mich dabei Ihres regen Talentes sehr erfreut; alles, was ich darüber zu bemerken hätte, wäre höchstens ein zuweilen schnell aufeinander folgender Harmoniewechsel, wodurch dem Zuhörer an der Faßlichkeit etwas entzogen wird; auch scheinen Sie sich öfters der Originalität etwas zu sehr hinzugeben, ich meine dem etwas bizarren; ich wünschte nicht, daß Sie sich dieses aus Angewohnheit zum Styl machten, weil es der Schönheit, Klarheit und Einheit einer wohlregelten Composition nachtheilig seyn wurde.' (Letter from Hummel to Schumann of 24 May 1832).

The Universal Style: A Multitude of Tone Ideals

While it is safe to establish the cultivation of touch and tone as a cornerstone of Schumann's technical practice, it is still an open question as to which tone ideal he was trying to realise. Unfortunately, the current knowledge of his piano practice does not suggest any definitive answer. Indeed, there is much to suggest that it was the English school and the resonant singing tone which was his ideal, as his practice on scales attests. This is supported by the nature of his commitment to Hummel's pedagogy, which largely came out of a wish to solve his increasing technical deficiencies, and only to a lesser extent to nurture his touch. Still, had Schumann been fully vested in Wieck's ideals, why would he approach Hummel—Wieck's ideological 'enemy'—for lessons? It was not a matter of choosing between one ideology or the other, or as Schumann formulated it in 1834: that he should 'lean more or less to this or the other school'.⁵⁴ Instead, he embraced a variety of playing styles, and thereby also a number of sound ideals.

With a curious mind and still relatively new to the music world at large, the years as law student in Leipzig introduced Schumann to a broad range of composers and styles. However, aside from his lasting admiration of Schubert and Chopin, this only resulted in fascinations which were more or less fleeting. These found their expression not only in his piano practice and performances, but also in his compositional work, in which he emulated the stylistic and pianistic elements of a number of composers in whom he was interested. Thus, his composition of a total of fourteen songs between 1827 and 1828 coincided with the introduction to Gottlob Wiedebein (1779–1854), whose songs he played regularly with Agnes Carus during the same period.⁵⁵ Another example is the aforementioned Charles Meyer, whose *Toccata* in E major served as model for Schumann's *Exercice pour le Pianoforte* (1829). In the same vein,

54. Schumann, 'Anschlag (Musik)', 233. For full quote, cf. Chapter 3 on page 88.

55. Whilst Schumann became acquainted with the songs by a number of composers during his student years, including Franz Schubert (1797–1828), Franz Ignaz Danzi (1763–1826), Heinrich August Marschner (1795–1861; songs from 'Faust' and 'Wanderlieder'), Louis Spohr (1784–1859), Rodolphe Kreutzer (1766–1831), an 'A. Lister' and Friedrich Wieck, it can only firmly be established that he knew two of them while composing his own songs: Schubert and Wiedebein. However, when Schumann decided to contact one of the masters for advice in July 1828, he wrote Wiedebein and not Schubert. In his reply, Wiedebein conceded that Schumann's songs had their shortcomings—'sometimes many'—but they were 'sins of nature and youth' rather than 'sins of the spirit'; thus, Schumann would be already forgiven, as there were 'flashes' of a 'true spirit' with a 'purely poetic feeling'. What is most notable about the correspondence with Wiedebein, is Schumann's ecstatic reaction in his diary upon receiving Wiedebein's letter on 3 August 1828: 'Through his letter, Wiedebein has made me very happy, and he is exactly the way I imagined'. In his diaries, Schumann is very honest, sometimes even harsh, about the persons around him. That Schumann wrote so positively about Wiedebein's letter in his private diary only showed how highly he regarded the opinions of Wiedebein. As an example of Schumann's occasional bluntness, observe a selection of quotes on his roommate Fleschig (1808–1867): 'The disgusting Fleschig' ('Der ekelhafte Fleschig'; 16 August 1828); 'Fleschig is a weak, pathetic human being' ('Fl.[eschig] ist ein schwacher, erbärmlicher Mensch'; 5 November 1828), cf. TB1, 102, 115, 130; Georg Eismann, ed., *Briefe, Aufzeichnungen, Dokumente, mit zahlreichen Erstveröffentlichungen*, vol. 1 of *Robert Schumann: ein Quellenwerk über sein Leben und Schaffen* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1956), 39 (hereafter cited as Quellen).

the unpublished Piano Quartet in C minor (1829) RSW:Anh:E1, incorporates a number of pianistic and chamber musical features which sums up his experiences with the repertoire of the *Quartettgesellschaft*. Thus, Draheim observes that the second theme of the opening movement ‘echoes’ the ‘pianistic elegance’ of Prince Louis Ferdinand and that the second movement represents a ‘virtuoso canonic scherzo in the tradition of Beethoven’.⁵⁶ In addition, Schumann employed a number of pianistic figurations also seen in the chamber music by Weber and Ries performed by the *Quartettgesellschaft*.⁵⁷

Even after his decision for a career in music, Schumann’s endorsement of the different schools of playing continued to evolve. For instance, in 1846 he recalled a fascination with the ‘shallow virtuosity’ of Herz and Czerny during his youth.⁵⁸ There are indeed signs that this infatuation was not over by the summer 1831 during his crisis. While Macdonald argues that Schumann used piano concertos by Hummel and Kalkbrenner as models for the unpublished Piano Concerto in F major RSW:Anh:B1 (1830–1831) in its earliest incarnations, newer sketches dating from May 1831 reveal him adopting ‘Herz’s Romantic style of writing’.⁵⁹ However, Schumann’s interest in Herz did not last, and by May 1832 he had distanced himself so much from Herz’s pianism that he was toying with the idea of composing a *Fantaisie satyrique* on a theme by Herz.⁶⁰

It was not only his enthusiasm for Herz which was gradually subsiding, he was by no means flattered when compared to Field. Thus, when Wieck and Dorn heard portions of the concerto, they agreed that there was something ‘Field-ish’ about it; Schumann was offended by the assumption and felt ‘misunderstood’ and ‘estranged’ from this ‘character’, and preferred to label its style as ‘Romantic’.⁶¹ Also, his engagement with the pedagogy of Hummel was cooling. By June 1834, Schumann had assumed a more critical stance towards Hummel and his *Anweisung*.

56. Robert Schumann, *Quartett für Violine, Viola, Violoncello und Klavier, c-Moll*, RSW:Anh:E1, ed. Joachim Draheim (Mainz: Schott, 2010), iii.

57. In general, Schumann reverts to repeated chords or tremolos for accompaniment figures in a manner similar to Ries (see his Piano Quartet in E^b major op. 17, 1st movement, bar 5 onwards). Also, Schumann employs an orchestral style of writing, not seen in any of his other works at the time. However, Weber uses them in Finale of his Piano Quartet in B major H76 (bars 214–217), and Ries in his Piano Trio in C minor op. 143, 1st movement, bars 128–130.

58. Robert Schumann, ‘Materialien [–1829]’ (Archiv des Robert-Schumann-Hauses Zwickau, D-Zsch 4871 VII, B, 3 A3), 3. ‘Anfänge des seichten Virtuositenthums (Herz, Czerny). Dagegen auch Paganinis Erscheinung. (Später in Frankfurt a/m gehört). Mein Verwerfen dieser Schule’.

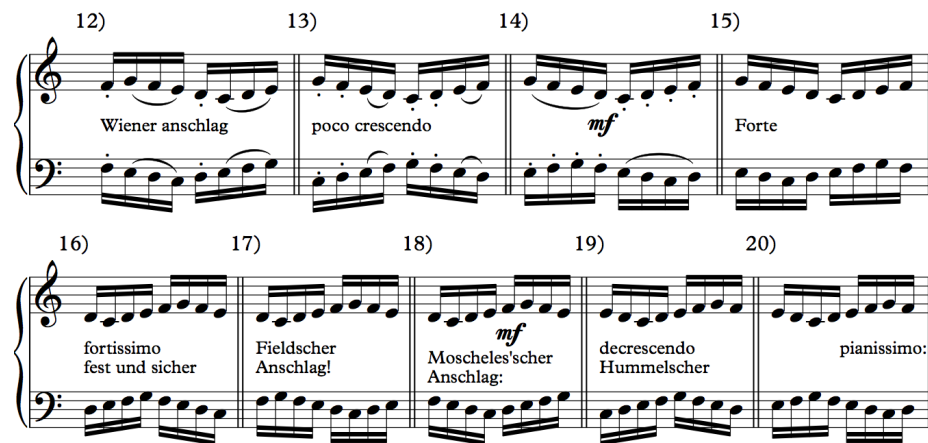
59. Macdonald, ‘F-Major Piano Concerto’, 13.

60. TB1, 387. ‘Idee zu Henri Herz, Fantaisie satyrique’ (10 May 1832). One short fragment of this work survives, cf. Robert Schumann, ‘Skizzenbuch III’ (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn, D-Bnu NL Schumann 15, 1832), 60, accessed 1 April 2017, <http://digitale-sammlungen.ulb.uni-bonn.de/ulbbnhans/content/titleinfo/1043491> (hereafter cited as SB3).

61. TB1, 361. ‘Dorn und Wieck wollen im Concert einen Field’schen Charakter legen, der mir durchaus fremd ist. [...] Beym Himmel: könnt’ ich erwidern, dies scheint mir wie das erste in meinem Styl geschrieben, sich zum Romantischen neigt.’ (14 August 1831).

Reflecting on Hummel's efforts, Schumann noted that although Hummel was an 'extraordinary virtuoso in his own day', he might only be 'a mere pedagogue to future times'.⁶² Schumann conceded that there was much 'good advice' in the tutor, but generally 'found in that work so much that was aimless, and even put there to bulk it up'.⁶³ The reason, Schumann discovered, was that 'Hummel had not kept up with the rapid march of improvement'—in accordance with the advice Schumann had been given when he considered going to study with Hummel: that he was 'ten years behind the times'.⁶⁴

His fascination with and support of different composers and pianistic styles came and went, giving the impression that there was no particular school or musical ideology that he supported. As his own pedagogy suggests, Schumann advocated a more flexible approach. In his *Klavierschule*, a sketch titled *First Exercises* ('Erste Uebungen') demonstrates that when it came to the production of tone, the player should be able to adapt to each of these schools as needed. The 'Erste Uebungen' form a series of short five-finger exercises, to which Schumann added encouraging commentaries to the imaginary pupil, just like the voice of a teacher:



Example 3.12. Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch I', 105. *Klavierschule* RSW:Anh:F5, 'Erste Uebungen'

The first exercises direct the student's attention towards playing 'with expression', 'legatissimo' and 'with quiet arm' among others.⁶⁵ However, from Exercise 12, Schumann introduced con-

62. Schumann, *Music and Musicians*, 196; Robert Schumann, ed., *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (Leipzig) 1 (1834–1835): 74. 'Schon bei der Clavierschule Hummel's [...] schöpfte ich einen leisen Verdacht, ob Hummel, wie er ein ausgezeichneteter Virtuose seiner Zeit war, auch ein großer Pädagog für die künftige wäre' (review of Hummel's Studies op. 125, *NZfM*, 5 June 1834).

63. Schumann, *Music and Musicians*, 196; Schumann, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 74. 'Es fand sich in ihr neben vielem Nützlichem so viel Zweckloses und bloß Aufgehäuftes, neben guten Winken so viel Bildungshemmendes [...]'.
64. Schumann, *Music and Musicians*, 196; Schumann, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 74. 'Auf den eigentlichen Grund, daß Hummel mit der einstweilen raschgehenden Zeit vielleicht nicht Schritt gehalten, fiel ich nicht'.

65. SB1, 105. 'mit Ausdruck [...] Legatissimo [...] Arm ruhig'.

cepts of touch relating to the different schools of playing: ‘Viennese touch’, ‘Field-ish touch’, ‘Moscheles-ish touch’ and ‘Hummel-ish touch’.⁶⁶ As the dynamic progression going through this series of exercises shows, the characteristic of each type of touch is directly related to its dynamic nuances. The ‘Viennese touch’ is played relatively softly, as it appears before a *crescendo* towards a *mezzoforte*; the Field touch is played *fortissimo*, ‘firmly and securely’; Moscheles’ touch is *mezzoforte*; and Hummel’s touch is played on a *decrescendo* towards a *pianissimo*. This confirms how the different schools of playing relied on different touches to correspond to their respective sound ideals: Hummel closest to the Classical ‘Viennese touch’ and Field representing a grander style, with Moscheles in the middle. Not only did Schumann universally accept these different touches, the mastery of each of them were so fundamental to piano technique that Schumann placed them among the very first exercises the student should learn.



To Schumann there was more than one tone ideal. As will be explored in further detail, his own compositions were characterised by the influence of different pianistic styles, and when it came to the performance of other composers’ works, he believed that the pianist should adapt to the idioms in any given composition. Thus, his approach to piano playing is best described as universal: in his works, he borrowed ideas from a range of traditions, and in an earlier version of the ‘Erste Uebungen’, he advised the student to be observant to the sound when playing these exercises by noting that one should strive for a ‘pearly’, ‘bold’ and ‘tender’ tone.⁶⁷ However self-contradictory this may seem, it implies that the pianist was required to produce a variety of sounds, depending on the musical setting. This is perfectly in line with Hummel’s principle that *Allegros* called for a sparkly touch, while *Adagios* required a singing tone; Schumann’s adjectives could very well have been applied to describe the qualities of these two types of music. This approach to music making requires a technique which is flexible enough to adapt to a range of sounds and playing styles. However, when defining Schumann’s ideals of tone, playing style only represented one half of the equation; the instruments were just as important, and, as will be revealed in the next chapter, his preference of piano was far less ambiguous.

66. SB1, 105.

67. SB1, 17. ‘[...] ein schöner, perlengleicher, runder, elastischer Anschlag [...] u. Weichheit im Ton’.

Chapter 4

Tone Ideals: Schools of Piano Making

Whilst Schumann by no means had settled on a specific performance style or playing tradition, his relationship to the various schools of piano making were quite the opposite. In fact, instruments based on the Viennese type were the main—and perhaps the only—piano which Schumann knew while he was still active as a performer. This chapter seeks to establish more precisely what he understood by the term ‘piano’, and what this meant to his piano technique, especially in terms of tone production. As covered to some detail in Chapter 1, the English and French pianos were founded upon an understanding of what a piano should sound like that differed vastly from the values of Viennese piano makers. As the nineteenth century progressed, the gap between these traditions of piano making continued to widen. Whilst the English and French piano makers adopted new production techniques and materials, the Viennese workshops resisted many of the new developments and trends, staying loyal to the *Prellmechanik* and the wooden frame. In the long run, the pianos of England and France proved lasting: by the early 1900s the Viennese piano became more or less extinct. Whilst Schumann’s preference for the Viennese school was principally based on a lack of alternatives, he was nevertheless a proponent of a tradition in decline. This meant that Schumann’s early piano works were composed on and for a type of instrument that relied on different means of expression from his contemporaries in other parts of Europe. Thus, whilst the English and French pianos offered new possibilities, including richer pedalled sonorities and loudness of the instrument, as well as the singing tone facilitated by a fuller sound and longer decay, Schumann had to rely on subtle ways to obtain a desired musical effect, such as the precise balancing of textures, minute shades of tone colour, and, not the least, a vivid imagination. To understand how the pianos which Schumann knew and played differed from the counterparts of France and England, it is necessary to briefly examine some of the general developments in piano making during this period.

Piano Making in the Nineteenth Century: Inventions and Innovations

Some of the most significant developments to the piano during the first half of the nineteenth century happened to the piano action. In 1821, Sébastien Erard patented a repetition action which ensured that a note could be re-struck without having to release the key to its resting position. The gradually increasing key dip on the English and French pianos had made note repetition more challenging on these instruments, and Erard's improvement to the English grand action allowed further deepening of touch while accommodating easy repetition of notes. At first, the adoption of Erard's repetition action was rather slow. Instead, piano makers both inside and outside of France attempted to make their own repetition action mechanisms: in France, Pleyel worked on a custom version of a repetition action, Broadwood developed their own patented version in the early 1840s based on Stodart's original English grand action, and Chickering—the leading American manufacturer of the time—used an American action.¹ Common to all these different types of repetition action was a further deepening of the key dip, which increased the perceived heaviness of the action, requiring more weight to be applied from the hand.² Already at this stage, such changes would undoubtedly have made an impact on tempo and articulation and, combined with other innovations within the domain of piano making, this would define a new direction in the performance style of the decades to come. While the key dip on Viennese instruments had been on the increase since the invention of the Viennese action, and note repetition had become significantly more challenging to produce on such a piano, there seemed to be no pressing need either to update the Viennese action, or to dismiss it completely. Therefore, the Viennese and German makers remained faithful to the principles of the Viennese action, and it was only towards the end of the nineteenth century that they offered a modified version of Erard's action as an option in grands.

Another important patent of the 1820s was granted to employees of the London-based Stodart company, James Thom and William Allen. This was given in 1820 for the invention of a metal compensation frame, consisting of nine metal tubes which ran along the strings to stabilise tuning. The underlying principle was that the metal tubes—made of brass and steel just like the strings—would expand and contract with humidity changes at the same rate as the strings, thus maintaining the tuning better than the more unstable fully wooden frame. Even though the effect of this compensation frame was less than intended, it provided an additional strength which could withstand far greater string pressure, thereby accommodating the use of

1. Edwin Marshall Good, *Giraffes, Black Dragons and Other Pianos: A Technological History from Christofori to the Modern Concert Grand*, 2nd edition (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 172; The earliest surviving Broadwood grand piano with repetition action was, according to Martha Clinkscale, produced no earlier than 1840, cf. Martha Novak Clinkscale, *1820–1860*, vol. 2 of *Makers of the Piano* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 56.

2. For more on the key dip and its influence on the perceived heaviness of touch, cf. note 7 on page 35.

heavier, more resonant strings. After this, the piano industry saw an increasing utilisation of metal in pianos: from at least 1823, Broadwood fitted longitudinal metal braces above the strings, and in 1827 the company patented a hitchpin plate in metal which was attached to the aforementioned metal braces.³ These inventions were imitated by other English and French makers during the following decades, but—with the exception of Streicher, who experimented with metal bracing in the 1830s—the Viennese piano makers largely resisted this development.⁴ The main reason was that metal bracing was not that needed in Viennese pianos; the wooden case of the pianos made in Germany and Austria was generally massive and much deeper (and therefore stronger) than their French and English competitors, and the rounded S-shape of the so-called ‘Empire’ style avoided some crucial structurally weak points of the French and English piano designs.⁵

The increasing strength of the frame allowed for the use of heavier and more powerful strings which could produce a still louder and more resonant sound. Ahrens points out that the string tension of Viennese grand pianos increased exponentially in these years: from an estimated average of 1.850 kg in 1780 to 4.500 kg in 1810, 9.000 kg in 1830, and 15.000 kg in 1860. While these are small numbers compared to the thirty tonnes of string tension on a modern concert grand piano, this demonstrates quite a significant evolution happening within less than a century.⁶ During the nineteenth century a few metallurgical advances took place which enabled piano makers to produce strings that fully utilised the tensile strength of the new, reinforced frames. In the first decades of the century, strings of brass in the bass and iron in the treble were the most common, but revolutions in the methods of producing steel wire in 1819 changed this, and the use of the much stronger steel strings became possible. As demonstrated with the innovations in action making and framing, adoption took a few decades. Despite the advances in steel wire making, it was still very expensive to produce steel strings of a satisfactory quality. Furthermore, it is difficult to establish when steel strings were first used

3. The hitchpins are the small pins located at the opposite end of the piano to the keyboard, around which the strings pass.

4. For more on the growing use of metal in pianos, cf. Cyril Ehrlich, *The Piano: A History*, revised ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 32–33; Good, *Giraffes*, 143, 151; David Rowland, ‘The Piano Since c. 1825’, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Piano*, ed. David Rowland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 40–43.

5. Another—and perhaps more controversial reason—is provided by Good, who believes that because many piano makers had a background as cabinet makers, they did not embrace metal at all: as he writes, they ‘live and die by wood’. At the same time, Good mentions Graf, Broadwood and Chickering as prominent cabinet makers who went into the piano-making business, which is a remarkable choice of examples, as the two latter makers were both pioneers in the introduction of metal in piano making, and only Graf remained loyal to the fully wooden frame throughout his career. It is therefore questionable if this claim has any credibility in relation to the fact that some piano makers refrained from using metal in their designs. It is much more likely that metal simply was not that necessary in the Viennese pianos at this time, cf. Good, *Giraffes*, 150.

6. Christian Ahrens, *Hammerklaviere mit Wiener Mechanik: ...einen überaus poetischen Ton* (Frankfurt am Main: Erwin Bochinsky, 1999), 76; Ehrlich, *The Piano*, 32.

in the piano, as original brass and iron strings could easily be replaced with steel strings without leaving traces. Harding suggests that steel was being used as early as 1815, while Hirt guesses it was not used before 1850.⁷ As Good notes, French maker Henri Pape was granted a patent for making strings of annealed steel in 1826, and while it is uncertain if Pape made use of this patent, it does show that piano makers were experimenting with steel strings around this time.⁸ The truth is probably that the adoption of steel strings happened gradually as the production costs were reduced. In any case, these developments took place in France and England, too far away from mid-Germany to have any significant influence on the pianos which Schumann was in contact with, at least until around 1835.

With heavier strings and higher tension, heavier hammers were needed. The traditional leather cover was not durable enough, and makers therefore began experimenting with other materials. If the material was too soft, brilliance would be lost, and hard material gives too brittle a sound. At the same time, Ehrlich notes, the hammer cover should keep its shape over time, being ‘absolutely resistant to the cutting properties of metal wire’.⁹ Makers experimented with a variety of materials, using several layers of different substances, but the real breakthrough happened when Pape, in 1826, patented a felt covering which proved durable enough for other French and English piano makers to adopt. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, felt was used in France and England on top of several layers of leather. In Vienna, however, hammers retained their leather cover: as late as at the 1851 Exhibition, a piano of Austrian make was noted for leather-covered hammers.¹⁰

During most of Schumann’s lifetime, the piano saw few revolutionary changes within German-speaking Europe. To an even larger degree, French makers became the chief innovators, with the invention and early adoption of the repetition action, steel strings and felt-covered hammers. Whilst the pianos from the factories of Germany and Austria increased in size during the first half of the nineteenth century, the gap between these instruments and their competitors from France and England grew even wider. The pianos of the Viennese tradition were generally able to produce a singing tone, perfectly suited to long melodic lines in the mid-range whilst maintaining a clarity of texture combined with a lightness of touch. They lacked, however, qualities which defined the new generation of French pianos in particular: loudness, long decay of tone, brilliance in the treble and, to an increasing degree, evenness of tone across the registers of the keyboard—qualities which the new generation of piano virtuosos

7. Franz Josef Hirt, *Meisterwerke des Klavierbaus: Stringed Keyboard Instruments*, trans. M. Boehme-Brown (Zürich: Graf-Verlag, 1981), 95; Rosamond Evelyn Mary Harding, *The Pianoforte: Its History Traced to the Great Exhibition of 1851* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), 372.

8. Good, *Giraffes*, 183.

9. Ehrlich, *The Piano*, 21.

10. For more on hammer covers in the period 1820–1850, cf. Ehrlich, *The Piano*, 30–31; Rowland, ‘The Piano Since c. 1825’, 44–45.

increasingly demanded. Due to the growing success of the Steinway pianos from New York, German makers would gradually abandon the Viennese action for Steinway's improved repetition action, their new cast-iron frames, and their method of cross-stringing. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Viennese action-based instruments were produced in limited numbers, with production being confined to Vienna. With a prominent maker such as Bösendorfer removing the Viennese action as their standard option in their grand pianos in 1909, a tradition of piano making which had influenced the pianism of many great composers including Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms—and, as will be demonstrated, Schumann—became almost completely extinct.

The Viennese Piano in Leipzig

While the Viennese piano was falling behind the European trends in piano making, it continued to be the instrument of choice among German pianists, including Wieck and Hummel. Despite their differing views on piano playing, they could generally agree on their preference for this school of piano making. A champion of the Viennese school of playing, Hummel unsurprisingly advocated the Viennese piano, as they were 'played upon with great facility as to touch', the English piano 'with considerably less ease'.¹¹ While he did admit to the 'durability and fullness of tone' of the English pianos which gives 'the melody [...] a peculiar charm and harmonious sweetness', he identified a number of shortcomings: the touch was 'much heavier, the keys sink much deeper, and, consequently, the return of the hammer upon the repetition of a note, cannot take place so quickly'.¹² The heaviness of the action did not result in any improvement of tone compared to the Viennese pianos. Quite the opposite, Hummel thought the English action 'not capable of such numerous modifications as to degree of tone as ours', and even its loudness, 'powerfully as these instruments sound in a chamber, they change the nature of their tone in spacious localities'.¹³ The reason was that the tone was 'less distinguishable than ours, when associated with complicated orchestral accompaniments'; this, he believed, was to be 'attributed to the thickness and fullness of their tone'.¹⁴

Despite the aforementioned allegiance to Field and the English school, the Wiecks seemed to be just as much in favour of the Viennese piano as Hummel was. Throughout Clara's concert tours during the 1820s and 1830s—which were always accompanied by Friedrich Wieck—the two encountered a variety of instruments of different makes. While Clara indeed played a

11. Johann Nepomuk Hummel, *Part III*, in *A Complete Theoretical & Practical Course of Instructions on the Art of Playing the Piano Forte* (London: Boosey, 1828), 64.

12. *Ibid.*, 64–65.

13. *Ibid.*, 65.

14. *Ibid.*

number of Viennese instruments which she disliked or simply found to be suffering from neglect, some of her favourite instruments were made in the Viennese tradition. Thus, in 1828 she compared an instrument by Andreas Stein with Conrad Graf's 'no. 41', considering the Graf the most 'wonderful' piano, which she had ever 'had under her fingers'.¹⁵ Even amongst the Viennese pianos, the Wiecks had their preferences. In Weimar in 1831—where Hummel resided at the time—Streicher had almost a monopoly on the piano market, to Wieck's frustration. He blamed Hummel for recommending these instruments, so that the pianos across the city suffered from a 'wooden, stiff and soulless treble'.¹⁶ However, these complaints did not compare to the overall unhappiness with pianos from England and France, where Clara repeatedly dismissed the instruments from even the leading makers. When Schumann in 1838 suggested buying a grand piano by Broadwood for them, Clara simply refused to play it.¹⁷ She had previously played on a grand piano by Clementi in Paris with no success, and had found Mendelssohn's 1820 Broadwood to be 'hard work'.¹⁸ The pianos from France were in no better standing. Having tried instruments by Pape, Erard and Pleyel, she found the first two to be too 'heavy' to the extent that they caused her 'much pain'.¹⁹ As Friedrich Wieck summarised: 'The

15. Thomas Synofzik, "...den ich kaum erdrücken konnte": Clara Schumann-Wieck in der Auseinandersetzung mit Wiener, Englischer und Französischer Mechanik 1826 bis 1853', in *Von Mozart bis Chopin: das Fortepiano 1770–1850: Symposium im Rahmen der 32. Tage Alter Musik in Herne 2007*, ed. Christian Ahrens and Gregor Klinker (Musikverlag Katzbichler, 2010), 152–153; Clara Wieck, 'Jugendtagebücher, vol. 1' (Archiv des Robert-Schumann-Hauses Zwickau, D-Zsch 4877,1/2/4/7–A3, Zwickau), 58–59. Nevertheless, touring pianist Emilie von Belleville preferred the Stein piano: 'Sie [Emilie von Belleville] [...] wählte bei mir zu Ihrem Spiele auf dem Gewandhause nicht einen unvergleichlich schönen Conrad Graf #5 sondern Andreas Stein #41, weil dieser sich leichter spielen (er hatte feste Fütterung und zu flachen Fall) und jener einen zu tiefen Fall hätte, ob ich gleich auf jenem viel lieber und sicherer spielen und diesen Conrad Graf #5 überhaupt für das schönste Instrument halte, was ich letzt unter den Fingern gehabt habe' (5 October 1831). Many of the entries in Clara's diaries from her childhood and youth were written by Friedrich Wieck. The piano by Stein mentioned here, is the same instrument used for the recordings in this thesis.

16. Synofzik, '...den ich kaum erdrücken', 154; Clara Wieck, 'Jugendtagebücher, vol. 2' (Archiv des Robert-Schumann-Hauses Zwickau, D-Zsch 4877,1/2/4/7–A3, Zwickau), 122. 'Durch Hummels Empfehlung ist Weimar mit den Pianoforten des A. Streicher (– eignige frühere ausgenommen, die aber nur klapprig sind, – so wie auch 2 Patent-Flügel des jungen Streicher, – [die] wenigstens in Hinsicht des Tons aber nicht der Spielart eine Ausnahme machen), die mit ihren hölzernen, steifen und seelenlosen Discant jeder Empfindung und fast alle ein Schattirungen spotten, ganz belegt' (26 October 1831).

17. Eva Weissweiler and Susanna Ludwig, eds., vol. 2 of *Briefwechsel* (Basel: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1984), 161. 'Nun zu dem Flügel: [...] einen Englischen nimm Dir auch nicht; wenn Du ihn auch etwas billiger erhältst, so ist er doch immer noch unverhältnismäßig theuer, ich liebe *sie gar nicht*, würde also auch *nie* darauf spielen [...] in 2 Monaten bekomme ich einen ganz schönen Conrad Graf geschickt' (letter from Clara Wieck to Schumann of 23 April 1838).

18. Wieck, 'Jugendtagebücher 1', 41. 'Ich spielte eine Stunde auf Mendelssohns englischen Flügel – das ist eine schwere Arbeit' (31 December 1838).

19. Schumann and Schumann, *Briefwechsel*, 388. 'Ich habe einen Erard auf meinem Zimmer, der kaum zu erdrücken ist; ich hatte allen Muth verloren, doch gestern hat ich Pleyel gespielt, und die gehen doch nicht so schwer. Drei Wochen muß ich noch studieren, ehe ich einen Ton vorspielen kann.' (letter from Clara Wieck to Schumann of 14 February 1839).

English and French tone has no character and is merely strong, full and thick, dead'.²⁰

The broad acceptance of the Viennese piano across Germany meant that in Leipzig, the Viennese piano dominated to the degree that only one maker attempted to produce English-style pianos in the early nineteenth century. This was Gottfried Härtel, the renowned music publisher, who took over the late Bernard Christoph Breitkopf's Leipzig publishing house in 1795, and expanded the business in 1807 to include piano manufacturing.²¹ Upon a visit from Clementi in 1804, Härtel was inspired to break away from the Viennese tradition of piano making.²² However, Härtel's instruments with English action were not well received by the local market, whose playing style and musical taste matched the pianos equipped with Viennese action, and subsequently Härtel had to give up manufacturing English-style pianos, in 1824. It took until 1839 before Härtel again attempted to make pianos with English action; this time they based their pianos on a Broadwood grand piano made the previous year, containing Broadwood's own improved repetition action.²³ And Härtel did continue to produce pianos fitted with Viennese action; in fact, his only two surviving grand pianos of the 1840s both have Viennese action, the first of these even having the typically Viennese moderator pedal.²⁴ In 1840, Schumann did indeed purchase a piano from Härtel, but there is no reference to Härtel's early English-action pianos neither in Schumann's early diaries nor his letters, so one must assume that Schumann himself never played any of Härtel's earlier instruments.²⁵

Schumann's Pianos Until 1832

With the general availability of Viennese instruments in the region, it is highly likely that all of Schumann's pianos during his student years probably were of the Viennese type. Without exception, these instruments are now lost, his 1839 Conrad Graf grand piano being the earliest surviving piano. However, material on the makers of these pianos provides sufficient knowledge

20. Clara Wieck, 'Jugendtagebücher, vol. 7' (Archiv des Robert-Schumann-Hauses Zwickau, D-Zsch 4877,1/2/4/7-A3, Zwickau), 41. 'Der Vater sagt, der englische und französische Ton habe keinen Charakter und sey stark, voll und dick, todt' (31 December 1838).

21. Hans-Martin Plesske, 'Breitkopf & Härtel', in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed 1 April 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/0392>.

22. Oskar von Hase and Hellmuth von Hase, *Breitkopf & Härtel: Gedenkschrift und Arbeitbericht*, 4th ed., vol. 2 (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1917), 368.

23. Kurt Hahn, 'Schumanns Klavierstil und die Klaviere seiner Zeit', in *Robert Schumann: Aus Anlass seines 100. Todestages*, ed. Hans Joachim Moser and Eberhard Rebling (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1956), 122.

24. Clinkscale, *Makers of the Piano* 2, 45.

25. In his diaries, Schumann often commented on pianos he played, for instance a 'beautiful piano' ('hübsches Klavier') in the village of Frankental near Mannheim, or a 'dull grand piano' ('lederner Flügel') in Coblenz. Had Schumann played a Härtel piano, he would almost certainly have mentioned the instrument in his diary, cf. Robert Schumann, 1827–1838, vol. 1 of *Tagebücher*, ed. Georg Eismann (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1971), 78–79 (hereafter cited as TB1).

to draw a few conclusions on the common characteristics of these instruments. In total, there is evidence of five instruments owned by Schumann until 1832:

Grand piano by Streicher; acquired by August Schumann *c.* 1824.

Square piano by an unknown maker; acquired in 1828.

Grand piano by Franz Bayer; acquired in 1828.

Grand piano by Heckel; acquired in 1830.

Grand piano by Melzer; acquired in 1831.

Little is known about the pianos in the Schumann family's household during Robert's earliest childhood. However, it is certain that August Schumann acquired a Streicher grand during Schumann's years as an adolescent. Robert himself mentioned the year of this purchase as 1824 in one place, and 1826 in another. However, August Schumann confirmed the year of this piano in a letter dated 18 July 1824.²⁶ Robert must have felt very close to this instrument. Whilst living in Leipzig in 1828, he looked back at the last time he played this piano (by this time located in the Schumann family home in Zwickau, now in his brother Julius's room), and wrote that he 'could not help crying' when playing on it.²⁷ The Streicher remained in Zwickau with his brother Julius, and in September 1831 Robert decided to let Julius's wife Rosalie keep it.²⁸ Nannette Streicher (1769–1833), the maker of this piano, was the daughter of Johann Andreas Stein (1728–1792), the famous Augsburg piano maker praised by no less than Mozart. She moved to Vienna after her marriage to become one of her generation's most influential and respected piano makers. Her son, Johann Baptist Streicher (1796–1871), became a partner of the company in 1823, and brought forward quite a few innovations, such as a downstriking action and experiments with iron framing.

This piano would undoubtedly have had many of the characteristics of the Viennese piano of that time: leather-covered hammers, wooden frame, as well as a number of pedals not present on English or French pianos, including one or more moderator stops and a bassoon stop. It is

26. Thomas Synofzik, '...den ich nicht hätte herausgegeben sollen...', in *Zwischen Poesie und Musik: Robert Schumann früh und spät*, ed. Ingrid Bodscho and Gerd Nauhaus (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld, 2006), 53.

27. Clara Schumann, ed., *Jugendbriefe*, 4th ed. (1886; Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1910), 25. 'Ich mußte weinen, wie ich das letzte Mal in Julius' Stube darauf spielte.' Letter to his mother of 13 June 1828 (hereafter cited as Briefe); Translated in Clara Schumann, ed., *Early Letters of Robert Schumann*, trans. May Herbert (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1888), 25 (hereafter cited as Letters).

28. Letters, 146. Letter to his mother of 21 September 1831. Together with their mother, Julius was the single family member most critical about Robert's aspirations to become a piano virtuoso. Schumann was very fond of Rosalie, and it was a great loss to him when both died two years later, in 1833, cf. John Worthen, *Robert Schumann: Life and Death of a Musician* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2007), 88.

likely that this piano had a traditional Viennese action. In 1823, Johann Baptist Streicher patented a down-striking action as an alternative to the standard Viennese action usually used in their grand pianos.²⁹ Surviving instruments from the 1820s show that grand pianos made up to 1823 all have Viennese action, and pianos from 1825 and 1826 have the new down-striking action (no instruments from 1824 survive).³⁰ On the other hand, in 1824 Johann Baptist Streicher also patented an action based on a traditional Viennese *Prellmechanik*, making the matter even more confusing.³¹ As there is no evidence that Streicher actually did produce any grand pianos with down-striking action in 1824, it is impossible to establish what type of action Schumann's piano may have had. Although piano makers had experimented with down-strikers since the early days of the piano, these instruments remained somewhat of a novelty.³² Streicher's new attempt at a down-striking action would undoubtedly impart a state-of-the-art feeling to the instrument. However, Schumann never mentioned that this instrument had any peculiar features, including the piano's action, suggesting that it was at least more likely to have a Viennese action.

Since the birth of the piano, makers had experimented with different compasses, and two pianos made around the same time could have completely different ranges. However, the general trend was that the compass was increasing, from four octaves on Cristofori's pianos of the early eighteenth century to five in the 1780s.³³ On most of their grand pianos of the early 1820s, Streicher used a six-octave compass (FF-f⁴), which was the most common on Viennese pianos of that time. They did, however, experiment with extending the bass down to CC, as surviving pianos from 1821 and 1823 show.³⁴ However, this range represents a minority of the surviving pianos by Streicher, and it is therefore most likely that the grand piano of the Schumann family home had the normal six octave-range.

Schumann sent a letter to his mother from Leipzig on 13 June 1828. In this letter—which is one of his most informative documents from this period about his pianos—he deemed his

29. Amongst the German and Viennese piano makers, Streicher was one of few to experiment with alternatives to the Viennese action. In addition to the down-striking action (a type of action that was rarely successful), they attempted to produce a mechanism of their own invention during the mid-1830s, inspired by the English grand action, cf. Rowland, 'The Piano Since c. 1825', 46.

30. Clinkscale, *Makers of the Piano* 2, 365–366.

31. Alfred Dolge, *Pianos and Their Makers: A Comprehensive History of the Development of the Piano from the Monochord to the Concert Grand Player Piano* (Covina, CA: Covina Publishing, 1911), 87.

32. Good, *Giraffes*, 176. Good notes that apart from the 'naturalness' of the motion of hammer falling onto the strings, the down-striking action was 'theoretically attractive' to piano makers: it solved the problem that 'a heavy blow [in an up-striking action] from the hammer could unseat the string from the bridge, with dramatic consequences for the tuning'.

33. *Ibid.*, 30, 74.

34. Michael Latham, 'The Development of the Streicher Firm of Piano Builders under the Leadership of Nannette Streicher', in *Das Wiener Klavier bis 1850: Bericht des Symposiums 'Das Wiener Klavier bis 1850'*, ed. Beatrix Darmstädter, Alfons Huber and Rudolf Hopfner (Tutzing: H. Schneider, 2007), 70.

current piano ('Pianoforte') 'excellent'.³⁵ This was possibly a square piano, as he referred to it as a 'Pianoforte' and not 'Flügel' (the German terms used to distinguish a grand piano from a smaller instrument, i.e. a square or upright piano), but nothing else is known about this instrument. For Schumann, the affordable square piano must have been a natural choice to match his limited budget. Indeed, square pianos were small and cheap to produce, and production did outnumber the grand piano; Edwin Good suggests that the number of square pianos at one point were produced at a ratio of 10:1 compared to grand pianos.³⁶ However, these instruments produced little sound due to their short strings, and because they were highly vulnerable few survive today.

Later in this letter, Schumann showed a slight discontent with his 'excellent instrument', writing that:

If I had 400 thalers to spare, and you and my guardian allowed it, I should at once buy an instrument here by a maker named Stein; but the gods will probably refuse me this, so I let the bright hope cheer me for the future.³⁷

The Stein which Schumann referred to is most likely to be André (Mathias Andreas) Stein (1776–1842), the younger brother of Nannette Streicher. Clinkscale notes that André's son, Karl, was himself to become an influential piano maker, but only started his own business in 1828. Thus, André was the only member of the Stein family to have his own workshop at this time, and must therefore be the maker of the kind of piano that Schumann wished to obtain.³⁸ This piano represented, without doubt, the state-of-the-art of Viennese piano making, and was of comparable quality to Streicher's instruments.

Schumann kept his square piano a few months into his studies with Wieck. A diary entry of 29 November shows that he bought a Franz Bayer grand piano from Wieck. Zeuner played in a 'heavenly' way on this instrument according to Schumann himself.³⁹ The Bayer must have been an considerable investment for Schumann, as his brother Eduard ended up paying for it. Bayer was a Vienna-based piano maker, known to be active between 1817 and 1851.⁴⁰ Little information remains on him, and according to Clinkscale only one instrument survives, a grand piano possibly from 1820.⁴¹ This piano is presumably made with a Viennese action, and has

35. Letters, 25.

36. Good, *Giraffes*, 88.

37. Briefe, 26. 'Hätt' ich 400 Thaler übrig und würdest Du und der Vormund es erlauben, so kauft' ich mir auf der Stelle hier ein Instrument von Stein: aber die Götter versagen mir wahrscheinlich dies und ich tröste mich mit dieser schönen Hoffnung bis auf künftige Zeiten.' Letter to his mother of 13 June 1828. Translated in Letters, 25.

38. For further biographical information on the Stein family, cf. Clinkscale, *Makers of the Piano* 2, 351.

39. TB1, 149. 'Zeuners himmlisches Clavierspiel u. Composition auf dem Bayer' (29 November 1828), cf. (Chapter 2 on page 65).

40. Helmut Ottner, *Der Wiener Instrumentenbau 1815–1833* (Tutzing: Schneider, 1977), 21; Martha Novak Clinkscale, *1700–1820*, vol. 1 of *Makers of the Piano* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 19.

41. Clinkscale, *Makers of the Piano* 1, 19.

one hand stop instead of a pedal—something very conservative for a piano from this period. Despite this piano probably not being able to match the Stein piano which Schumann wished to acquire, this must have been an improvement on his square piano, and at the end of the day of receiving the new instrument he noted in his diary: ‘piano playing and inner content’.⁴²

Soon after arriving at Heidelberg, Schumann acquired a grand piano made by Karl Ferdinand Heckel (1800–1870) in Mannheim.⁴³ Heckel was born in Vienna and studied piano with Hummel in Weimar until 1821, when he decided to move to Mannheim and become an instrument dealer. Soon after, he expanded his business to include music publishing as well as piano making.⁴⁴ In a letter of 14 October 1831, Schumann apologised to Heckel that he still needed to pay for the purchase he had made more than two years earlier, hoping that Heckel would kindly resell twelve copies of Schumann’s op. 1, the *Abegg Variations*, and offering him half of the revenue.⁴⁵ Schumann’s praise of Heckel’s ‘beautiful piano’ in the letter is likely to be an act of courtesy to man who had not seen his money for more than two years, rather than being a sincere compliment. In a letter of 25 September 1830, shortly before moving back to Leipzig, Schumann expressed his discontent with this instrument to Dr Carus.⁴⁶ There is not much known about this piano, other than it is highly likely that it is made on Viennese principles: Heckel’s Viennese background points to this idea, as does his musical training with Hummel, a supporter of the Viennese piano.

Less than a year after his move back to Leipzig, Schumann purchased a grand piano by Viennese maker Franz Melzer for the price of 225 thalers. Wieck was reselling Melzer’s instruments during 1831, and with the purchase date of 15 June of that year Schumann acquired this instrument in the middle of his crisis in his piano studies.⁴⁷ He had been complaining about his previous piano (presumably the Bayer), and in his diary he wrote on 29 May 1831 that piano playing was ‘quite bad—and [I have] no energy to carry on studying’, followed by ‘no desire to play [the piano]’ on 4 June.⁴⁸ With the purchase of the Melzer piano, Schumann might have hoped that a new instrument would help him out of his crisis. However, on 15 June—the day of receiving the instrument—Schumann did not seem to be the slightest bit excited about his

42. TB1, 149.

43. Letters, 150.

44. Peter Clive, *Beethoven and His World: A Biographical Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 157–158. Heckel’s brother was the Vienna-based painter Johann Christoph, who painted Beethoven in 1815 (this painting is now located in the Library of Congress).

45. Letters, 150.

46. Siegfried Kross, ed., *Briefe und Notizen Clara und Robert Schumanns*, 2nd ed. (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1982), 28.

47. Synofzik, ‘...den ich kaum erdrücken’, 152; TB1, 342. ‘Kauf des Melzerschen Flügel für 225 Thlr. – Bezahlung sämtlicher Schulden’ (15 June 1831).

48. TB1, 335–336. ‘Clavier nichts, g[an]z schlecht—auch keine Kraft zum fortstudiren’ (29 May 1831); ‘Keine Lust zum Spielen’ (4 June 1831).

new purchase, just commenting in his diary: 'piano bad', possibly referring to the state of the progress of his playing at that time.⁴⁹ This did not mean that Schumann remained unhappy with the Melzer grand piano, as he openly recommended Melzer's pianos.⁵⁰

Melzer was known to be active as a piano maker by around 1830, receiving a Viennese privilege to make pianos in 1832.⁵¹ Like many other minor piano makers of the time, no instruments of his survive, but based on Melzer's presumed opening of business around 1830, Schumann's grand piano must have been a new instrument—an idea supported by the price of 255 thaler, which would be a realistic price for a new instrument by a maker of Melzer's reputation. This instrument must have been the closest Schumann was able to come to the Stein piano he had desired back in 1828. He put the Melzer up for sale in 1838; the advert from the *Leipziger Zeitung* of 19 November described the piano as made 'after A. Stein, beautifully built' out of cherry wood, with the unusually wide compass of 6 ³/₄ octaves.⁵²

Schumann's Preferred Piano

What can be inferred from this catalogue of instruments? A few scholars have argued that Schumann's early admiration for Viennese pianos were based on a deliberate, informed choice, implying a first-hand knowledge of pianos based on an English design. In his article on the 'Clavier' in Herlossohn's *Damen-Conversations-Lexicon* from 1834, Schumann made a few recommendations on pianos and their makers:

In the previous century, Silbermann's pianos were considered the best; later the Viennese instruments came to the fore and have remained there ever since. The old masters, such as Stein, Lauterer, have now been replaced by the new ones: Konrad Graf, Nanette Streicher, Wacke, Melzer, Franz Bayer and others.⁵³

Eijsink argues that Schumann's mention of a Viennese tradition of piano making in the quote above must point to the fact that he knew of an alternative, i.e. an English school.⁵⁴ This argument is supported by Hahn, who observes that Schumann knew quite a few virtuosos with connections to Parisian instrument makers, and that he consequently was well aware of the

49. TB1, 342. 'Klavier schlecht' (15 June 1831).

50. Robert Schumann, 'Clavier', in *Damen-Conversations-Lexicon*, ed. Karl Herlossohn (Leipzig: Fr. Bolckmar, 1834), 425.

51. Clinkscale, *Makers of the Piano* 2, 251; Ottner, *Instrumentenbau*, 101.

52. Synofzik, '...den ich kaum erdrücken', 152.

53. Schumann, 'Clavier', 425. 'Im vorigen Jahrhundert galten die Silbermannschen Klaviere als die besten, später kamen die Wiener Instrumente im Ruf und sind es geblieben. Die älteren Meister, wie Stein, Lauterer, sind jetzt den neuern Konrad Graf, Nanette Streicher, Wacke, Melzer, Franz Bayer u.a. gewichen.'

54. Hans Eijsink, 'Robert Schumann', in *12 komponisten en hun klavier*, ed. Jan Nuchelmans (Utrecht: Holland Festival Oude Muziek, 1988), 44.

instruments that these musicians played.⁵⁵ While Schumann—by 1834 a music journalist and editor with contacts and correspondents from abroad—almost certainly would have been familiar with the existence of alternatives to Viennese pianos, these two writers fail to produce any evidence that Schumann ever *played* anything but Viennese pianos up to this point.

Among the ‘new masters’ which Schumann mentioned, there are pianos by Streicher, Bayer, and Melzer—makers whose work Schumann had directly experienced. He must therefore have had some knowledge of instruments by all of the makers who he endorsed here. Therefore, not mentioning any instruments of French or English make does not necessarily mean that Schumann did not like them; Schumann’s knowledge of alternatives to the Viennese type of pianos may have been extremely scarce, and certainly limited to the extent that he could not give his professional stamp of approval to any specific makers of French or English pianos. Throughout his life, Schumann was in favour of new technology: for instance, he did not hesitate to take his first ever train-ride a few days after the Leipzig–Dresden line formally opened in 1839 as the first train service in his region.⁵⁶ While Schumann clearly expressed a preference for the Viennese school of piano making, this must almost certainly have been a default position.

Bearing in mind Schumann’s endorsement of several makers, there was no single preferred Viennese piano maker for Schumann: Graf’s pianos may have been as desirable as instruments by Streicher. As already noted, these pianos had quite a few common characteristics of design, action, and sound, and these features are the ones that define Schumann’s ideal piano.⁵⁷ But what did this mean to Schumann’s approach to piano performance and composition? With a smaller dynamic range compared to its English and French counterparts, one had to find other technical means than sheer power. This included an elaborate use of tone colours and a careful balancing of textures, which the following examples will demonstrate.

In comparison to contemporary instruments, the Viennese pianos featured a more transparent timbre which allowed for greater clarity. This was particularly evident in the bass register of the instrument. For instance, the coda of the *Abegg Variations* would most likely be muffled

55. Hahn, ‘Schumanns Klavierstil’, 122.

56. That Schumann would later complain about the impact that the growing network of railroads had on nature does not change the fact that the train appeared to be Schumann’s favourite means of transport, and he would travel this way whenever possible, cf. Robert Schumann, 1836–1854, vol. 2 of *Tagebücher*, ed. Georg Eismann (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1987), 190; Worthen, *Robert Schumann*, 163.

57. While there never seemed to be any doubt in Schumann’s mind that the pianoforte was the instrument which he preferred, he grew up during a period where the piano had only in recent decades established itself as the dominant keyboard instrument. Schumann’s upbringing in provincial Zwickau and his frequent travels to the rural areas of Saxony and Bohemia must have guaranteed encounters with various keyboard instruments and pianos of older date. One should be careful to assume that players in Schumann’s day always played on new, state-of-the-art instruments. Just as a 30- or 40-year-old grand piano is not frowned on today, there is all good reason to believe that older instruments were being played in the first decades of the nineteenth century. As previously observed, even Schumann’s own instruments were at times simple: the piano which he owned during his first half year in Leipzig was presumably a square, and the subsequent Bayer grand piano was built by a conservative maker.

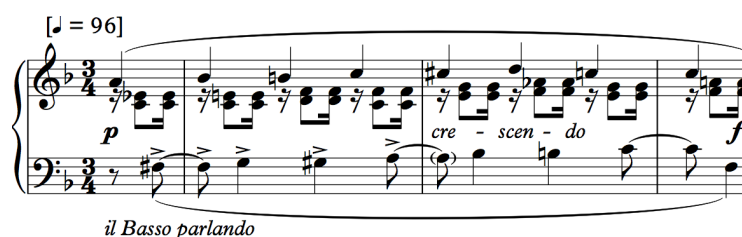
on any other piano; a Viennese piano from the period would produce the clarity necessary to distinguish the left hand Cs and D^bs in bars 101–103 fairly well:



Audio 18

Example 4.1. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, 'Finale alla fantasia', bars 101–105

This made it possible to balance even dense textures, so that the leading voices would remain clearly audible. Buried in the middle of the pianistic setting, the syncopated accompaniment of the second variation of the same work has a tendency on to overshadow the duet between the treble and bass parts on a heavier instrument:



Audio 7

Example 4.2. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, Variation 2, bars 1–3

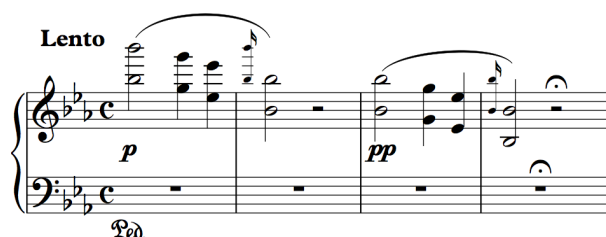
Due the shorter decay and thinner sound, the accompanying syncopations balance well within the texture with no particular effort from the player's side.

The gain in textural transparency, however, came at the expense of power. Thus, the increasingly durable instruments from England and France gradually began to allow for the player to engage in the act of playing in a whole new way, utilising the weight of the arms and upper body. The application of so much force did not produce the desired result on a Viennese instrument. In his notes on playing the fortepiano, Andreas Streicher wrote that 'striking [the keys] too hard [...] [produces] far less sound than you normally would believe', as a string 'can only yield a limited degree of loudness'.⁵⁸ He also noted that the most beautiful sound is produced by playing within the dynamic range of the string, calling for the player to project the music with the aid of tone colour and articulation rather than volume. Despite being written a decade before Schumann's birth, this testimony still held true on Viennese pianos of the late

58. Preethi and Da Silva, ed., *The Fortepiano Writings of Streicher, Dieudonné, and the Schiedmayers* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), 267.

1820s and 1830s, as pianos, despite their growth in size and string tension, were built on the same principles, with the piano action being fundamentally unchanged since the publication of Streicher's book in 1802.

Instead, the Viennese instruments excelled in soft dynamics. Firstly, the effectiveness of the dampers combined with the simplicity and reliability of the *Prellmechanik* ensured a minute control of tone. Secondly, the Viennese piano distinguished itself from other schools of piano making by its numerous stops, which could alter the timbre of tone. In addition to the damper and *una corda* pedals—which were also the norm in grand pianos from France and England by this time—the moderator in particular enhanced the palette of tonal colour in the softest dynamics. This was extremely apt as an agent of musical contrast, due to its drastic effect on the timbre of the instrument. It could appropriately be applied over extended passages or even whole sections of a movement as seen in *Papillon* no. 7 (Example 8.18a on page 250), where it gives the first half of the piece a more fragile character, providing a stronger contrast to the sonorous second part; or in *Papillon* no. 10 (Example 8.15 on page 247), where it creates misty sonority in conjunction with the damper pedal. It could also work as a signifier of an echo effect, for instance in the opening of *Paganini Study* no. 5:



Example 4.3. Schumann: *Paganini Studies* op. 3 no. 5, bars 1–4

Audio 37

To demonstrate how effectively that the moderator can be used in this environment, the opening four bars are played three times in Audio 37: the first time with the damper pedal only, the second time with the *una corda* pressed down in bars 3–4, and the third time the combined moderator and *una corda* pedal is applied in the last two bars. Schumann never indicated the use of the moderator, and it is therefore always used at the discretion of the performer.

Still, there are numerous examples of the opposite end of the dynamic spectrum in Schumann's earliest piano works. Reproducing these convincingly required the performer to seek other solutions than merely using a stronger touch or applying excessive amounts of weight. This is seen, for instance, in the 'Finale alla fantasia' of the *Abegg Variations*:

[Vivace (♩. = 80)]

cres - - - cen - - - do

51

ff

8va

Red.

loco

*

Audio 13

Example 4.4. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, 'Finale alla fantasia', bars 49–55

On a modern instrument, the *crescendo* which runs through these bars—peaking at a *fortissimo* in bar 53—can easily be rendered by gradually playing all four voices stronger. On a Viennese piano, however, one will risk reaching the upper dynamic limit of the instrument. When reaching this boundary, the action noise becomes prominent, and the overall dynamic will therefore appear to be the same, if not less. This can be remedied by careful voicing throughout this passage: if the middle voices in the left and right hands, respectively, are kept softer in the first bars of the *crescendo*, these voices can gradually rise through bar 52, adding more substance to the texture towards the *fortissimo* in bar 53. This way, the *crescendo* is realised by making the texture appear gradually fuller, rather than relying on the outer voices alone. The player thus creates an illusion of loudness through colour, not power.

The careful use of tone colour and balancing could also to some extent compensate for the Viennese pianos' inability to reproduce a singing tone in the high register of the instruments. The influence of the singing tone ideal in Schumann's piano playing has already been demonstrated in Chapter 3, and this style was by no means foreign to his earliest piano compositions, which feature long phrases with elongated notes for a singing, sustained style of playing. This is seen in *Papillons* no. 10, where the melody in the upper part is based on minims and dotted minims:

Example 4.5. Schumann: *Papillons*, op. 2 no. 10, bars 25–28

Audio 28

Even with Schumann's metronome marking $\text{♩} = 138$, these notes will resonate sufficiently on a Viennese instrument to maintain a convincing *legato*, due to their position in the middle register of the keyboard.⁵⁹ However, in the upper range of the keyboard, the decay was so short that it became significantly harder to reproduce a melodic line satisfactorily.

As previously quoted, Kalkbrenner—who was trained in the French tradition—saw this as a deficiency of the Viennese piano.⁶⁰ To him, the ability to sustain high-register notes was one of the qualities which defined the English piano in contrast to the 'dry' Viennese piano. Indeed, as the opening theme of the first movement of Kalkbrenner's Piano Concerto no. 1 op. 61 demonstrates, the tone does not carry sufficiently to uphold the melodic line:⁶¹

59. In numerous works, Schumann included metronome markings, including opp. 1 and 2. Research by Dietrich Kamper and later Michael Struck has debunked the myth that Schumann's metronome was faulty in any way; the conclusion is that Schumann's metronome markings are reliable. All of the markings in these two works are written in brackets, which could indicate that they are merely suggestions. However, in the Theme and 'Cantabile' of the *Abegg Variations*, the metronome markings are listed without brackets. Whether this would indicate an emphatic instruction or just an oversight on Schumann part is unclear, cf. Dietrich Kamper, 'Zur Frage der Metronombezeichnungen Robert Schumanns', *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 21, no. 2 (1964): 143; 'Phone Interview With Dr. Michael Struck on Schumann's Metronome Markings', G. Henle Verlag, 2010, accessed 1 April 2017, http://www.henle.de/files/interview_struck.pdf.

60. For the full quote, cf. Chapter 1 on page 42.

61. Schumann performed this work on 25 January 1828 at his last concert at the Zwickau Lyceum, before relocating to Leipzig, cf. Georg Eismann, ed., *Briefe, Aufzeichnungen, Dokumente, mit zahlreichen Erstveröffentlichungen*, vol. 1 of *Robert Schumann: ein Quellenwerk über sein Leben und Schaffen* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1956), 20 (hereafter cited as *Quellen*).

[Allegro maestoso]

cresc. *fp*

107

108

111

Red.

8^{va}

3

* Red.

* Red.

* Red.

Audio 2

Example 4.6. Kalkbrenner: Piano Concerto in D minor op. 61, 1st mvt., bars 105–113

Had the right hand been doubled at the octave, as in Variation 7 of Herz's *Carafa Variations*, each melodic note could have been sustained for a more singing tone, even on a Viennese piano.⁶²

62. Schumann began studying this particular work on 25 May 1831. Two days later he played the work to Wieck, and a diary entry of 6 June shows him still at work on this piece, cf. TB1, 333–334.

The musical score is for Variation 7 of Herz's Carafa Variations, measures 9 through 12. It is written for piano in 12/16 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat major). The right hand (RH) plays a melodic line with slurs and accents, marked 'Cantabile'. The left hand (LH) plays a complex, rapid figuration. Dynamics include *sf* (sforzando), *cresc.* (crescendo), *sf*, *p* (piano), *molto espress.* (molto espressivo), *dim.* (diminuendo), *smorz.* (smorzando), and *p*. There are two 'Ped.' (pedal) markings and an asterisk '*' between the two systems.

Example 4.7. Herz: *Carafa Variations* op. 48, Variation 7, bars 9–12

Audio 1

Schumann encountered this technique in the piano works he studied by Herz and other composers in the French tradition, and there are indeed several instances of high-pitched melodies in double octaves in Schumann's early piano works.⁶³ However, when this particular technique made its way into Schumann's compositions, it came with the addition of a left hand figuration which was more elaborate than the simple repeated chords of Examples 4.6 to 4.7 on pages 128–129:

63. While the technique of doubling melodic passages in octaves is completely absent from the works which Schumann studied in depth by the two Viennese-school composers, Hummel (Piano Sonata op. 81 and Piano Concerto op. 85) and Moscheles (*Alexander Variations* op. 32), it became a common pianistic device during the Romantic era. Well-known works of the canon feature this technique, including: Chopin: Piano Concerto no. 1 op. 11 (first movement, second theme); Chopin: Nocturne op. 9 no. 1; Liszt: Sonata in B minor ('Quasi Adagio'); Liszt: Consolation no. 3.



Audio 3

Example 4.8. Schumann: Piano Concerto in F major, RSW:Anh:B3, 1st mvt., bars 21–27 (fragment)



Audio 8

Example 4.9. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, 'Cantabile', bars 1–3

In both examples, the right hand octaves rise to the upper limit of the keyboard, in a range where the notes can hardly sustain. This is an issue in Example 4.9, where the crotchet die out at the slow pace of $\text{♩} = 126$, rendering a true sense of *legato* almost impossible when played without the left hand. However, due to the broken chords in Example 4.8 and the lilting movement of e^b-a^b and $f-a$ in Example 4.9, the left hand produces more resonant sonorities, which—aided by the pedal—fill the gaps of sound between the right-hand melody notes. Thus, instead of overshadowing the right hand melody, playing the left hand slightly stronger as demonstrated by Audio 3 and Audio 8 does not overshadow the right hand melody, but supports the illusion of a singing tone in these passages.



The evidence strongly suggests that the pianos which Schumann knew and played came from the Viennese tradition. While the differences between two contemporary Viennese instruments were vastly greater than the variations in the piano making of today, the Viennese pianos nevertheless had a few common traits. These included a transparency of sound which allowed for the rendering of rich textures with clarity, as well as a fine control of dynamic nuances, especially in the soft range. However, these qualities came at the expense of shorter decay and a lack of volume, compared to English and French counterparts. To realise the virtuoso piano music of Schumann's repertoire on a Viennese piano, one would have to find other pianistic means, such as variation of tone colour through a fine control of touch. With the relative fragility of the Viennese pianos, it would be natural to assume that this would be realised by the use of the fingers alone. However, as will be investigated in the next chapter, the still-hand technique of the time allowed for the application of more modern technical concepts which were nevertheless invisible to the observer, such as the use of weight from the hand. It was these invisible elements which enabled a versatility in the production of tone, which in turn allowed Schumann to embrace the stylistic differences of works ranging from Hummel to Field and beyond on the Viennese piano.

Chapter 5

Tone Production Fundamentals

As established in the previous chapters, Schumann embraced a variety of playing traditions and their respective tone ideals, most likely shaped exclusively by Viennese pianos. The following two chapters explore the practical methods of resolving these ideals from a technical perspective. In this chapter, Schumann's ideal methods of tone production will be established, whilst Chapter 6 investigates his inability to reproduce these ideals during his crisis over the summer of 1831.

At the time, the principle of the still-hand technique—by some aided by the use of mechanical contraptions or *Chiroplasts*—dominated all parts of Europe. On this basis, it would be natural to assume that the finger alone should produce the variety of touches which Schumann sought to achieve. However, the surface of this apparently simple technique conceals a number of invisible playing agents, which are just as important to the production of tone as the general control of finger action. These included concepts of drawing the notes towards oneself with the hand, or the controlled application of weight or pressure from the hand and arm. In addition, Schumann also considered the haptic aspect of playing as an important agent to assess and adjust the production of tone. This gave him a foundation to develop a sophisticated technique with a rich palette of tonal colours, which eventually found its use in his piano compositions.

Visible Playing Agents: *Chiroplasts* and the Still-Hand Technique

Based on Schumann's own pedagogy, it would be natural to assume that his piano technique was completely finger-based. At the bottom of a sketch from his *Klavierschule*, Schumann outlined the second and third chapters of the tutor. The outline covered the following topics: scales, trills, double stops, chromatic passages, embellishments, finger substitutions, arpeggios, stretches and

leaps.¹ Whilst the outline made no mention of a first chapter, the sketch titled 'Erste Uebungen' would logically be placed in the beginning of the tutor, suggesting that the first part would contain five-finger exercises without passing of the thumb.² Although this outline was written at the bottom of a sketch, thus appearing to be a quick draft rather than a carefully worked-out plan, it nevertheless defines piano technique in Schumann's own understanding. Aside from the mention of arpeggios and leaps, the topics mentioned in the outline are focussed on a finger-based technique, in which the production of tone and the technical dexterity in general is concentrated on the digits, with the wrists only being employed on rare occasions for special effects. For the most part, the role of the arms is reduced to tasks relating to navigating around the keyboard. The active use of the shoulder joint, which is central to modern piano technique with its ability to roll the upper arms forward and consequently move the wrists, appears to have been completely absent from piano technique. In this respect, Schumann was part of a tradition of keyboard playing with a century-long lineage, with a continued belief in the finger-centric technique which encouraged a persistent effort to arrest the movements of any joints other than those of the fingers.

From the harpsichordists of the early eighteenth century onward, keyboard playing technique had relied on finger action alone.³ By the first decades of the following century, there was still a consensus that the production of tone depended on nothing but the fingers: Czerny stressed that the 'equality in the touch can only be acquired, when both hands are kept perfectly still', with which Wieck and Hummel agreed.⁴ Hummel noted that the 'quickness of motion lies only in the joints of the fingers', avoiding 'every violent movement of the elbow and hands'.⁵ In one place, Wieck warned against the 'uneasy jerking of the arm' and in another

1. Robert Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch I' (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn, D-Bnu NL Schumann 13, 1831–1832), 106–107, accessed 1 April 2017, <http://digitale-sammlungen.ulb.uni-bonn.de/ulbbnhans/content/titleinfo/1043463> (hereafter cited as SB1).

2. SB1, 17, 105.

3. Among others, Couperin, Rameau and J. S. Bach were prime examples of early eighteenth-century keyboard players who insisted on a purely finger-based playing technique. According to Forkel, Bach was known to have played the clavichord 'with so easy and small a motion of the fingers that it was hardly perceptible', cf. *The Bach Reader: A Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters and Documents*, ed. Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1945), 307. Rameau's tutor opens with the statement: 'Perfection of touch results from proper finger action. [...] The ability to walk or run derives from the flexibility of the knee-joint; the ability to play the harpsichord from the flexibility of the fingers at their roots.' ('La perfection du toucher sur le Clavecin consiste principalement dans un mouvement des Doigts bien dirigé [...] La faculté de marcher ou de courir vient de la souplesse du jarret: celle de toucher le Clavessin dépend de la souplesse des doigts à leur racine', cf. Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Pieces de clavessin avec une methode pour la mecanique des doigts où l'on enseigne les moyens de se procurer une parfaite execution sur cet instrument* (Paris: Charles-Etienne Hochereau, 1724), i. Translated in Eta Harich-Schneider, *The Harpsichord: An introduction to Technique, style and the historical sources*. (Kassel and Basel: Bärenreiter, 1954), 15.

4. Carl Czerny, vol. 1 of *Complete Theoretical and Practical Piano Forte School*, op. 500, trans. J. A. Hamilton (London: R. Cocks), 9.

5. Johann Nepomuk Hummel, *Part I*, in *A Complete Theoretical & Practical Course of Instructions on the Art of Playing the Piano Forte* (London: Boosey, 1828), 3.

place against ‘a rigid, strained, and vicious touch, proceeding from the arm’, which would only lead to a ‘thoroughly vulgar’ style of playing ‘without beauty’.⁶ This was not limited to German and Austrian pianists. Chopin’s piano tuner in London, Alfred James Hipkins (1826–1903) noticed in 1848 that Chopin ‘played only with finger touch, no weight from the arms’.⁷ Valérie Boissier (1813–1894), a student of Liszt, noted after her first lesson with him in 1832 that Liszt had insisted that one should play from the fingers and never from the arms.⁸

To keep the forearm in check, Liszt recommended using the *Chiroplast*, a device which Wieck used in his teaching for a short period of time, including the training of his daughter, Clara.⁹ Although there is no evidence that Schumann used any similar mechanism before 1832, it aided a type of technique prevalent in his pianistic training and pedagogy. First publicly demonstrated in 1813, Johann Bernhard Logier originally invented the *Chiroplast* as a teaching aid for his daughter’s piano lessons. As Bernarr Rainbow describes, the purpose of this mechanism was to guide the student’s hands and fingers into the correct position:

Simply described, the Chiroplast consisted of a wooden framework extending the whole length of the keyboard, above which it was screwed into place. Immediately in front of the player were two parallel horizontal rails between which the hands were inserted to keep the wrists at working level. Above the keys themselves was a brass rod the whole length of the keyboard. This carried the ‘finger-guides’ – two flat brass frames free to slide along it, each containing slots into which the thumb and fingers were to be inserted. The frames were adjustable and kept the hands in correct position in relation to the arms, but prevented the fingers from moving other than vertically.¹⁰

The *Chiroplast* kept the hand in a five-finger position, and the device was therefore mainly aimed at beginners. Logier advertised the teaching aid as well-suited for group teaching, and he thought that a class of 12 to 24 pupils each playing their own instrument was appropriate.¹¹ Over the following decade, Logier’s system gained much traction, and a number of Logier

6. Friedrich Wieck, *Piano and Singing*, trans. Mary P. Nicholls (Boston: Lockwood, Brooks & Company, 1875), 34, 115 (hereafter cited as PS).

7. Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as Seen by His Pupils*, 3rd ed., ed. Roy Howat, trans. Naomi Shoet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 30.

8. Reginald R Gerig, *Famous Pianists and Their Technique*, new edition (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 181.

9. Gerig, *Famous Pianists*, 181; Auguste Boissier, ‘Liszt as Pedagogue’, *The Piano Teacher* 3, no. 6 (1961): 15.

10. Bernarr Rainbow, ‘Johann Bernhard Logier and the Chiroplast Controversy’, *The Musical Times* 131, no. 1766 (1990): 193.

11. Cathleen Köckritz, *Friedrich Wieck: Studien zur Biographie und zur Klavierpädagogik* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2007), 109.

academies opened across Germany.¹² In Leipzig, too, Logier's friend Adolf Bargiel (1783–1841) opened an academy, and Wieck himself used Logier's methods with group lessons by 1824.¹³ Because of Clara's 'impatient temperament' as well as the generally restrictive nature of the system, Wieck gave up on Logier's teaching methods again the following year.¹⁴ Logier's system was designed as a start-to-finish pedagogical method, which went beyond the *Chiroplast* itself. Wieck's reasons for leaving Logier's system seem to be directed at the method rather than the device itself, and he continued to support the *Chiroplast* as late as 1834.¹⁵

The idea of using a mechanical device to assist the development of a good hand position was by no means novel, nor was it controversial. As early as 1716, Couperin suggested the following method of remedying a high wrist:

If a pupil holds one wrist too high in playing, the only remedy that I have found, is to get someone to hold a small flexible stick which is passed over the faulty wrist, and at the same time under the other wrist. If the defect is the opposite, the reverse must be done. But this stick must not absolutely hinder the freedom of the player. Little by little this fault will correct itself; and this invention has been of great service to me.¹⁶

Some of the most respected pianists of the day supported Logier's device, including Cramer and Clementi. Similarly, Kalkbrenner went on to invent an improved version of the *Chiroplast*, the so-called *hand-guide*, and Herz invented the *Dactylion*, another mechanical device with a slightly different purpose in mind.¹⁷ As Gerig describes, Herz's invention 'had ten wires hanging down attached to ten rings through which the fingers were to be inserted. Springs were fastened at the top of each wire. The fingers were then forced to lift high'.¹⁸ As demonstrated later, the technique of lifting the fingers high was in contrast to the teachings of Wieck and other Viennese pianists of the day. Consequently, Wieck never recommended Herz' invention, but did think highly of Kalkbrenner's improvements to the *Chiroplast*, which he had

12. In his tutor, Hummel also commended the *Chiroplast* to beginners, until the pupil had obtained the correct hand position, cf. Hummel, *Course*, 2.

13. Köckritz, *Friedrich Wieck*, 110–112.

14. Köckritz, *Friedrich Wieck*, 112. Recent research by Köckritz suspects infidelity of Wieck's first wife, Mariane Tromlitz. After she and Wieck divorced, she married Bargiel. To propose that this had any influence on Wieck's support of Logier's system is would be speculative, but it is nevertheless an aspect which should not be ignored, cf. Köckritz, *Friedrich Wieck*, 117.

15. Robert Schumann, ed., *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (Leipzig) 1 (1834–1835): 6, 9.

16. Francois Couperin, *L'art de toucher le Clavecin. The Art of Playing the Harpsichord*, ed. and trans. Margery Halford (Port Washington, NY: Alfred Publishing, 1979), 30. 'Sy une personne a un poignet trop hault en jouant, le seul remède que j'aye trouvé, est de faire tenir une petite baguette-pliante par quelqu'un; laquelle sera passée par dessus le poignet défectueux: et en même-tems par dessous L'autre poignet'.

17. Gerig, *Famous Pianists*, 130; Henri Herz, *Méthode complète de piano*, op. 100 (Mainz: B. Schotts Söhne, 1838), 40.

18. Gerig, *Famous Pianists*, 130.

noted existed among ‘several pianists in Leipzig’.¹⁹ However, the *Chiroplast* was not without its critics. Czerny warned against it in his *Piano Forte School* op. 500 and found it ‘useless’ for the four main reasons that (1) ‘a long use of them must necessarily be relaxing both to the mind and to the feelings’, (2) ‘because they consume a great deal of time’, (3) ‘because they are by no means well adapted to encrease[sic] the love of the art in young Pupils and Amateurs’, and (4) ‘because they fetter by far too much, all freedom of movement, and reduce the Player to mere Automation’.²⁰ While Czerny found the *Chiroplast* too restrictive to the freedom of movement, his objections were against the device itself, and not the still-hand principle.

Schumann, too, applied some of the still-hand principles promoted by the *Chiroplast* in his own piano practice and pedagogical output. In the running commentaries to the ‘Erste Uebungen’ of his *Klavierschule*, Schumann repeatedly encouraged a style of playing from the finger alone, stressing a complete stillness of the arm:

Playing finger – completely calmness in the arm – [...] quiet arm – [...] no movement of the arm!²¹

This shows Schumann as a supporter of the still-hand technique, with all playing activity mainly stemming from the fingers alone with a quiet arm. As an alternative to the *Chiroplast*, one could isolate the fingers by other means. A sensible method would be to practice with sustained notes. This technique was used by Wieck, as shown in the very first exercise from his piano studies:²²



Example 5.1. Wieck, *Studien*, exercise 1

By sustaining the fifth and first fingers of the left and right hands respectively, any potential hand movement is kept at a minimum, and with Wieck’s instruction to practice this exercise slowly, he ensured that the pupil’s attention could be directed at the execution of each note.

Schumann frequently applied this strategy in his own piano practice. While studying Chopin’s Variations op. 2, Schumann reminded himself in a diary entry of 9 July 1831: ‘prac-

19. Schumann, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 9. ‘Solche verbesserte Handleiter [Kalkbrenner’s] sind bereits in Leipzig bei mehreren Clavierspielern zu finden’.

20. Carl Czerny, vol. 3 of *Complete Theoretical and Practical Piano Forte School*, op. 500, trans. J. A. Hamilton (London: R. Cocks), 129.

21. SB1, 17. ‘Spielende Finger – ganz ruhiger Arm – [...] Arm still – [...] ohne Bewegung des Armes!’

22. Friedrich Wieck, *Pianoforte Studien*, ed. Marie Wieck (New York: Schirmer, 1901), 1 (hereafter cited as *Studien*).

tice patiently, lift your fingers quietly, hold your hand still and play slowly'.²³ In a number of exercises from his *Uebungstagebuch*, Schumann incorporated additional sustained notes into Chopin's textures, with the two benefits that the hand is held still, the held notes providing stability for the hand, and so that the fingers can play more freely, especially when lifted gently. The following exercises illustrate different uses of additional or sustained notes to enforce stillness of the hand while playing:²⁴



a. *Uebungstagebuch*, exercise 8

[♩ = 96]



b. Chopin: Variations op. 2, 'Alla Polacca', bar 75

Example 5.2. Schumann: *Uebungstagebuch*, exercise 8 (15 June 1831) with corresponding passage by Chopin



a. *Uebungstagebuch*, exercise 10




b. Chopin: Variations op. 2, Variation 3, bar 14

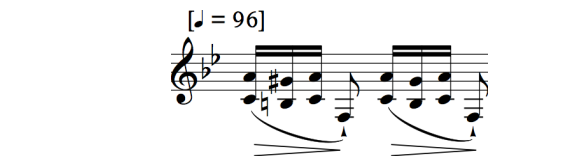
Example 5.3. Schumann: *Uebungstagebuch*, exercise 10 (5 July 1831) with corresponding passage by Chopin

23. Robert Schumann, 1827–1838, vol. 1 of *Tagebücher*, ed. Georg Eismann (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1971), 349. '[...] übe dich in Geduld, hebe die Finger leise, halte die Hand ruhig u. spiele langsam' (9 July 1831) (hereafter cited as TB1).

24. All examples of Schumann's *Uebungstagebuch* are taken from SB1, 93–96.



a. *Uebungstagebuch*, exercise 33



b. Chopin: Variations op. 2, 'Alla Polacca', bar 26

Example 5.4. Schumann: *Uebungstagebuch*, exercise 33 (between 19 and 21 July 1831) with corresponding passage by Chopin

In Example 5.2a on page 138 the additional third finger c^2 creates a pivot point for the hand which balances the octave tremolo, and eases the connection between the fifth finger f^2 and the double thirds. The exercises in Example 5.3a and 5.4a show how Schumann used sustained notes in the right and left hands respectively to practice particularly difficult passages involving the outer fingers (3, 4 and 5) of each hand. In Example 5.3a, the lower part of the double third trill is left out and the first and second fingers are held to isolate the upper part trill played by the fourth and fifth fingers. Similarly, in the left-hand exercise in Example 5.4a, the lower part involving the third, fourth and fifth fingers is prioritised at the expense of the double sixths as seen in Chopin's original (Example 5.4b).

In his own works, Schumann also integrated sustained notes. In the earliest version of the *Beethoven-Exercises*, Exercise A7 involves sustained fifth fingers in both hands for the same purpose:



Example 5.5. Schumann: *Beethoven-Exercises*, A7, bars 1–2

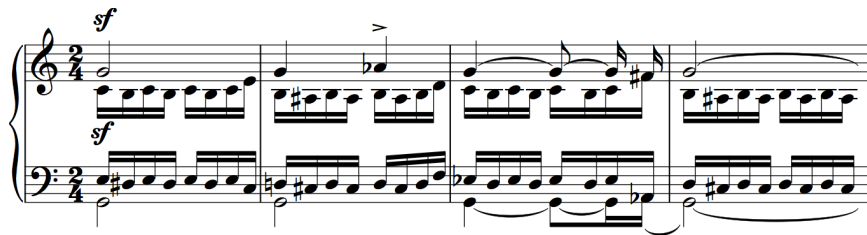
Here the sustained notes require the broken thirds be played mainly by the first and second fingers. While these notes demand a certain amount of stretching of the outer fingers (3, 4

and 5), the real challenge lies in the finger agility of the first and second fingers—particularly because of the lack of support from the hand caused by the sustained notes. In Exercise A8, the melodic line in upper part of the right hand works in the same way as sustained notes:



Example 5.6. Schumann: *Beethoven-Exercises*, A8, bars 1–2

In this exercise, the stretches are distributed primarily between the first, second and third fingers, with octaves in the first and fifth fingers on the beat. This emphasis provides stability for the hand, requiring independence of the three middle fingers. Similarly, in a few passages from the *Exercice pour le Pianoforte* the outer voices are sustained by the fifth fingers of both hands:



Example 5.7. Schumann: *Exercice pour le Pianoforte*, bars 62–65

This texture depends less on stretching of the middle fingers than agility in the first and second fingers, requiring frequent passing of the thumb.

A New Perspective on Technique: The Body as Mechanism

Although the principal means of producing sound on the piano remained within the boundaries of the finger technique, the pedagogical developments around Schumann suggests a growing understanding of the upper body as an important part of the playing apparatus. This signalled a new way of thinking, in which the six joints from the shoulder to the finger tips formed a connected system which had to be finely tuned and aligned. In terms of piano technique, the first half of the nineteenth century was a period of transition, where the heritage of the clavier players and early fortepianists of the previous century still played an enormous role, whilst the

earliest concepts of modern piano technique were beginning to take shape. Although different by nature, there was not necessarily a conflict between the two. On the contrary, they could very well exist side by side, and some of the most vigorous supporters of the still-hand technique were keenly aware of the importance of the correct use of the upper body as a prerequisite to the production of a beautiful tone: as the following will demonstrate, Milchmeyer, Logier and Hummel stressed the importance of posture, sitting height and distance, and hand position for freedom of execution and beauty of sound.

That the two trains of thought could coexist was due to their intrinsically different natures. Whereas the still-hand technique mainly focussed on the *visible* aspects of piano playing—that is, the economy of movement in all joints but those of the fingers—the understanding of the upper body as an integral part of the playing apparatus relied more on everything *invisible* to the observer: the sensation of ‘drawing’ the notes from the knuckle joints, the application of weight from the hand, as well as the minuscule stabilising movements of the wrists, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

The notion that piano technique went beyond finger activity was probably inspired by the development of heavier instruments from England and France. These instruments required an increasing input of energy which the fingers alone could not produce. To match the growing complexity of the mechanisms of these pianos, the whole body was beginning to be considered in the same vein. In his *Peculiar Method of Teaching the Art of Sciences and Music* from 1828, Logier wrote about the body as a mechanical extension of the piano, considering ‘the fingers, hands, and arms, together, as a piece of natural mechanism’, where the relationship between the various joints should be as finely tuned as the piano action itself:

That equality and brilliancy of touch are indispensable requisites to form a good piano-forte player has never been disputed; it should therefore be a primary consideration to make ourselves intimately acquainted with the peculiar agency of the fingers, hands, and arms, in order that we may be enabled, not only to increase their natural power, but, having done so, bring them into a due subjection to our will; in one word, that they may become our humble servants, and not our masters.

In illustration of this part of the subject, we shall consider the fingers, hands, and arms, together, as a piece of natural mechanism; and, in order that we may form a still more clear and distinct idea of the action of its several parts, as required in piano-forte playing, we shall compare it to an artificial piece of mechanism; [...] For example, if we press down one of the keys of a piano-forte, we shall perceive that a small lever, called the hammer, ascends, and, after having touched the string with a velocity nearly imperceptible to the eye, falls immediately afterwards into

a state of perfect rest. This hammer is attached by a leathern hinge to a portion of the work, called the hammer-rail. Only one motion is here perceptible, and that motion is perpendicular. The part which gives the impulse to this hammer is firmly secured to the key. This key is acted upon by the finger of the performer, which (when compared with the hammer) may be considered as an inverted lever, the fulcrum or hinge of which is at the knuckle. The hand, to which the finger is attached, is likewise a lever, whose fulcrum is the wrist, where it is joined to the fore-arm—a lever whose fulcrum is the elbow. Thus it is clear that the fingers, hand, and arm form collectively a piece of natural mechanism.²⁵

In the spirit of his *Chiroplast*, this by no means warranted activity by other joints than those of the fingers. Instead, Logier's analogy to a piece of machinery called for a careful alignment of the torso and limbs to support the fingers, rather than a complex system of interdependent movements. However, the idea that the instrument and player were part of the same mechanism conveys a sense of connection between the pianist and the piano. This points to an intimacy with the instrument in which the sensation of playing is considered a key element in making tangible the tone as imagined.

Considering the torso, arms and wrists as important parts of the playing apparatus, the action of the fingers—and thus the production of tone on the keyboard—relied on how the joints of the upper body were aligned. Although Logier made the analogy of the body and instrument as one mechanism, Milchmeyer and Hummel were far more specific when it came to describing the fundamental principles of posture at the piano. For good posture, Hummel noted that 'the body must be held upright', and there seemed to be general consensus that the shoulders should remain in their resting position with the upper arms hanging in a relaxed state, with the elbows 'turned towards the body, yet without pressing against it'.²⁶ For the most part the upper body would remain completely neutral, except for 'passages expressive of strong agitation and violent feelings', Logier argued, as they 'may require the motion of the body itself, in order to produce the desired effect'.²⁷ Overall, Hummel advocated playing without 'any stiffness', applying only as much force 'as is necessary to move the hands and fingers without languor'.²⁸ To ensure as much freedom as possible for the arms to reach both extremities of

25. Johann Bernhard Logier, *Peculiar Method of Teaching the Art of Sciences and Music* (London: J. Green, 1828), 3.

26. Hummel, *Course 1*, 3. Milchmeyer notes that the shoulder should never be raised and that 'the elbow of the player, up to the shoulder, should be vertical', so that 'the elbow should never be moved away from the body unless absolutely necessary'. However, the arm still serves to 'guide the hand up and down the keyboard', as well as carrying it towards the black keys, cf. Robert Rhein, 'Johann Peter Milchmeyer's "Die wahre Art das Pianoforte zu spielen": An annotated translation' (PhD, University of Nebraska, 1993), 5–6.

27. Logier, *Method*, 5.

28. Hummel, *Course 1*, 3.

the keyboard, Hummel proposed that the pianist should be seated at a comfortable distance so that ‘the right hand may conveniently reach the highest, and the left the lowest keys, without altering the position of the body’.²⁹ As to the sitting height, Milchmeyer emphasised that the ‘position of the hand depends entirely on the height of the chair’, and he expressly warned against sitting too low.³⁰ To this end, Hummel noted that both hands should be able to ‘rest on the keys, naturally and without effort’, suggesting a preferred sitting height where the forearm remains near horizontal when the hands rest at the keyboard, as this causes the least strain on the arms.³¹

Milchmeyer’s advocacy for a high sitting position would result in the hand sloping ‘slightly downward towards the keyboard’, i.e. that the wrist should be held fairly high.³² Similarly to Milchmeyer, Hummel advised that the fingers be curved with a striking point on the keys ‘with the middle of the tips of the fingers’, and Logier argued that this hand position ensured equality of tone and precision of execution, as all the fingers would strike the notes at the same point of the key.³³ In addition to these descriptions, Milchmeyer’s illustration of his ideal hand position (Figure 5.1 on the next page) shows an arched position, in which the knuckles are above the wrist and fingers—a hand position occasionally referred to as a ‘high bridge’, which brings structural integrity to the hand.³⁴ Such a position reinforces an intrinsically strong structure of the hand, in which the organisation of the hand and finger joints ensure the required firmness, while the fingers can freely press or strike the keys. If an opposite type of hand position is used—for instance with a collapsed knuckle row—the muscles of the hand and fingers have to take some of the responsibilities that the joints would otherwise assume. In this case, the sensation of a firm touch combined with a perceived relaxation of the hands and fingers is virtually impossible. The ‘high bridge’ encourages finger movements from the knuckle joints, and is ideal for the technique of ‘drawing’ the notes which Schumann appears to have used, as will be discussed.

Wieck, too, emphasised the importance of a ‘correct position of the hand’ as a prerequisite for good tone production.³⁵ While there are no surviving accounts of a hand position to Wieck’s ideal, one of his essays describes the faulty piano playing of a violinist: ‘he now and then tried to

29. Ibid., 2.

30. Rhein, ‘Milchmeyer’s “Die wahre Art”’, 6.

31. Hummel, *Course 1*, 2.

32. Rhein, ‘Milchmeyer’s “Die wahre Art”’, 25.

33. Rhein, ‘Milchmeyer’s “Die wahre Art”’, 6; Hummel, *Course 1*, 3; Logier, *Method*, 4.

34. Rhein, ‘Milchmeyer’s “Die wahre Art”’, 6. The term ‘high bridge’ is used by Seymour Bernstein, cf. Seymour Bernstein, *20 Lessons in Keyboard Choreography: The Basics of Physical Movements at the Piano* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 1991), 35. For further discussions of the structural integrity and inherent strength of a high bridge, cf. Alan Fraser, *The Craft of Piano Playing: A New Approach to Piano Technique* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 53–150.

35. PS, 34.

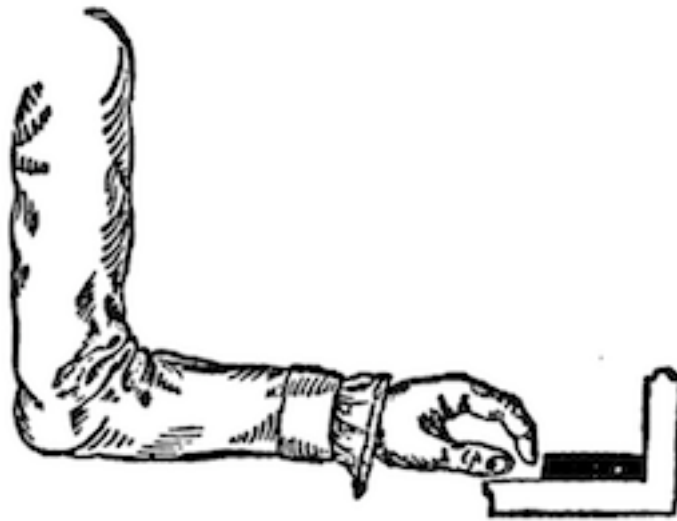


Figure 5.1. Hand position as suggested by Milchmeyer (Milchmeyer, *Die wahre Art*, 1).

sprawl out a few examples of fingering, in a spider-like fashion [...].³⁶ Wieck did not elaborate on this style of playing. However, it was possibly the comparison of the fingers to the legs of a spider as a hand position, in which the knuckles (analogous to the body of the insect) are lower than fingers. This alludes to a flatter hand position, where the second and thirds joints of the fingers are bent, rather the first (the knuckle joints)—the antithesis to the hand position championed by Milchmeyer, Logier and Hummel. This suggests that Wieck taught a similar rounded hand position with a ‘high bridge’. Hummel, too, warned against ‘extending the fingers flat on the keys’, ‘boring into them, by letting the hands hang downwards, are altogether faulty positions, and give rise to a lame and heavy manner of playing’.³⁷ Hummel also advised that the hands be turned slightly outwards, to facilitate the ‘employment of the thumb on the black keys’, and Milchmeyer noted that this was especially helpful when the ‘right hand plays low, or the left hand high’.³⁸

Invisible Playing Agents: Weight and the ‘Arm-Pressure School’

Logier shared Wieck’s opinion that quality of tone is first and foremost a technical issue, and thought that the pianist should ‘endeavour to bring the action of [the] hands and fingers to a [...] state of perfection’ similar to that of the instrument, and that ‘the equality of tone arises from

36. PS, 43.

37. Hummel, *Course 1*, 3.

38. Hummel, *Course 1*, 3; Rhein, ‘Milchmeyer’s “Die wahre Art”’, 6.

the perfect state of [the piano's] mechanism, and not from any art employed by the performer'.³⁹ As to the technical execution, Logier set two main rules regarding touch:

First, the fingers ought not to be raised higher than the keys themselves, with which they should be in continual contact. Secondly, not to strike the keys, but to press them down.⁴⁰

This suggests a playing technique in which the finger has already made contact with the key before playing a given note, much in contrast to the Lebert–Stark school practiced at the Stuttgart Conservatory.⁴¹ Although the technical methods of Lebert and Stark only appeared with the foundation of the Conservatory in the 1850s, Hummel warned against lifting the fingers too high several decades earlier, and Wieck agreed that the player should avoid trying 'to produce the tone in the air' by excessively lifting the fingers.⁴²

Instead, Wieck supported Logier's principle. In the first of his piano exercises, Wieck instructed the student to play the first exercises 'slowly, with the firm "pressure-touch," not with the ordinary "hammer-stroke"'.⁴³ Rather than raising the fingers, Wieck described a type of touch in which the notes should be drawn 'out with the keys', and in his *Klavierschule* Schumann suggested a similar approach of 'accurately drawing back the finger' towards oneself.⁴⁴ In a diary entry of 19 August 1831, through the voice of Eusebius, Schumann reminded himself of the specifics of a good touch:

Could you only, Sir, settle on your style of playing, your touch; do you not have a different one every day? Yesterday you had one, from which I would gladly suffer; I describe it thus: the hand rests on the keys without force; the first joint is rather bent; the finger strikes the key like a small hammer, which moves by its own force; and the arm and hand remains still; the finger hardly moves when striking the key and only just presses the key down.⁴⁵

39. Logier, *Method*, 3.

40. Ibid., 5.

41. This school of playing was developed by the founders of the Royal Conservatory in Stuttgart, Sigismund Lebert (1822–1884) and Ludwig Stark (1831–1884), and advocated a still-hand technique with a high-finger action. At the time, this method was widely promoted, and its supporters were found amongst leading pianists, including Liszt, Hiller and Moscheles, cf. Gerig, *Famous Pianists*, 230–232.

42. Hummel, *Course 1*, 4; PS, 34.

43. Studien, 1.

44. PS, 34; SB1, 17. Schumann's remark on drawing the finger back is one amongst a number of encouraging commentaries, which he added to go along with a series of five-note exercises.

45. TB1, 363. 'Könntest Du nur Herr Deiner Spielart, Deines Anschlags werden; hast Du nicht jeden Tag eine andere? gestern hattest Du die, die auch ich gern leide: ich beschreibe sie, die Hand liegt ungezwungen auf den Tasten nieder, die vordersten Glieder ziemlich eingebogen, der Finger trifft die Taste wie ein Hämmerchen, der sich durch eigene Kraft bewegt, der Arm u. Hand bleiben ruhig, der Finger hebt sich kaum zum Anschlag u. drückt fest die Taste nur nieder'.

This type of touch in which the key is *pressed* down was clearly passed on to other of Wieck's students, including his daughter, Clara. Much later, her student Franklin Taylor (1843–1919) described her playing for the second edition of *Grove's Dictionary for Music and Musicians* of 1908:

Indeed, her playing was particularly free from violent movement of any kind; in passages, the fingers were kept close to the keys and squeezed instead of striking them, while chords were grasped from the wrist rather than struck from the elbow. She founded her *technique* upon the principle laid down by her father, F. Wieck, who was also her instructor, that 'touch' (i.e. the blow of the finger upon the keys) should never be audible, but only the musical sound.⁴⁶

The continuous contact between the finger tip and the key allowed for the tone to be produced with the support of the rest of the playing apparatus. Championed by leading figures of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century piano circles, including Carreño, Godowsky, Breithaupt and Matthay, the emergence of the arm-weight school was still more than half a century away. Nevertheless, by the 1830s Czerny had discovered the force of gravity as a useful source of energy in piano playing. In relation to the opening of his *Piano Forte School* op. 500, Czerny instructed how the first exercises should be played *legato*, 'so that the *weight* of the hand always rests on the keys, but on one finger only, while all the rest are poised in the air':⁴⁷



Example 5.8. Czerny, *Piano Forte School*, 6. Lesson 2 ('Primary Finger-Exercises')

Although the application of weight is restricted to the hand as appropriate to a Viennese piano from the 1830s, this instruction invariably sounds like the transfer of weight from finger to finger, as later promoted by the arm-weight school. This type of touch would warrant a slightly heavier style of playing with a fuller tone, which leans more towards the English tone ideal than that of the Viennese.

This could very well have been the way in which Schumann achieved a singing tone on the piano. Gerig groups the performers of the early nineteenth century, who 'acknowledged legitimacy of an arm pressure touch' as the 'pressure school'.⁴⁸ He identifies this as a precursor to the arm-weight school, and included in this school Adolphe Adam (1803–1856), Kalkbrenner,

46. *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., ed. Fuller Maitland and John Alexander, vol. 4 (New York: Macmillan Company, 1908), 344.

47. Czerny, *Piano Forte School* 1, 6. My italics.

48. Gerig, *Famous Pianists*, 236.

Anton Kontski (1817–1899), Thalberg, Clara Schumann, and in relation to Schumann, Hummel and Wieck.⁴⁹ The application of weight—or pressure—from the hand allows for a versatile style of playing; according to Czerny, this approach warranted variation of tone, depending on the dynamics that one wished to produce. Thus, if the player needed to produce a *crescendo* there was no need to lift up ‘the fingers higher than is usual [...] but only by an encreased[sic] *internal action of the nerves*, and by a *greater degree of weight*, which the hand receives therefrom’.⁵⁰ Even when playing softly in slow passages, weight should still be applied to maintain contact with the key bed after striking each note, but with minimal effort from the fingers:

In slow notes this [pressing down the keys as far as possible] must be resorted to, even when we are to play piano or pianissimo. In all such cases too, the hand must be kept quite tranquil, so that this touch may be produced only by its entire weight, and by an internal and invisible pressure. When however a Turn, a Shake, a rapid embellishment, or a quick passage intervenes in the course of the melody, this energetic pressure must be instantaneously relinquished, that we may produce these quicker notes with the requisite degree of gentleness and grace.⁵¹

As Czerny noted, the weight from the hand can be alleviated immediately, when a different type of sound is required. This allows for the pianist to produce tones ranging from the lightness of the Viennese school to the singing tone of the English. Nevertheless, Czerny stressed repeatedly that the hand should be kept still, and even in *crescendos* he observed that ‘the crescendo should never be produced by a visible exertion of the hands’.⁵² Any application of weight from the hand was *invisible*, and would only be perceived by the player. This allows for a fluent technique in which movements are used economically, and where any ‘uneasy jerking of the arm’, which Wieck so vigorously warned against, is avoided.⁵³ Conversely, the hand would remain perfectly still as per the governing technical principles of the time.

Indeed, economy of movement is a prerequisite for the application of weight from the hand. A still hand and arm ensures stability, making it easier to transfer weight from finger to finger, as described by Czerny. In melodic playing, there is usually a greater risk of losing the continuum of weight transfer when passing the thumb over or under the hand, as the change of hand position unavoidably causes stretching of the thumb as well as a rebalancing of the weight distribution of the hand. Whenever possible, this can be avoided by the use of finger substitutions. This technique dates back to Couperin, who advocated the substitution of the fingers

49. Ibid.

50. Czerny, *Piano Forte School 1*, 15.

51. Ibid., 41.

52. Ibid., 15.

53. PS, 34.

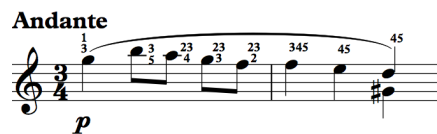
without striking the note again.⁵⁴ As his exercises from the *Anweisung* demonstrates, Hummel instructed this type of fingering with a set of exercises dedicated to this particular topic:



Example 5.9. Hummel, *Anweisung*, 333. 'Vom Abwechseln eines oder mehrer Finger auf derselben Taste'

According to his own output, Schumann seems to have been a supporter of finger substitutions to aid the transfer of weight from one finger to another and, according to the outline to his *Klavierschule*, he even planned to include a chapter on this very topic.⁵⁵ While this never materialised, Schumann nevertheless included finger substitutions for expressive purposes in his *Paganini Study* op. 3 no. 3, prefaced by the following comment:

The third capriccio has been included more for the intimate simplicity of its melody than for its qualities as an etude. [...] [The editor] also wishes to draw attention to the silent substitution of the fingers on a single key, which often has a beautiful effect in Adagio (less so here).⁵⁶



Audio 36

Example 5.10. Schumann: *Paganini Studies* op. 3 no. 3, bars 1–2 (right hand)

Although finger substitutions appear quite rarely in Schumann's own works, the *Allegro* op. 8 is a notable exception:



Example 5.11. Schumann: *Allegro* op. 8, bar 34

54. Marion Phyllis Barnum, 'A comprehensive performance project in piano literature and an essay on J. N. Hummel and his treatise on piano playing' (PhD, The University of Iowa, 1971), 97–98.

55. SB1, 107.

56. Robert Schumann, *Etudes pour le Pianoforte d'après les Caprices de Paganini*, op. 3, 1st ed. (Leipzig: Friedrich Hofmeister, [n.d.]), 5. 'Der dritte Caprice-Satz steht mehr wegen seines innigen, einfachen Gesanges, denn als Studie da. [...] Er macht noch auf das stille Ablösen der Finger auf einen Taste aufmerksam, das (hier weniger) im Adagio oft von schöner Wirkung ist [...]'. (Hereafter cited as RS3-Hof); Translated in Robert Schumann, *Paganini-Etuden*, op. 3, ed. Ernst Herttrich (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2009), xvi (hereafter cited as RS3-Henle).

In addition to this occurrence, he clearly prioritised the study of this technique in the *Paganini Studies*, as he included this caprice despite its apparent unsuitability as an étude. In the preface, Schumann included five preparatory exercises, of which exercises *c* and *d* are particularly relevant to the application of weight from the hand:

a. Exercise c

b. Exercise d

Example 5.12. Schumann, *Paganini Studies op. 3 1st ed.*, 5

With the additional thirds and sixths respectively, the hand is encouraged to lean its weight on the sustained notes of the melodic line, which is kept *legato* through the finger substitutions. Whilst Schumann did not add fingerings to Variation 2 of the *Abegg Variations*, the *legato* of the melodic line implies a similar fingering with finger substitution as the exercise of Example 5.12a (Example 4.2 on page 124); the application of weight from the hand ensures that the melodic line is emphasised with a singing tone, whilst the syncopated lower part is kept light.

Even when limited to the hand, the application of weight puts the structure of the hand and the position of the wrist under pressure. To counter this, a certain amount of tautness is required by the fingers, while they still maintain their flexibility and elasticity to move freely. In one of his essays, Wieck advised a student to study scales and exercises to achieve enough ‘firmness’ and ‘decision’ to produce a ‘certain distinct tone and a tolerable touch’.⁵⁷ Schumann, too, linked firmness of attack with the quality of the tone; in the *Paganini Studies* he advised the player to ‘strive for vitality and elasticity of tone’ to make the playing ‘technically beautiful’.⁵⁸ Although he also asked for a ‘gentle pressing down of the key’, ‘precision without force’ and no stiffness of touch in the ‘Erste Uebungen’ of his *Klavierschule*—referring to Hummel’s ‘rule’ that finger exercises should be played with a ‘completely loose hand without any great tension

57. PS, 81.

58. RS3-Hof, 2–4. Terms used by Schumann: ‘perlengleicher’, ‘runder’ and ‘Weichheit im Ton’; Translated in RS3-Henle, xii–xiii.

of the muscles’—Schumann also admitted that a small amount of firmness can be beneficial at times: ‘if the fingers of the student are very weak, then let him play with a firm, strong, even touch’.⁵⁹ Czerny seemed to agree with this view:

The beginner must accustom himself to a moderately strong touch, so as to press down the keys firmly; he will naturally practice it, at first very slow, accelerating movements by degrees, as the flexibility of the fingers develops itself, and without any strain upon the nerves.⁶⁰

This suggests that the firmness and distinction of touch can be cultivated by exaggeratedly playing with a stronger attack, as seen in the following exercise from the preface to Schumann’s *Paganini Studies* op. 3:



Example 5.13. Schumann, *Paganini Studies* op. 3 1st ed., 7. Exercises for strengthening and increasing the independence of the fingers.

The layout of this exercise ensures a focus on one finger at a time; the *sf* require a stronger touch, and sustaining the note ensures that the fingers work independently of each other:

The following exercises are useful for strengthening and increasing the independence of the fingers [Example 5.13].⁶¹

The cultivation of gently taut fingers was, however, not synonymous with rigidity. Instead, the player should strive for ‘lightness’ of touch, with a ‘quiet movement of the fingers’, playing with ‘loose fingers and a loose wrist’, particularly when playing *legato*, as Wieck expressed it.⁶² According to Wieck, the suppleness of the wrist played an important role on the quality of tone:

The tones which are produced with a loose wrist are always more tender and more attractive, have a fuller sound, and permit more delicate shading than the sharp tones, without body, which are thrown or fired off or tapped out with unendurable

59. SB1, 17. ‘Leises Niederdrücken der Tasten – [...] Präzision Ohne Zwang – [...] nicht steif’; ‘Der Schüler kann Hummel’s Regel, Fingerübungen mit ganz lockerer Hand ohne grosse Anspannung der Musceln zu Spielen nicht genug beobachten.’; ‘sind freilich die Finger des Schülers sehr schwach, so lasse man sie ihm fest, stark, egal anschlagen.’

60. Czerny, *Piano Forte School* 1, 7.

61. RS3-Hof, 7. ‘Im die einzelnen Finger zu stärken und unabhängig zu machen, kann man sich folgender Uebungen bedienen’. Translated in RS3-Henle, xix.

62. PS, 27, 34, 154.

rigidity by the aid of the arm and fore-arm. A superior technique can with few exceptions be more quickly and favorably acquired in this way than when the elbows are required to contribute their power.⁶³

As per the principles of the still-hand technique, the finger was traditionally considered to be the only moving agent in piano playing at the time. However, to bring out ‘a fine legato tone’, Wieck advocated playing ‘with loose and quiet fingers and a yieldingly movable wrist, without the assistance of the arm’.⁶⁴ The question remains why the wrists should stay ‘loose’ and ‘movable’ when not directly involved in the production of tone, except for rare occasions.

The answer may reside within Otto Ortmann’s discovery in the 1920s that ‘what frequently appears a motionless state is, in reality, a minute movement, too small or too rapid to be readily detected by the eye’.⁶⁵ The pulling motion of gently drawing the notes towards oneself from the knuckle joint, as promoted by Wieck and Schumann, will naturally invoke a counter-movement from the arm, pushing the forearm forwards. This movement releases the arm tension caused by the grasping from the hand, and absorbs the small amount of tension which builds up every time the finger reaches the key bed. Whether or not this actually affects the fullness of tone is debatable, but the comfort that the flow of this chain reaction provides may in any case affect the perception of the tone quality. In Ortmann’s understanding, although the wrists and arms appear to remain quiet, there are constant, imperceptible movements occurring throughout the playing apparatus. These movements are only possible as long as the joints in the arms and wrists remain supple to allow them to take place, however minor. Similarly to the application of weight from the hand, these movements remain within the territory of invisible technique although the hand appears to be kept completely still. Reaching an equilibrium between the perceived relaxation of the fingers, wrists and arms, combined with the need for a slight firmness of touch and the constant adjustment of weight from the hand, requires a high degree of attentiveness to the sensation of playing.

Invisible Playing Agents: Aural Imagination and Tactile Feedback

Schumann was keenly aware of the physical sensation of playing and in his *Klavierschule* he used it as a guide to discover when the balance between posture, weight, firmness of attack and finger action had been achieved: ‘when a *gentle trembling* is felt at the fingertips, then the wonderful touch has been acquired’.⁶⁶ However intangible this statement may seem, it reveals an intimate

63. PS, 148.

64. PS, 27.

65. Otto Ortmann, *The Physiological Mechanics of Piano Technique* (Hertford: Stephen Austin & Sons, 1929), 84.

66. SB1, 17. ‘Wenn ein *leises Zittern* in der Fingerspitze eintritt, so ist der schöne Anschlag da bald da Erreicht’.

understanding of the instrument, as well as an appreciation of the link between the physical sensation of playing and the resulting sound. It is unclear from Schumann's statement what exactly the sensation of this 'gentle trembling' would imply; it could possibly be the transfer of vibrations from the strings and via the key to the fingertip. Such a phenomenon is known from the clavichord, where the tangent (the hammer) remains in contact with the vibrating string as long as the note is held. As Good explains, the vibrations travel through the action of the instrument to the finger of the player:

[...] the bridge transmits the vibrations to the amplifying soundboard, whereas the tangent transmits them only to the key, which does not enhance the audible resonance. About half of the string's vibrating energy goes where it cannot be resonated—except in the player's soul, one of the pleasures of playing the clavichord being a sense of intimacy with instrument from feeling the string's vibration through the keys.⁶⁷

Indeed, the action of the pianoforte is designed to reduce the amount of contact time between the hammer and the string to a fraction of a second, and the transmission of vibrations from the string to the tip of the finger is thus hardly perceptible. However, from my experience on Clara Schumann's 1828 Stein grand piano at Zwickau and other Viennese instruments from the time, one can indeed sense a slight vibration, or 'trembling', from the key as long as the finger remains fairly relaxed. In terms of technical execution, this would require an immediate release of any finger tension as soon as the note is struck; this release would allow for the rest of the playing apparatus to absorb any motion initiated by the finger, and would thus result in a freer, more resonant sound.

However, the order of cause and effect between sensation and sound was at times also reversed. In the case of Schumann's instruction from his *Klavierschule*, the sensory feedback from the finger was used to assess whether the ideal sound had been reached. Conversely, according to the pedagogies of Milchmeyer and Wieck, the imagined sensation of playing could be used to produce the desired tone. On playing with a *legato* touch, Milchmeyer noted:

Furthermore, the fingers should, as it were, *lightly feel out all notes in advance of playing them*, and hold as many fingers as possible in readiness for coming notes.⁶⁸

Köckritz assesses that Wieck must have learnt this technique from Milchmeyer, and that Wieck applied a similar approach to sound production in his own teaching, where the 'touch must be

67. Edwin Marshall Good, *Giraffes, Black Dragons and Other Pianos: A Technological History from Christofori to the Modern Concert Grand*, 2nd edition (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 61.

68. Milchmeyer, *Die wahre Art*, 3; Translated in Rhein, 'Milchmeyer's "Die wahre Art"', 10–11. My italics. 'Ferner muß man alle Noten gleichsam ganz leicht schon vorher unter den Fingern fühlen, ehe man spielt [...]'.

prepared in the mind' before playing a note.⁶⁹ Following nearly four years of piano studies with Wieck, Schumann must undoubtedly have been familiar with this concept. During his studies with Wieck, he spent hours exploring the borderland between the imagined and the actual sound in numerous improvisation sessions. As will be examined, this type of experimentation led to the discovery of some of the most novel applications of piano sonority at the time.



Schumann lived in a time and environment where the ideals of sound and playing technique underwent a remarkable transformation, from the classical idioms of the Viennese tradition of the late eighteenth century to the early forerunners of a more modern approach to piano playing. On one hand, the pianos he played and knew were deeply rooted in the sound world of the previous century; yet, however finely crafted these instruments were, the emergence of a radically different style of playing left the Viennese pianos on a slow track towards extinction. On the other hand, Schumann experienced an influx of music from the world outside of Saxony, and he was well aware of the requirements of this music. As a consequence, he accommodated his touch to also encompass the somewhat 'heavier' style of the French and English composers, possibly by applying weight from the hand to varying degrees. However, there was not necessarily a conflict between the instruments and the music. The superior build quality of the Viennese instruments allowed for the player to bring out delicate shades of tonal colour through a finely adjusted and flexible touch.

While the music by Herz, Kalkbrenner or Field played on a Viennese piano would indeed sound considerably different than on a contemporary instrument from France or England, a Viennese piano would be just as apt at bringing out the expressive qualities of the music. However, the means of producing these effects would not be the same: lacking grandeur and resonance, one would depend to a greater extent on the depth of touch and articulation and less on the pedal. This approach to piano performance warranted the cultivation of a versatile technique, in which the quality of tone and the fine nuances of touch were at the heart of piano playing. This type of playing relied on constant feedback from the sensory system and, according to Schumann it was not only used to kinaesthetically deem if one had played the correct notes, it could also assess the quality of tone: when the execution of a note *felt* right, it probably also *sounded* right. When Schumann repeatedly complained about his sound not living up to his own expectations during the crisis in 1831, the issue could just as well have been that his sensation of playing was not satisfactory. This leads back to the crisis and what triggered it.

69. Köckritz, *Friedrich Wieck*, 434.

Chapter 6

'Only the Dry, Cold Keys Remain': Technical Struggles During the 1831 Crisis

This chapter addresses the inherent conflict between Schumann's elaborate ideals and methods of tone production (established in Chapter 5) and his unfruitful attempts to reproduce them during his crisis in 1831. As described in Chapter 2, the crisis was triggered by his failed attempts to get past the second stage of his learning process, where 'only the dry, cold keys remain'.¹ To remedy this, he became more systematic about piano practice: he structured his work days, produced customised exercises based on Hummel's *Anweisung*, and began keeping a practising diary, the *Uebungstagebuch*. Despite these improvements, they proved insufficient to overcome the hardships he encountered. However, whilst the Chopin Variations—the centre of his struggles—admittedly challenge even the seasoned virtuoso, this was by no means the first demanding showpiece which Schumann learned. Moscheles' *Alexander Variations* were staples in any virtuoso's repertoire at the time, and the various variation sets by Herz which Schumann practiced share many postclassical traits of Chopin's op. 2. This leaves the paradoxical question of why Schumann in 1831—despite his development of fairly advanced practising skills—was flung into such a crisis.

A possible explanation, Macdonald suggests, was Schumann's tendency to revert to 'less polished playing' such as sight-reading and improvisation.² Combined with an impatience—trying to find new means and ways to shorten the process of learning which Macdonald reads as an effort to 'decrease the interval of', or even skip altogether, 'the second stage of his study scheme'—Schumann's crisis could merely be a question of diligence. However, as documented

1. See note 71 on page 75.

2. Claudia Macdonald, 'Robert Schumann's F-Major Piano Concerto of 1831 as Reconstructed From His First Sketchbook: A History of Its Composition and Study of Its Musical Background' (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1986), 539.

in Chapter 2, Schumann maintained a disciplined practice routine for extended periods of time during 1830 and 1831 and, in addition, his objective of shortening the second stage is not necessarily problematic by definition. Instead, the ability to work efficiently and quickly digest large portions of new music is an acquired skill in itself, associated with the pedagogy of Wieck. In addition, as this chapter will demonstrate, the *Uebungstagebuch* proves the opposite of MacDonald's claim: that Schumann took a thoughtful and deliberate approach to piano practice, and that his reflections had paid off.

This chapter proposes that the problem was principally technical. A closer examination of the *Uebungstagebuch* reveals his thoughtful attempts to solve a number of specific mechanical issues related to the right hand. Coinciding with the *Uebungstagebuch*, Schumann made his debut as composer with the publication of his first Opus, the *Abegg Variations*. Hidden underneath a surface of brilliant figurations and postclassical bravura, this work adapts pianistic textures which compensate for technical issues present in his own playing. Based on these two sources and supported by his pedagogical works from the early 1830s, this chapter pinpoints four categories of technical problems which Schumann tried to address as both performer and composer. This evidence does not allow for an assessment of Schumann the pianist as such. However, his approach to technical problem-solving clearly demonstrates a profound understanding of piano mechanics, which the absence of a public performing career did not stand in the way for.

Following a brief review of the relevant primary evidence concerning Schumann's piano technique during the period in question, this chapter presents four particular technical issues, all of which relate to the right hand: the adaption of fingerings which avoid the use of the third finger, a loss of elasticity to stretch the hand, difficulties with lateral movements of the fingers and, lastly, a lack of finger independence. The last section of this chapter investigates Schumann's technical struggles in a broader perspective, raising the question of their cause. As the four issues discussed below align with probable symptoms of the hand injury, it will be speculated that this undiagnosed ailment could be the cause. Whilst the evidence remains inconclusive, it contributes to the general discourse regarding Schumann's hand injury and opens new paths for further research on the topic.



Schumann left a body of indirect evidence which makes it possible to quantify his technique at the time, including records of his own practice, pedagogical materials and compositions. Thus, the *Uebungstagebuch* attests to his efforts to solve technical issues in his piano practice, and the pedagogical works from the early 1830s—namely the *Beethoven-Exercises*, the *Klavierschule*, the *Exercice* as well as the *Paganini Studies* op. 3—demonstrate how his outlook on piano

technique evolved before and after the crisis. In addition, the pianistic style of his compositions from this period respond directly to his own hands, as he could conveniently accommodate the instrumental writing to his own technique. Thus, by adapting textures and figurations to mitigate his technical issues, the works composed around the time of his crisis in 1831 are key to the understanding of Schumann's piano playing during this period.

But which compositions was he working on over the summer of 1831? Macdonald proposes that it was primarily the Piano Concerto in F major RSW:Anh:B3, which caught Schumann's attention during these months. He was revising the opening movement during the summer, played it to a group of friends on the 9 August and attached it to his letter to Hummel on the 24th.³ While Macdonald concludes that it was the Concerto which 'excited' Schumann during this period, the *Abegg Variations* were arguably also important. What makes this proposition controversial is the apparent pianistic style of the work, which—on the surface—appear typically postclassical. However, it can be argued that underneath the *stile brillante* textures with their 'many passages of fleet, high-register figuration', as Thomas Sauer describes it, Schumann employed a number of technical strategies to relieve unnecessary strain on the right hand.⁴ What makes this proposition problematic is the present catalogues of Schumann's compositions, which collectively suggest that the *Abegg Variations* were finished by the summer 1831, and it is therefore necessary to briefly review the genesis of the work to challenge the established notion that it was more or less ready for publication by the time of his crisis.

Macdonald's assumption is based on the theory that he had completed the set by 1830, and that he was only 'putting the finishing touches' on the work by the summer 1831.⁵ Margit McCorkle estimates that the work was written as early as January 1830, probably based on Schumann's later catalogues: the flyleaf of his own copy of the *Abegg Variations* state that the work was composed during the winter 1829–1830, a catalogue from 1849/1850 sets the year of composition as 1830, and his earliest catalogue from 1832/1833 is more precise attributing the time of composition as July and August 1830.⁶

A number of sources confirm that Schumann was indeed working on the *Abegg Variations* during 1830. The dedicatee, 'Pauline Comtesse d'Abegg', is generally believed to be a pseudonym for a young pianist from Mannheim, Meta Abegg (1810–1835), with whom Schumann

3. Claudia Macdonald, 'Schumann's Piano Practice: Technical Mastery and Artistic Ideal', *The Journal of Musicology* 19, no. 4 (2002): 447.

4. Macdonald, 'Piano Practice', 557 fn. 95; Thomas Sauer, 'Texture in Robert Schumann's First-Decade Piano Works' (PhD diss., The City University of New York, 1997), 65.

5. Macdonald, 'Piano Practice', 557 fn. 95.

6. Margit L. McCorkle, *Thematisches Verzeichniss sämtlicher im Druck erschienenen Werke Robert Schumann's*, 4th ed. (London: Stephen Austin / Sons, 1966), 1; Robert Schumann, *Abegg-Variationen*, op. 1, ed. Ernst Herttrich (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2004), iv; Wolfgang Boetticher, *Opus 1–6*, vol. 1 of *Robert Schumanns Klavierwerke: Neue biographische und textkritische Untersuchungen* (Wilhelmshafen: Heinrichshofen's Verlag, 1976), 23.

became acquainted during his time in Heidelberg.⁷ The earliest reference to Abegg's name in relation to a musical motif (A–B^b–E–G–G) is suggested through the mention in his diary of an 'Abegg Waltz' on 22 February 1830.⁸ Subsequently, Schumann experimented with various forms and instrumentations featuring this motif, including an orchestral prelude to a piano concerto and a 'second variation' for string quartet.⁹ He eventually settled on the piano as soloist, and by 11 January 1831 the *Abegg Variations* had taken enough form for Schumann to deem the work ready for publication in a letter to August Lemke.¹⁰ However, this may have been a very different version from what was eventually published, as suggested by surviving sketches and fragments scattered across his *Skizzenbuch I*, *III* and *V*. These sketches attest to a more elaborate working process than the letter to Lemke would suggest, and that the *Abegg Variations* only took their final shape close to 12 September 1831, when Schumann sent his manuscript to Kistner, the publisher.¹¹

Skizzenbuch I is particularly informative in this regard. Despite its name, this sketchbook was most likely begun at a later date than both *Skizzenbuch III* and *V*. Matthias Wendt has demonstrated that the materials collected in *Skizzenbuch I* date 'principally' from the period 1830–1832, with the sketches dated by Schumann stretching from 17 May 1831 and 21 April 1832.¹² This sketchbook includes several indications that Schumann was far from finished with the work during the summer 1831. Firstly, it contains an orchestral introduction to the *Abegg Variations*, which means suggests that he pushed the question of instrumentation to a very late stage in the compositional process.¹³ Secondly, the Piano Concerto and the *Abegg Variations* share several leaves in *Skizzenbuch I*, and because Schumann was deeply engaged in his work on the Concerto over the summer of 1831, it is safe to assume that he was at the very least still working on Variations 1 and 3, as well as the 'Cantabile'.¹⁴ That he was still producing new

7. Boetticher, *Klavierwerke, Opus 1–6*, 24.

8. Robert Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch III' (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn, D-Bnu NL Schumann 15, 1832), 10, accessed 1 April 2017, <http://digitale-sammlungen.ulb.uni-bonn.de/ulbbnhans/content/titleinfo/1043491> (hereafter cited as SB3); Robert Schumann, 1827–1838, vol. 1 of *Tagebücher*, ed. Georg Eismann (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1971), 228. Schumann put the melodic line of the theme in the *Skizzenbuch III* in what is believed to be the earliest sketch of the work (hereafter cited as TB1).

9. Robert Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch V' (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn, D-Bnu NL Schumann 17, 1830), 13, accessed 1 April 2017, <http://digitale-sammlungen.ulb.uni-bonn.de/ulbbnhans/content/titleinfo/1043629>; SB3, 17.

10. F. Gustav Jansen, ed., *Robert Schumanns Briefe: Neue Folge*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1904), 29.

11. *Ibid.*, 413.

12. Matthias Wendt, 'Zu Schumanns Skizzenbüchern', in *Schumanns Werke: Text und Interpretation. 16 Studien*, ed. Akio Mayeda and Klaus Wolfgang Niemöller (Mainz: Schott, 1987), 101; Robert Schumann, *Studien- und Skizzenbuch I und II*, vol. 1 of *Neue Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Matthias Wendt, Neue Gesamtausgabe 3 (Mainz: Schott, 2011), 259.

13. Robert Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch I' (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn, D-Bnu NL Schumann 13, 1831–1832), 78, accessed 1 April 2017, <http://digitale-sammlungen.ulb.uni-bonn.de/ulbbnhans/content/titleinfo/1043463> (hereafter cited as SB1).

14. Macdonald, 'Piano Practice', 537; Schumann, *Studien- und Skizzenbuch I und II*, 111, 112, 155, 172, 175.

variations at this time is supported by his *Projektenbuch*; here, he listed the *Abegg Variations* as his 'first published Opus', adding that 'only half of the variations are printed', suggesting that he eventually produced a surplus of variations.¹⁵ Lastly, Schumann's acquaintance with the Chopin Variations may have inspired alterations to the work. As Köhler argues, the '*Werk-II*-experience' (referring to Schumann's review of Chopin's Variations, *Ein Werk II*) taught Schumann about the 'dramaturgical arch' of a musical work, which may have led to a re-conceptualisation of the *Abegg Variations*. This probably happened from June 1831 onwards when Schumann began practice on Chopin's op. 2.¹⁶

Schumann's own practice may have triggered some of the changes which he made to the *Abegg Variations* during 1831. As his diaries document, he was in the process of learning the work himself between August and October, and his pianistic hands-on experience evidently led to changes to the composition. For instance, fitted in between a few cadences (dated 3 August 1831) and a harmony exercise (dated 8 August 1831) in *Skizzenbuch I*, a brief fragment explores an alternative hand distribution to the last bar of the 'Cantabile'.¹⁷ Coincidentally, the *Uebungstagebuch* records Schumann practicing a few of the preceding bars of the 'Cantabile' on 3 August, demonstrating that his own study of the *Abegg Variations* brought up revisions of the work itself.¹⁸ It can therefore be concluded that by summer 1831, Schumann had by no means finished his work on the *Abegg Variations*, and that the changes which he made at the time included revisions on the pianistic layout of the work. Thus, similarly to the *Uebungstagebuch* and pedagogical works, the pianism of the *Abegg Variations* was informed by Schumann's technical issues.

These issues revealed by these sources fall roughly under the following four categories, as will be explored in further detail below:

Fingerings; change of fingerings to avoid the use of the third finger in his practice as well as in his compositions.

Stretches of the hand; mainly between the middle fingers.

Lateral movements of the fingers; including finger crossings and passing of the thumb.

The leaves shared between the Piano Concerto and the *Abegg Variations* are the bifolia on pages 25–26/29–30; 53–54/75–76; 55–56/73–74; 65–66/87–88.

15. Georg Eismann, ed., *Briefe, Aufzeichnungen, Dokumente, mit zahlreichen Erstveröffentlichungen*, vol. 1 of *Robert Schumann: ein Quellenwerk über sein Leben und Schaffen* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1956), 81 (hereafter cited as *Quellen*).

16. Hans-Joachim Köhler, 'Ein Werk I – Zur Genese der *Abegg Variationen* op. 1 von Robert Schumann', in *Schumanniana Nova*, ed. Bernhard R Appel, Ute Bär and Matthias Wendt (Sinzig: Studio Punkt Verlag, 2002), 375.

17. SB1, 75.

18. SB1, 95.

Finger independence; lack of agility when using the third finger in conjunction with the second or fourth finger; compensated by the support of the hand and rotational movements from the forearm.

Based on an examination of the *Uebungstagebuch*, *Abegg Variations*, as well as other compositions and pedagogical works, the effect of the hand injury on Schumann's piano technique during the summer 1831 shall be inspected in each of these four areas.

Fingerings

One of the features exclusive to Schumann's earliest piano works is the inclusion of fingerings. Thus, whilst he added fingerings to the *Abegg Variations*, the *Paganini Studies* op. 3 and the *Exercise, Carnival* op. 9 and *Symphonic Etudes* op. 13 only include occasional fingerings, and there are none in the *Davidbündlertänze* op. 6 and *Kreisleriana* op. 17. Describing his general stance on fingerings in the *Paganini Studies*, he elaborated:

[...] the editor has very precisely and fastidiously indicated the fingering as a secure basis for mastering the purely mechanical difficulties. The student should therefore direct his attention above all to the fingering.¹⁹

Moreover, when omitting fingerings from a movement in these early works he specifically emphasised this point. In the preface to the sixth Study, he elaborated on his decision to omit fingerings from this particular etude:

In the sixth capriccio the editor has deliberately indicated only a few fingerings. Those intent on learning this piece, however, are urged to fill in the empty spaces, as unless one is absolutely certain about each note it will prove impossible fully to master this, in any event, very difficult work.²⁰

In other words, the meticulous process of deciding one's own fingerings was integral to the familiarisation with a work, and Schumann's suggestions of fingerings to his own works thus attest to his familiarity with this music—not just as the composer, but also as a performer. In

19. Robert Schumann, *Etudes pour le Pianoforte d'après les Caprices de Paganini*, op. 3, 1st ed. (Leipzig: Friedrich Hofmeister, [n.d.]), 2. 'Darum zeichnete der Herausgeber einen sehr genauen und sorgsam-überlegten Fingersatz an, als ersten Grund alles tüchtigen (mechanischen) Spiels. Richte also der Studirende vor Allem sein Augenmerk darauf.' (Hereafter cited as RS3-Hof); Translated in Robert Schumann, *Paganini-Etuden*, op. 3, ed. Ernst Herttrich (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2009), xii (hereafter cited as RS3-Henle).

20. RS3-Hof, 7. 'In der sechsten Caprice hat der Herausgeber geflissentlich nur einzelne Finger bemerkt. Wenn es aber Ernst um Erlernung dieses Satzes ist, der fülle die leeren Stellen aus, da, im Falle man nicht über jede Note mit sich einig wäre, ein vollkommenes Beherrschen der ohnehin sehr schwierigen Caprice nicht möglich sein würde.' Translated in RS3-Henle, xix.

works of other composers, he could avoid the third finger of the right hand through inventive fingerings; in his own works, he could design the textural layout of the right hand part to avoid the use of this finger.

More obviously than anywhere else in his early virtuosic works, such avoidance of the third finger is seen in the *Toccata* op. 7, where the opening 22 bars can comfortably be played without the third finger of the right hand at all. While Altenmüller's argument that 'this extremely difficult piece can be played without the middle finger of the right hand' seems exaggerated, the final version from 1834 uses the third finger much more sparingly than the earlier version from 1830, before the aforementioned crisis.²¹ This is evident in bars 27–28 of the *Exercice*, which correspond to bar 35–36 in the *Toccata*:

a. Exercice pour le Pianoforte, bars 27–28

Example 6.1. Schumann: *Exercice pour le Pianoforte* (1830), bars 27–28 with corresponding passage in *Toccata* op. 7

Here, Schumann changed the lower part of the double notes and altered the fingerings slightly. With an inept third finger, the parallel double thirds between e-G² and d-F^{#2} of the earlier version would be more difficult to execute than the connection from the minor seventh a¹-G² to the d-F^{#2}. In the second variation of the *Abegg Variations*, which Sauer argues to be ‘far more typical of Schumann’s later style than that of Variation 1’, there is a similar avoidance of the third finger (Example 4.2 on page 124).²² With the application of finger-replacements and finger crossings, this melodic line can easily be played *legato*, almost without including the

21. Eckart Altenmüller, 'Robert Schumann's Focal Dystonia', in *Neurological Disorders in Famous Artists*, ed. Julien Bogousslavsky and Francois Boller (Basel: Karger, 2005), 183.

22. Sauer, 'Texture', 69.

third finger in the melodic line. Although Schumann struggled with finger crossings between the fourth and fifth fingers in his own piano practice (which will be investigated further in Example 6.7a on page 165), the finger crossings in this variation happen at a much slower pace, and would certainly not have been a problem to Schumann.

This is not the only example in the *Abegg Variations* of Schumann avoiding the third finger; throughout the work, there are numerous shorter passages where Schumann's own fingerings circumvent its use. In the opening variation the right hand plays a falling sequence of broken C major chords as an embellishment on top of the ABEGG-motif in the left hand:

[(♩ = 104)]

a. *Abegg Variations*, Variation 1, bars 9–10 (right hand)

Vivace

b. Moscheles: Etude in A major op. 70 no. 19, bars 1–2 (right hand)

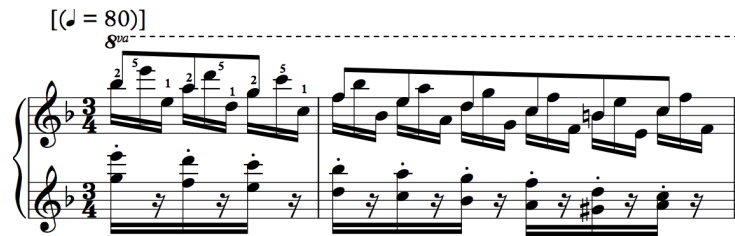
Example 6.2. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, Variation 1, bars 8–12 and similar passage from Moscheles: Etude op. 70 no. 19

In essence a simplified version of the main figuration of Moscheles' Etude op. 70 no. 19, this figure is followed by broken F major chords, rising towards the highest register of the keyboard. Throughout these bars, the second finger markings ensure that the repeated notes are played by the first and second finger, with the latter acting as a pivot point for the hand. Consequently, although the hand travels from the top register of the instrument to the middle and back up again, the third finger is not used at all during these four bars.

In Variation 3, Schumann also depended on the index finger to avoid any excessive use of the third finger. Featuring a perpetual motion in semiquaver triplets throughout, Variation 3 appears to rely on all five fingers of the hand:



a. Bars 1–2



b. Bars 11–12



c. Bar 24



d. Bar 4

Example 6.3. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, Variation 3. My fingerings.

However, underneath the surface of chromatic scales and brilliant passagework, most of the chromaticism can be played with the first three fingers of the hand, thereby avoiding the use of the third and fourth fingers in conjunction. Other types of passagework are straightforwardly written for the first, second and fifth fingers, for instance the slurred notes in the opening bar (Example 6.3a). This is also the case in bars 11–12 (Example 6.3b), as well as the repeated notes in bar 24 (Example 6.3c); and in bar 4 the third and fourth fingers are supported by the second finger on the double stops (Example 6.3d). In these examples, the avoidance of the third finger placed reliance on the first, second and fifth fingers. In several places, however, Schumann even wrote figurations which involve all fingers of the right hand, except for the third finger. Thus, the falling sequence of bars 33–35 of the 'Finale alla fantasia' avoids the third finger, as Schumann's fingerings demonstrate:

[Vivace (♩. = 80)]

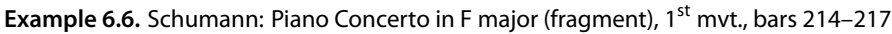
Example 6.4. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, 'Finale alla fantasia', bars 34–37

In the same manner, Schumann designed fingering patterns for sequential passagework, which can ignore the third finger, for instance the rising sequence beginning at bar 68 in the 'Finale alla fantasia':

[Vivace (♩. = 80)]

Example 6.5. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, 'Finale alla fantasia', bars 68–69

In his Piano Concerto in F major, Schumann applied similar formulas to his passagework. Although the sketches to the concerto do not include fingerings, bars 214–215 of the first movement implies almost complete avoidance of the third finger, and 216–217 can comfortably be played with the middle finger as well:



[Brillante (♩ = 76)]



Example 6.7. Schumann: *Uebungstagebuch*, exercise 17 (7 July 1831) with corresponding passage by Chopin

While Paderewski's more natural fingering in the corresponding passage by Chopin would ensure an evenness of tone and execution at high speeds, Schumann's fingering tends to destabilise the hand and adds a layer of technical insecurity by reusing the same two fingers (fourth and fifth). It must have been a time-consuming effort for Schumann to make this fingering work satisfactorily, and may suggest the technical sacrifices he was willing to make to avoid stretching the third finger.

Stretches of the Hand

Schumann's efforts to avoid the third finger were possibly the consequence of a generally inelastic hand. However, whilst Schumann could bypass the third finger through careful fingering, addressing wide stretches of the hand—which are found in abundance in Chopin's op. 2—required other means. To counter this problem, his own pedagogical output repeatedly emphasised the practice of extreme stretches of the hand. But Wieck was by no means in favour of such practice and warned:

Give up the practice of extreme stretches. [...] I beg you to reflect that too much practice of very wide stretches enfeebls the muscles and the power of the hand and fingers, endangers an even, sound touch, and makes the best style of playing a doubtful acquisition.²³

A series of exercises with sustained notes by Wieck and Schumann respectively illustrate their differing views: in Wieck's five-note exercises (Example 5.1 on page 137), the hand is placed in a closed position, fairly relaxed and balanced at the keyboard; in comparison, Schumann requires the fingers to work independently despite being in a stretched and less comfortable position, as seen in his *Beethoven-Exercises* A7 and A8 (Examples 5.5 to 5.6 on pages 139–140). The pedagogical aim was to train wide stretches as a pianistic skill in itself, as demonstrated by the opening exercises of the *Klavierschule* ('Erste Uebungen'). Here, the hand is placed in a closed five-note position with one sustained note at a time (Example 6.8a), developing to increasingly larger intervals which extend to a minor seventh b^1-b^1 from the first to fifth finger (Example 6.8b):

I. [inke] H. [and] Der Daumen bl. [eibt] liegen

a. Section I, bars 1–4

b. Section IV, bars 1–4

Example 6.8. Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch I', 104. *Klavierschule* RSW:Anh:F5, 'Figurensammlung'

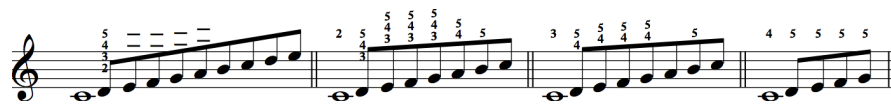
To further isolate the playing fingers and increase the stretch between them, Schumann extended these exercises to incorporate two and three sustained notes:

23. Friedrich Wieck, *Piano and Singing*, trans. Mary P. Nicholls (Boston: Lockwood, Brooks & Company, 1875), 171 (hereafter cited as PS).



Example 6.9. Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch I', 104. *Klavierschule* RSW:Anh:F5, 'Uebungen mit stillstehender Hand ohne Untersatz und Ueberschlag', exercise 3.

In addition, a fragment from a different leaf takes the cultivation of stretches to the extreme, including an octave between the second and fifth finger, as well as fifths between the third and fourth, and fourth and fifth fingers:



Example 6.10. Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch I', 107. *Klavierschule* RSW:Anh:F5, 'Spannung', bar 1

The exercises on extreme stretches found their application in the most challenging works of the piano literature, including Chopin's Variations op. 2. At times its dense textures often required the participation of all five fingers of the hand, making it impossible to solve any issue with the third finger through fingering. To mitigate necessary stretches of the hand, Schumann would in certain places choose more comfortable fingerings at the expense of playing *legato*. In the passage corresponding to exercise 20, Schumann could have maintained the *legato* in the upper part with the suggested fingering, but prioritised to ease the strain on the hand:



a. *Uebungstagebuch*, exercise 20



b. Chopin: Variations op. 2, Variation 3 bar 4 (right hand). Fingerings by Paderewski.

Example 6.11. Schumann: *Uebungstagebuch*, exercise 20 (7 July 1831) with corresponding passage by Chopin

Similarly, in bar 61 of the 'Alla Polacca' he refrained from playing every single voice of the texture *legato* to avoid excessive stretching of the hand:

a. *Uebungstagebuch*, exercise 38

b. Chopin: Variations op. 2, 'Alla Polacca' bar 35 (right hand)

Example 6.14. Schumann: *Uebungstagebuch*, exercise 38 (19 or 20 July 1831) with corresponding passage by Chopin

Whilst this fingering enables the lower part $c^2-b^1-a^1$ to be played *legato* as per Chopin's instruction, it causes a stretch between the third and fourth fingers. To prevent the hand from closing involuntarily, the added notes ensure an open and fully stretched hand, readily prepared to play the next notes.

In contrast to the pedagogically motivated *Beethoven-Exercises* and *Klavierschule*, Schumann wrote the *Abegg Variations*—at least in part—for himself to perform. Adapting the music to his own technique, the work features typically postclassical textures, but nevertheless avoid stretches common in the Chopin Variations. Some of the most challenging stretches of Chopin's op. 2 appear in two- and three-part textures, and whilst Variation 1 of the *Abegg Variations* involves similar figurations, wide stretches are generally avoided. For instance, the following bars present a two-part texture with chromatic semiquavers in the lower part and a bell-like embellishment of repeated quavers in the top voice. This texture resembles the fragment of an unfinished 'Variation II':

Audio 6

a. *Abegg Variations* op. 1, Variation 1, bars 5–7

b. Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch I', 32. 'Var. II' (fragment), bars 1–3

Example 6.15. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1. Variation 1, bars 5–7 and unfinished 'Var. II'

Despite the apparently similar use of chromatic runs, Example 6.15a makes only limited use of the third finger. Chopin utilises a similar texture, but even though the semiquaver triplets of the lower part are primarily to be played by the first and second fingers, Chopin added thematic material in the top voice to be played *legato*:

Example 6.16. Chopin: *Variations* op. 2, Variation 1, bars 1–2 (right hand)

This requires a flexible third finger, as it is interchangeably used for both parts with wide stretches between the middle fingers as a consequence. Schumann, on the other hand, avoids these stretches by simplifying the top voice in Example 6.15a drastically. The rest of the hand is free to execute the chromatic figuration without any significant stretches between the middle fingers.

Still, passages involving stretches do occur. The short *cadenza* between the 'Cantabile' and 'Finale alla fantasia' does require some flexibility and stretching of the hand:

[Cantabile ♩ = 126]

[accelerando]

16

cres - - - do

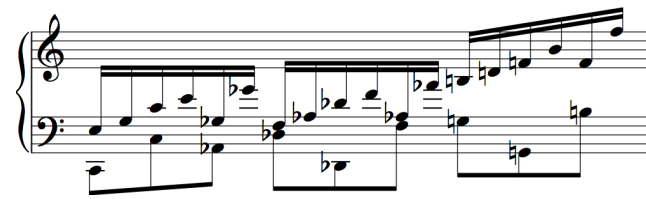
18

Ped. *

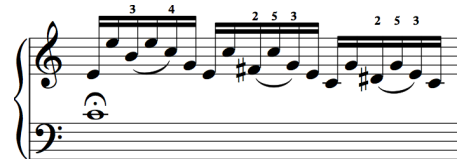
Example 6.17. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, 'Cantabile', bars 14–18. Fingerings based on exercise 62 from the *Uebungstagebuch* (Example 6.18b on the next page).

Audio 10

Firstly, the thumb changes from white to black keys in the rising sequence of bars 14–16, causing changes of hand position. Secondly, the following descending sequence in bars 17–18 involves stretches between the fifth finger and the accentuated third finger notes. Curiously, this particular passage (bars 14–18) is the only part of the *Abegg Variations* for which Schumann made exercises in the *Uebungstagebuch*:



a. Exercise 61



b. Exercise 62

Example 6.18. Schumann: *Uebungstagebuch*, exercises 61 and 62 (3 August 1831)

This demonstrates the degree of attention he gave to this passage in his own practice, indicating a particular technical challenge. Schumann did not sacrifice his creative ideal to accommodate his own technical abilities, but it did come at a price in the form of extra labour at the piano.

Lateral Movements of the Fingers

The apparent lack of elasticity to the hand not only affected stretched hand position, but could hamper lateral movements of the third finger, for instance when crossing the fingers over one another. As suggested by two exercises from the *Uebungstagebuch*, this was a particularly evident in Schumann's work on the Chopin Variations. Although Exercise 14 involves some degree of middle finger stretching, the primary challenge lies in the crossing of the fourth and fifth fingers:

a. *Uebungstagebuch*, exercise 14

[Brillante (♩ = 76)]



b. Chopin: Variations op. 2, Variation 1 bar 4 (right hand)

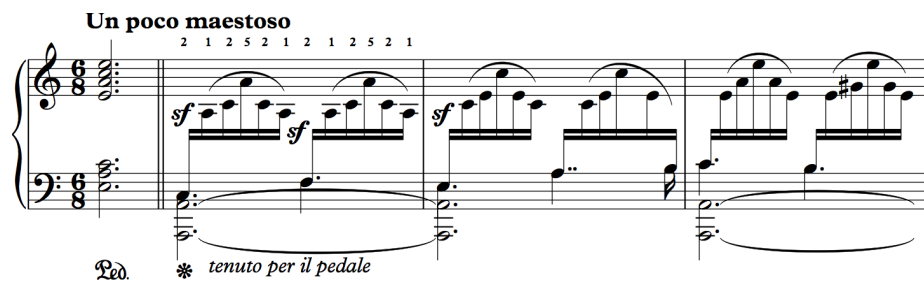
Example 6.19. Schumann: *Uebungstagebuch*, exercise 14 (7 July 1831) with corresponding passage by Chopin

That this exercise is designed to be practised in a loop only adds to its difficulty, as the crossing of the fourth finger over the fifth to reach the black note b^2 is much easier to execute than for the fifth finger to cross back under the fourth to reach the a^2 . Whilst finger crossings between the fourth and fifth fingers were clearly a point of attention to Schumann, crossing the fourth finger under the third appears to have been an even greater task. This is seen in exercise 16, where Schumann's fingering requires two crossings of the fourth finger under the third to maintain a *legato*:



The passing of thumb over or under the hand was another point of focus in Schumann's practice. Its use in passagework requires the hand to open and close quickly, and to perform such movements fluently the hands must remain flexible. The mastery of the thumbs was indeed also a key element in the pedagogy of the time. Thus, in the *Anweisung* Hummel highlighted the importance of the thumb's agility and independence from the hand, so that in passing the thumb under the hand 'any motion or twisting of the hands or arms' should be 'carefully avoided'.²⁴ Wieck argued that the thumb must already have 'passed under fingers, before it has to strike its key', to achieve the smoothest possible shift of hand position, and to 'avoid a jerky execution'.²⁵ Hummel agreed, noting that the thumbs of both hands should always be 'a little bent (yet not cramped) under the fore-finger' in order to prepare for passing under the hand.²⁶ Likewise, when the hand passes over thumb, he added, the hand should 'be ready, almost before the thumb has absolutely struck the note appropriated to it'.²⁷ Using the thumb to prepare for its new position required a flexible hand for it to open and close effortlessly.

Extending the emphasis on thumb technique in contemporary pedagogy, *Beethoven-Exercise A3* is an etude specifically written for the agility of this finger:



Example 6.22. Schumann: *Beethoven-Exercises*, A3, bars 1–4. My fingerings.

While the thumb serves as a pivot point for the hand when connecting the second finger melodic line with the upper part broken triads, the true technical challenge of this exercise lies within the changing intervals between the first and second fingers on the three first semiquavers of each beat. This could very well have been a response to his own practice during 1831, as it was the specifically the struggle with the passing under of the thumb which prompted Schumann to commence the *Uebungstagebuch*: below the opening exercise, an arpeggiated diminished seventh chord from Herz' Variations op. 48, he noted: 'the passing over and under the fifth finger

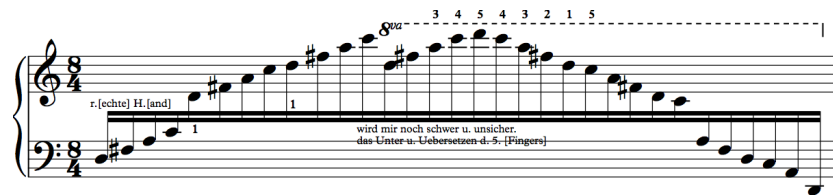
24. Johann Nepomuk Hummel, *A Complete Theoretical & Practical Course of Instructions on the Art of Playing the Piano Forte* (London: Boosey, 1828), 66.

25. Friedrich Wieck, *Pianoforte Studien*, ed. Marie Wieck (New York: Schirmer, 1901), 27 (hereafter cited as Studien).

26. Hummel, *Course*, 66.

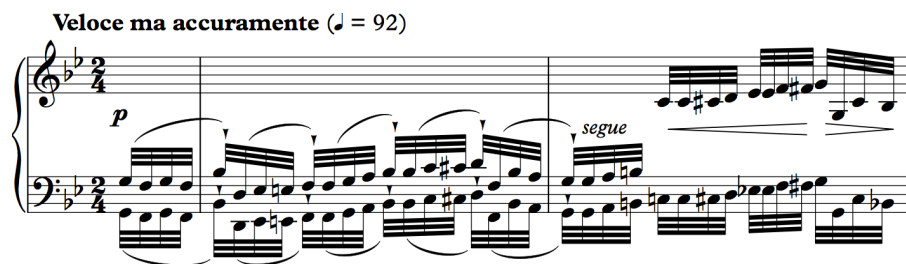
27. Ibid., 68.

remains difficult and insecure to me'.²⁸

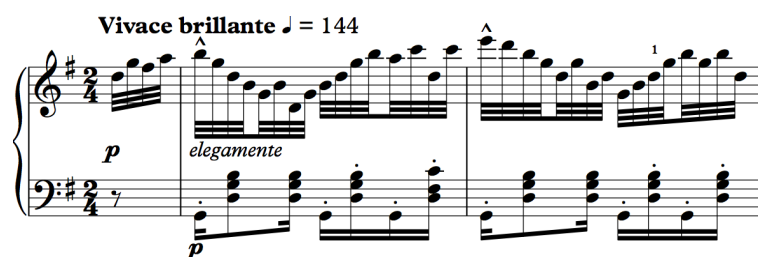


Example 6.23. Schumann: *Übungstagebuch*, exercise 1 (30 May 1831)

Despite his struggles with a rigid right hand, large portions of the *Abegg Variations* nevertheless relied on the passing of the thumb, to the extent that Variation 3 and the 'Finale alla fantasia' are the only two places in all of Schumann's published piano works to feature scales of two full octaves played in succession. To compensate for this, Schumann selected tempos which ensure a much slower pace than in contemporary virtuoso variation sets. Schumann's metronome markings thus indicate ♩ = 80 for Variation 3 and ♩ = 80 for the 'Finale alla fantasia'.²⁹ Other *perpetuum mobile* movements of his performing repertoire are markedly faster than those of Schumann's own works. For instance, in Variation 2 ('Veloce ma accuramente') of his op. 2, Chopin marks ♩ = 92 and Variation III ('Vivace brillante') of Herz's *Carafa Variations* op. 48 is ♩ = 144:



Example 6.24. Chopin: *Variations* op. 2, Variation 2, bars 1–2



Example 6.25. Herz: *Carafa Variations* op. 48, Variation 3, bars 1–2

28. SB1, 93. '[...] wird mir noch schwer u. unsicher des Unter u. Uebersetzen der 5. [finger]'.
 29. For further discussions of Schumann's metronome markings, cf. note 59 on page 127.

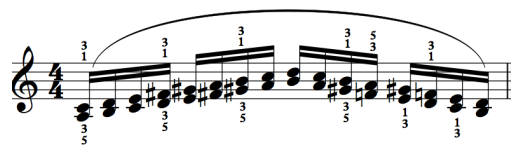
In both examples, the perpetual motion is based on demisemiquavers, thus appearing significantly faster than the passagework of the *Abegg Variations* which in the case of Variation 3 and the 'Finale alla fantasia' are based on semiquaver triplets.

Combining the aforementioned aspects of lateral movement—finger crossings and the passing of the thumb under the hand—the playing of double stops not only figured prominently in Schumann's technical output, but persistently received much attention in his practice during 1831. As fundamental to piano technique at the time, Hummel introduced exercises in double note playing at an early stage in his *Anweisung*, despite it being aimed at young beginners.³⁰



Example 6.26. Hummel, *Anweisung*, 55. 'Übungen im Oktav-Umfang, wobei die Quinte in der rechten Hand mit dem dritten, und in der linken mit dem zweiten Finger genommen wird'; 'Mehrstimmig' nos. 239–240

As Barnum summarises, 'skill in playing double notes' was 'essential' to the performance of music of 'Hummel's time and particularly his own'.³¹ Similarly, Wieck introduced double notes in the opening chapters of his own piano methods, with an emphasis on *legato* double thirds, played with precision and 'loose fingers'.³² These include diatonic figurations in parallel and contrary motion, as well as major, minor and diatonic scales.³³ Schumann, too, prioritised the study of double stops, especially double thirds:



Example 6.27. Schumann, *Paganini Studies* op. 3 1st ed., 4. Suggested fingerings for diatonic scales in double thirds.

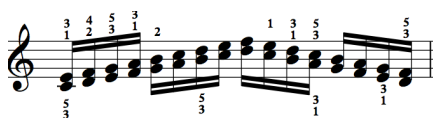
30. Johann Nepomuk Hummel, *Ausführliche theoretisch-practische Anweisung zum Piano-Forte-Spiel*, 1st ed. (Vienna: Tobias Haslinger, 1828), 55.

31. Marion Phyllis Barnum, 'A comprehensive performance project in piano literature and an essay on J. N. Hummel and his treatise on piano playing' (PhD, The University of Iowa, 1971), 55.

32. Friedrich Wieck, *Materialen zu Friedrich Wieck's Pianoforte-Methodik*, ed. Alwin Wieck (Berlin: Simrock, 1875), 9 (hereafter cited as *Materialen*); Studien, 7. Instructions to the player includes: 'Die Terzen genau zusammen anschlagen und binden.'

33. *Materialen*, 26–30; Studien, 4–6.

Noting that fingerings in piano methods can be ‘inconsistent’, he advised the player to choose fingerings ‘suitable to his own hand’, or consistently practice all diatonic scales ‘fingered in groups of three’, even with inserted ‘chromatic notes’.³⁴ This seems to have been Schumann’s preferred fingering as well; in his ‘Chromatic scales in double stops’ (‘Chromatische Tonleitern in Doppelgriffen’) from his *Klavierschule*, he consistently applied a variant of the aforementioned groups of three to all scales:³⁵



Example 6.28. Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch I', 97. *Klavierschule* RSW:Anh:F5, 'Chromatische Tonleitern in Doppelgriffen', bar 1

To Schumann, the distance from parallel double notes to actual two-part writing was short. As with the practice of regular scales, he suggested that the player advance from practising scales in double thirds to scales with ‘free counter-melodies’:



Example 6.29. Schumann, *Paganini Studies op. 3 1st ed.*, 5. Scales with free counter-melodies.

To this end, he collected a number of similar free-form exercises in his *Exercises in double stops I and II* ('Übungen in Doppelgriffen I/II') in the *Klavierschule* :



Example 6.30. Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch I', 23. *Klavierschule* RSW:Anh:F5, 'Uebungen in Doppelgriffen II', exercise 22

Such textures also found their way into Schumann's études: particularly exercises nos. 10 and 27 allude to a technique also applied to his *Beethoven-Exercises* and the *Exercice pour le Pianoforte*, which involves a *tremolando* motion between the outer fingers (1 and 5) and inner fingers (2

34. RS3-Hof, 4. 'Statt des schwankenden Fingersatzes in Clavierschulen wähle man einen Hand angemessenen eigenen oder übe den von drei zu drei Terzen fortrückenden für alle diatonischen Tonleitern'. Translated in RS3-Henle, xv.

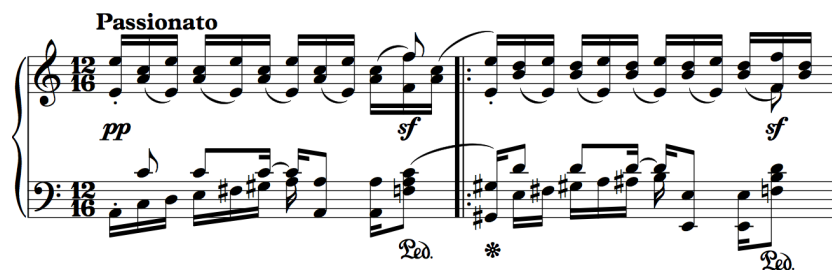
35. SB1, 97. These exercises feature no chromatic, but instead diatonic scales.

and 4). Although this figuration plays a less prominent role in the *Exercice* than in its final incarnation as the *Toccata* op. 7, it is nevertheless present as the principal theme:



Example 6.31. Schumann: *Exercice pour le Pianoforte*, bars 5–8

In *Beethoven-Exercise* A6, Schumann applied a similar figuration with a rhythmic effect characteristic of his later style of piano writing:



Example 6.32. Schumann: *Beethoven-Exercises*, A6, bars 1–2

Here, the placement on top of a triplet-based metre creates a sense of rhythmic unrest, which is emphasised by the articulation markings and *sf*. Although written to render a completely different musical character, another well-known example of this type of rhythmic displacement is found in 'Des Abends' from Schumann's *Phantasiestücke* op. 12 (Example 0.9 on page 17).

Schumann's thoroughness and attention to double stops could indeed have been the outcome of his own issues with this particular technique. The execution of double notes, especially when played *legato*, involves lateral finger movements. Exercises 19 and 42 from the *Uebungstagebuch* illustrates his attempts to address passages of Chopin's Variations, in which the hand needs to open or close quickly:

a. *Uebungstagebuch*, exercise 19

b. Chopin: Variations op. 2, Variation 1, bar 16 (right hand)

Example 6.33. Schumann: *Uebungstagebuch*, exercise 19 (7 July 1831) with corresponding passage by Chopin

a. *Uebungstagebuch*, exercise 42

b. Chopin: Variations op. 2, 'Alla Polacca', bars 54–55 (right hand)

Example 6.34. Schumann: *Uebungstagebuch*, exercise 42 (19 or 20 July 1831) with corresponding passage by Chopin

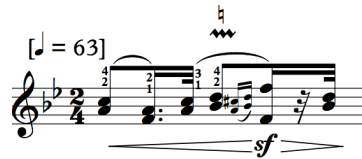
Whilst the leap in Example 6.33b forbids a *legato* throughout, the hand still needs to remain close to the keys to minimise its travelling distance during the change of position. Upon arriving at the b^1 – d^2 double third, the hand must open swiftly for the thumb to reach the e^1 – $c^{\sharp 2}$ double sixth. By contrast, the figuration in Example 6.34b can be played *legato* by passing the second finger over the thumb on the $g^{\sharp 1}$, b and $d^{\sharp 2}$ (see suggested fingering). In his corresponding exercise (Example 6.34a), Schumann added supporting notes on each quaver beat to aid the closed and open positions, ensuring that the hand maintains this position for as long as possible. Similarly to Chopin's original passage, the exercise is written in semiquaver triplets. However, Schumann's remark that the exercise is 'good in sextuplets too', suggests that he wanted fewer accentuated beats, possibly for the sake of achieving a higher degree of evenness of tone.

Finger Independence

To produce such evenness of tone in double stops, the fingers need to work independently. A general lack of finger independence may have contributed to the double notes as a recurring theme of his practice. This issue is highlighted in exercises 9 and 10 (Example 5.3 on page 138) from the *Uebungstagebuch*, which address the afterbeats following double stop trills:



a. *Uebungstagebuch*, exercise 9



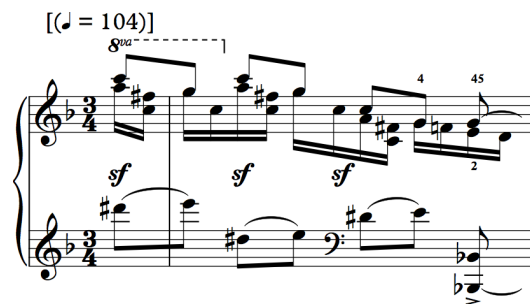
b. Chopin: Variations op. 2, Variation 3, bar 10
(right hand). Fingerings by Paderewski.

Example 6.35. Schumann: *Uebungstagebuch*, exercise 9 (25 June 1831) with corresponding passage by Chopin

Attempting to solve the problem of executing the trills of Examples 6.35b and 5.3b on page 138 and on this page, the exercises demonstrate a lesser concern with the trilling motion between the fourth and fifth fingers on the main trill (see suggested fingering), but needed to give the subsequent double thirds $a^1-c^{\sharp 2}$ to b^b1-d^2 special attention.³⁶ By playing this exercise in loop, it becomes a study of finger independence for the third and fourth fingers.

Despite the aforementioned efforts to strategically exclude the third finger from passage-work in the *Abegg Variations*, the third finger is extensively used throughout the work, particularly in Variations 1 and the 'Finale alla fantasia'. To avoid stretches, uncomfortable hand positions and finger isolation, Schumann applied a number of technical strategies which include the application of the wrists and forearms. One approach was the use of a falling motion from the wrists to avoid the isolation of the middle finger. This is primarily evident in the first variation, in which bar 16 introduces a left-hand motif based on the rising minor second A–B^b of the opening ('AB' of the ABEGG theme), here transposed to D[#]–E:

36. Schumann did not provide a source to the two exercises, but Wendt proposes that they correspond to the trills from Examples 6.35b and 5.3b, cf. SB1, 93.



Example 6.36. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, Variation 1, bar 17. Fingerings by Schumann.

The right hand figuration requires the employment of all five fingers to maintain a *legato* in the upper part d³-g², making the suggested fingering the only viable option. It is thus convenient for the third finger to play each of the Gs, as the hand begins its leap towards the next figure.³⁷

Towards the end of Variation 1, there is a different technique to avoid isolating the fingers when the middle finger is employed, namely the use of forearm rotation and circular movements. As observed in a number of two-part textures from the *Abegg Variations* as well as in Chopin's op. 2, the fourth and fifth fingers are supposed to play the upper part in bar 23, whilst the remaining three fingers play the middle and lower parts (see suggested fingering):



Example 6.37. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, Variation 1, bar 23

The accentuated notes on the first and second fingers provide an impulse for a circular movement towards the fifth finger, with the third finger relegated to playing a passing note in this movement. Similarly, in the 'Finale alla fantasia' the third finger is repeatedly used as the centre of rotational movements. For instance, in the opening of the *Finale*, the third finger acts as the pivot point of a circular movement, which activates the rotation of the forearm:

37. The use of falling movements to support the third finger is also seen in falling sequence in bar 19, as well as in the grace notes of bars 21–22.

[Vivace (♩ = 80)]

8va

pp *poco cresc.*

9

poco crescendo

13

mf *f*

Audio 12

Example 6.38. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, 'Finale alla fantasia', bars 4–15

From bars 4–7 onwards, the right hand figuration maintains the third finger as the centre of circular hand movements, and in bars 8–15—written in the '*foratura*' style of Field and Chopin, as Sauer notes—the third finger continues as pivot point to the hand, this time supported by the sustained thumb.³⁸ Also, a similar movement is beneficial to the execution of bars 93–98:

[Vivace (♩ = 80)]

8va

mf *dimin.*

96

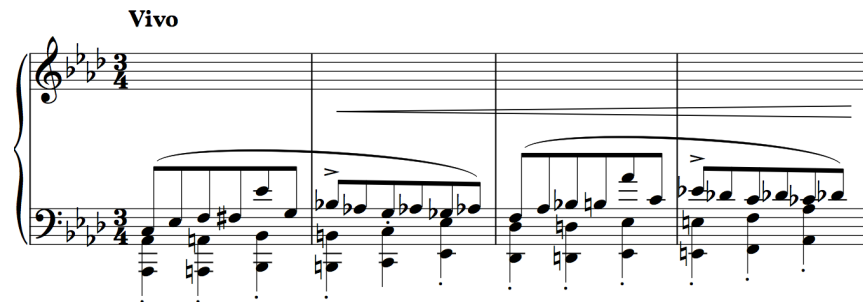
p

Example 6.39. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, 'Finale alla fantasia', bars 93–98 (right hand)

Whilst some editors suggest the use of the fourth finger on each of the main beats, the third finger would have accommodated Schumann's technique better, as it relieves any isolation of the

38. Sauer, 'Texture', 75.

fingers by allowing for the rotational movements of the forearm.³⁹ The rotation of the forearm became a regular solution to finger isolation issues in the passagework of his later piano works: see for instance the 'Prélude' from *Carnaval* op. 9 and the opening movement of *Kreisleriana* op. 16:



Example 6.40. Schumann: *Carnaval* op. 9, 'Prélude', bars 87–90



Example 6.41. Schumann: *Kreisleriana* op. 16 no. 1, bars 1–2

What Triggered Schumann's Crisis?

Bearing in mind the evidence presented, it is appropriate to elaborate on the question formulated in the opening of this chapter: why did Schumann encounter seemingly unsolvable technical hardships despite his development of fairly advanced practising skills?

It is possible that Schumann's technical issues reflected the early symptoms of his much-debated hand injury, despite the common belief that it appeared no earlier than October 1831. There are three important indicators that this may have been the case. Firstly, Schumann never recovered from the crisis before the injury precluded his career; in other words, the trajectory shows his playing in steady decline from the appearance of the crisis in May/June 1831 until his final capitulation in 1832. Secondly, the technical issues identified in this chapter all relate to the right hand, third finger in particular; this finger was evidently central to Schumann's

39. Robert Schumann, *Abegg-Variationen*, op. 1, ed. Hans-Joachim Köhler (Frankfurt: C. F. Peters, 1975), 16. Henle's edition suggests the third finger on the main beats as well, cf. Schumann, *Abegg-Variationen* (Henle), 13.

injury. Lastly, there is no clear evidence that his technique was hampered by other issues relating to anything but this finger. Whilst these observations provide no conclusive evidence, they nevertheless add new information to a topic which has been subject to much discussion in recent decades. It is therefore appropriate to review the present evidence in the context of Schumann's hand injury to shed light on a period which has not previously been associated this ailment.

Schumann began noticing the injury during the autumn of 1831. At the time, his practice was becoming increasingly sporadic. Symptomatically, he produced only 23 exercises in his *Uebungstagebuch* during the period between 28 August 1831 and 6 April 1832, and only a single diary entry—which turned out to be his last on piano practice—appeared on 13 October 1831. In this entry, he was content with his touch, keeping the wrists slightly higher in the style of Anna Caroline de Belleville-Oury (1808–1880); however, the 'grandiose waves' of her playing were missing.⁴⁰ The practice programme consisted of Moscheles' Piano Concerto no. 2 op. 56, the first variation of his own *Abegg Variations* and an *Hungarian Toccata*, as well as Chopin's *Variations* op. 2.

It was around this time that the devastating results of the hand injury became apparent to Schumann. He had noted motoric problems with the right hand in January 1830 when he mentioned a 'numb finger' ('mein betäubter Finger'), and in May the same year he wrote to his mother that his hand was 'rather shaky' while writing to her.⁴¹ Years later, he remembered a 'laming' of his right hand, which appeared around October 1831.⁴² Schumann seems to have deemed the problem a lack of finger independence, so while Wieck was away on tour with Clara during the 1831–1832 autumn and winter, Schumann used a finger stretcher to strengthen his fingers. A *Chiroplast* of his own invention—or the 'cigar-mechanism' as he called it—would pull the third finger towards the back of the hand.⁴³ At first he was optimistic about its utility: on 7 May 1832 he noted that his third finger was 'tolerable' and that his touch was now 'independent', and two days later the weakness of this finger was beginning to fade.⁴⁴ However, things soon took a turn for the worse: after 'a bit stronger' on 13 May, he conceded on 22 May that his third finger seemed 'irreparable'.⁴⁵ About a month later, on 12 June, he had a conversation with

40. TB1, 372. 'Mit dem Clavier geht's natürlich herrlich, vorzüglich in den letzten Tag[en]. Die Volubilität ist erschrecklich außer den Uebungen mit Juvenal. Das Handgelenk halt' ich etwas höher, ohngefähr wie die *Belleville*, obgleich die graziöse Wellenlinie fehlt' (13 October 1831).

41. Peter F. Ostwald, 'Florestan, Eusebius, Clara, and Schumann's Right Hand', *19th-Century Music* 4, no. 1 (1980): 22; TB1, 222. Diary entry of 26 January 1830.

42. Quellen, 78. 'Ohngefähr im Okt. 1831 Ehlähmung meiner rechten Hand – Inneres Kämpfe'.

43. Schumann's *Chiroplast* was different from the devices championed by Logier, Kalkbrenner and Herz, cf. Chapter 5 on page 135.

44. TB1, 386, 388. 'Mit dem dritten [Finger] geht's durch die Cigarrenmechanik leidlich. Der Anschlag ist unabhängig jetzt.' (7 May 1832); 'Die Schwachheit des Dritten [Fingers] fängt an zu vergehen.' (9 May 1832).

45. TB1, 388, 394. 'der dritte [Finger] ein wenig stärker.' (13 May 1832); 'der dritte [Finger] scheint wirklich uncorrigible.' (22 May 1832).

Wieck about his 'old hypochondriacal music mechanics', and the following day he seemed to capitulate: 'the third finger is completely stiff'.⁴⁶ Schumann never found the cause of the injury, neither did any mechanical or medical procedures cure the ailment.

Despite decades of debate on the topic, the medical intricacies surrounding the hand injury are still subject to speculation. The past four decades have seen a range of theories, including playing injuries, psychological causes, poisoning and neurological disorders. In his Schumann biography, John Worthen draws the attention to a 'stiff' *Klavatur* ('dumb keyboard') which Schumann used during 1830 to practice while travelling.⁴⁷ He concludes that the injury was caused by Schumann's excessive use of the *Klavatur*, and that his well-known use of the 'cigar-mechanics' only contributed to add insult to injury. Worthen's suggestion seems problematic for two reasons. Firstly, Schumann writes little about the *Klavatur*, and it is therefore questionable how much he actually used it. Secondly, the use of the 'cigar-mechanics' as the cause of a life-long injury is an old theory, which is contradictory to the observation that Schumann's condition appears to have been painless, unlike a strain injury.

Without any pianistic or physiological arguments to support this notion, a number of scholars have speculated that the injury could have had an external cause, for instance poisoning by heavy metals. Thus, Eric Sams argues that Schumann's 'numbed' finger related to mercury treatment of syphilis, and Franz Hermann Franken suggests that the poisoning came from arsenic treatments.⁴⁸ Eckart Altenmüller disagrees, and notes that arsenic would have lead to to 'pains, stomach, and intestine cramps, and numbness and paralysis of the feet and hands', while Peter Ostwald maintains that there is no evidence of Schumann ever taking mercury, and chemical tests of Schumann's hair show no trace of mercury in his body.⁴⁹ Instead, Ostwald points to the treatments of the injury: among other things, Schumann's doctor prescribed him so-called 'animal baths', where one inserts the hand into the carcass of a newly slaughtered animal—a morbid ordeal which Ostwald is convinced must have had a lasting psychological effect on Schumann.⁵⁰ Thus, according to Ostwald, the 'somatic insults' from the failed attempts to cure Schumann's 'laming' third finger gave him an excuse to forfeit an already failing concert career, linking Schumann's lack of ability at the piano with his physical injury.⁵¹ Jensen elaborated on Ostwald's theory:

46. TB1, 410. 'Gestern hatte ich mit Wieck ein langes Gespräch über meine alte hypochondrische Musikmechanik' (13 June 1832); 'Der Dritte [Finger] ist vollkommen steif.' (14 June 1832).

47. John Worthen, *Robert Schumann: Life and Death of a Musician* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2007), 57. According to Worthen, Friedrich Wieck advised against the use of the *Klavatur*.

48. Eric Sams, 'Schumann's Hand Injury', *The Musical Times* 112, no. 1546 (1971): 1156–1157; Altenmüller, 'Focal Dystonia', 184.

49. Altenmüller, 'Focal Dystonia', 184; Ostwald, 'Schumann's Right Hand', 18–19.

50. Ostwald, 'Schumann's Right Hand', 23.

51. *Ibid.*, 24–25.

Throughout the entire episode, Schumann exhibited unusual coolness and composure [...] at the time of his injury, noticeably absent was the sense of panic or despair that—given his previous behavior—might have been expected. Actually Schumann may have felt relieved. The injury to the hand simplified matters. Now he could focus his attention on writing music. Schumann's hand injury merely provided him with the excuse to do what he had long desired.⁵²

However, Ostwald and Jensen only attribute the long-term consequences of the hand injury to the psychological side effects of the treatments; their theories do not account for the initial appearance of the condition.

More recently, a neurologically based theory has emerged, with the proposal that Schumann suffered from focal dystonia, commonly known as 'musician's cramp'. According to Altenmüller, focal dystonia 'is a neurological disorder characterized by the loss of fine motor control of long practiced skilled movements during instrumental playing'. He continues:

The movement disorder is usually task-specific[,] limited to instrumental playing and does not extend over to other movements. There are no indications that Schumann's writing skills were affected, even though his editorial and compositional work required many hours of writing each day over a long period of time. There was no pain or deformation associated with the loss of control.⁵³

Altenmüller states that Schumann's personality traits, gender, instrument and age put him at risk for this ailment.⁵⁴ Referring to research on the subject, epidemiological studies have shown 'young to middle-aged men who play classical music' to be in the high-risk group, and 'guitarists and pianists' tend to be affected more often than other instrumentalists.⁵⁵ To this end, musicians with focal dystonia often 'suffer from anxiety disorders and from perfectionistic tendencies', characteristics of Schumann 'long before the beginning of the sickness'.⁵⁶ Altenmüller leaves little room for other explanations, however as focal dystonia is the single 'diagnosis which can sufficiently explain all of the symptoms and the progress of the sickness'. Nevertheless, it is a condition which leaves no measurable physical traces making any retrospective diagnosis reliant on indirect evidence. Regardless of its cause, none of the theories question Schumann's own descriptions of the 'laming third finger'—that the injury primarily affected the middle finger of the right hand.

52. Eric Frederick Jensen, *Schumann* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 69.

53. Altenmüller, 'Focal Dystonia', 186.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid., 187.

56. Ibid.

On the whole, Schumann's descriptions of the injury align with the technical issues outlined in this chapter. It is probable that he would do his best to compensate for or even circumvent the 'laming third finger', in his playing and compositions through careful fingerings or support from the wrist; and it is likely that such 'laming' would have affected the general elasticity of the hand, including the ability to stretch or move the fingers laterally. Furthermore, Schumann's frustrations were aimed on particular sections of the Chopin Variations. He may have been perfectly content with large portions of the work, and his practice may therefore have focussed exclusively on right-hand intensive sections: whilst Variation 1 is represented by six exercises, and the 'Alla Polacca' has thirteen exercises—Variations 2, 4 and 5 received no attention whatsoever in the *Uebungstagebuch*.⁵⁷ Variation 2 explores repeated notes between the first and fourth fingers, mostly applying straightforward rising and falling finger sequences in demisemiquavers (1–2–3–4 and 4–3–2–1), and Variation 4 employs a technique similar to 'Paganini' from *Carnaval* op. 9, which requires wide leaps by both hands. In Variation 3, instead of practising the perpetual semidemiquavers in the left hand, Schumann seems to have been more concerned with the polyphony and double third trills of the right hand. Written with a variety of scales, arpeggios, leaps, repeated notes and precise articulation marks, the left-hand part would normally be considered significantly more challenging than the right. These variations highlight passages which are no less demanding than many other textures in the work. They are, however, of a different nature than the extracts which Schumann focussed on in his *Uebungstagebuch*, and support the argument that the technical limitations which affected Schumann's playing and self-image were very specifically restricted to issues relating to the hand injury.

These observations amount to a body of circumstantial evidence, which suggests the hand injury as the trigger of Schumann's 1831 crisis. Yet, it remains inconclusive by definition: there is no consensus as to the medical diagnosis, and Schumann's own observations of the injury are scarce and vague. It nevertheless provides a pianistic perspective to the debate on the hand injury, and encourages further research into when and how the ailment initially appeared.



With the currently available evidence, technical deficiencies can be established as an important contributor to Schumann's crisis during 1831. These were manifested in various ways

57. Particularly the 'Alla Polacca' features prominently in the *Uebungstagebuch*. Exercises include the first Chopin exercise of the diary (15 June) as well as a large portion of the later exercises (19–20 July). The reappearances of the 'Alla Polacca' attest to its exceptional difficulty. The day he 'cried with rage' was 20 July 1831, after 'a couple of truly miserable days', and the 'Alla Polacca' was most likely the cause of his frustration. On 19 July Schumann added nine exercises based on this variation and on 20 July another two. As things got 'better' in the evening of the following day, the *Uebungstagebuch* show a number of still unidentified exercises; this must mean that he put the 'Alla Polacca' aside, at least for the day. TB1, 354. 'Abends wurd' es schöner' (21 July 1831).

in Schumann's interaction with the piano during these months: through his piano practice, his pedagogical output, and, not the least, his compositions. These indications showed in four key areas, including fingerings, stretches of the hand, lateral movements of the fingers and finger independence.

Whether these issues were a product of the hand injury or merely a lack of skill, the technical issues identified in this chapter do not allow for an assessment of Schumann the pianist, due to the subjective nature of the present evidence. On one hand, all surviving information presented in this chapter is based on self-observations: when Schumann refrained from performing at Wieck's house or when he considered his dry-runs on the Chopin Variations to be nothing more than reasonable, they were primarily reactions to his own feeling of inadequacy and solely reflections of his own judgements. How his performance of Chopin's Variations would have fared against Clara's or any other contemporary pianist's is impossible to tell. It is only certain that Schumann failed to meet his own expectations. On the other hand, he cannot be given the benefit of the doubt. Whilst the *Uebungstagebuch* suggests a contentment with long stretches of the Variations, this is no indicator as to whether his performance of the Variations matched the technical standard of contemporary travelling virtuosos. His pianistic abilities—or lack thereof—should not be based on the crisis itself.

However, Schumann can be measured by his working methods. Thus, despite the lack of a performing career or his teacher's acknowledgement, his attempts to solve pianistic issues through intricate mechanical exercises as well as his ability to adapt virtuosic textures to his own strength, attests to a deep understanding of the piano and its playing technique. As his performing career was dwindling in the months to come, he applied his pianistic knowledge on his own works as his focus of attention was increasingly moving towards composition. The last chapters therefore turn towards his two earliest published piano works, the *Abegg Variations* and *Papillons*, to demonstrate how he found a different medium to realise the artistic ideals which were out of his reach as performer.

Chapter 7

Exploring Touch: Tokens of 'True Music' in *Abegg Variations* op. 1

Whilst the previous chapters have focussed on Schumann's striving towards the third stage of his self-defined learning process, the last two chapters turn to his achievement of this state as composer. Applying the ideals and principles outlined in Chapters 3 to 5, he engaged with a range of tone production techniques, sonority, tactile feedback and aural imagination to reproduce the idealised 'magic' of his improvisations, in which he replaced the mechanical virtuosity of piano playing with a virtuosity of the imagination. In response, Chapters 7 to 8 will study his earliest published works, the *Abegg Variations* and *Papillons* respectively, to examine his compositional application of these principles to approximate two important sources of inspiration at the time: Paganini and Jean Paul.

Schumann's admiration of Paganini went well beyond the violinist's transcendental technique. As argued in Chapter 2, Schumann's projected novel *Wunderkinder* proposed Paganini as the embodiment of virtuosity, personifying the amalgamation between transcendental technical prowess and inspired artistic conviction. Schumann thus saw virtuosity as the product of two ideals intersecting: the 'ideal of skill' and the 'ideal of expression'. Whilst Hummel represented his 'ideal of skill', his 'ideal of expression' remains veiled. However, representing Schumann's virtuosic ideal, Paganini must intrinsically have possessed the traits of Schumann's 'ideal of expression'. Macdonald argues that this amounted to an element of lyricism, which Schumann tried to cultivate in his piano practice through the *Uebungstagebuch*. Thus, underneath the surface of mechanical exercises, the practice diary sought to give brilliant passagework from the Chopin Variations 'melodic definition' for a more expressive performance.¹ However,

1. Claudia Macdonald, 'Schumann's Piano Practice: Technical Mastery and Artistic Ideal', *The Journal of Musicology* 19, no. 4 (2002): 553.

this was but one element of a richer virtuosic concept. As will be demonstrated, it involved the application of a variety of touches and tone production techniques informed by his own exploration at the keyboard, giving the work a ‘transcendental touch of unfamiliarity and otherworldliness’ otherwise foreign to the pianism of the postclassical style.² However, aside from three examples which Macdonald provides, the *Uebungstagebuch* offers little information on the concept of virtuosity, which is why Schumann’s compositions must be examined for an answer.

In response, this chapter examines Schumann’s improvisational experimentation with a variety of touches and tone production techniques as important elements to the formation of a concept of imaginative virtuosity, inspired by Paganini. Tracing sketches and fragments of Schumann’s early piano works, the following will establish the development of compositional ideas as a product of extemporisation, along with the further refinement through continuous exploration at the keyboard. This involved the experimentation with a variety of tone production techniques as well as a hands-on approach to the meticulous crafting of sonorities, both of which persisted throughout the compositional process and even beyond the publication of the work. Exemplified by his utilisation of *staccato* marks and accents, this chapter examines how the exploration of sound materialised in Schumann’s compositions, the *Abegg Variations* in particular. This proved to be a fundamentally important aspect of Schumann’s virtuosic concept, which expressed a markedly different approach to bravura than his contemporaries, especially Liszt.

Exploration of Sound: Improvisation and the Compositional Process

Evaluating Schumann’s compositions as a proxy for his intentions as a performer inherently suggests an alignment between the artistic ideals of his performances with those of his compositions, i.e. that he sought to realise the same musical values in his performances as in his piano works. The question is, whether one so readily can make such an assumption. Gooley reminds that to nineteenth-century pianists there was no clear-cut distinction between the various fields of musical activity—that the elements which comprised a pianist’s musicianship interchangeably informed, inspired and enlightened each other:

In the musical careers of Mendelssohn, Liszt, and Chopin improvising was just one of the range of skills that went into the mastery of pianism and composition and was not marked for special agencies. Performance, improvisation, and composition belonged to a continuum of musical practice.³

2. Alexander Stefaniak, “Poetic Virtuosity”: Robert Schumann as a Critic and Composer of Virtuoso Instrumental Music’ (PhD, Eastman School of Music, 2012), 89.

3. Dana Gooley, ‘Schumann and Agencies of Improvisation’, in *Rethinking Schumann*, ed. Roe-Min Kok and

This continuum implies a bidirectional transfer of musical ideals and values, and while Gooley does not disclose how or why this applied to Schumann, the transaction of pianistic idiosyncrasies as seen in Chapter 6 demonstrates a similar interaction between Schumann's piano practice, compositions and pedagogy. However, within this continuum, improvisation had a special place for Schumann. Gooley continues:

For Schumann, however, improvisation came first and "organically." Only later, around 1831, did he pursue "theory" as a way of shifting his activities toward compositional productivity and achievement. This decoupling, which tends to polarize improvisation and composition conceptually (rather than see them as part of a continuum), made it possible for him to map improvisation onto subjective experience and psychological exploration. If the process of subject formation through *Bildung* involves some kind of oscillation between *schaffen* (creating) and *bilden* (shaping), for Schumann improvisation is all *schaffen*, calling forth a demand for correction, oversight, or, as he eventually decided, contrapuntal theory.⁴

This places improvisation at the beginning of the creative process, serving as a source of ideas. The improvisation gave Schumann space for self-exploration, which could subsequently branch out and materialise as a performance or composition. As a performer, the improvisation gave him a seed of inspiration, which was nurtured through deliberate, systematic practice. However, the spark which originally initiated the learning process should not be lost, and it was of principal importance to maintain a certain 'freshness' throughout. Similarly, Schumann's extemporisations started the compositional process, providing ideas and fragments for further exploration and refinement through continuous experimentation at the keyboard. This turned the composition into an ongoing creative process, which ensured a kind of 'freshness' similar to that of his piano practice. To demonstrate this, Gooley identifies a number of pianistic artefacts in Schumann's piano works derived from improvisational practices at the time. While this illustrates the *schaffen* aspect of subject formation, it does not take *bilden* into account. *Bilden*, however, was at this stage in Schumann's career not an issue of 'contrapuntal theory', but the result of an ongoing process of pianistic experimentation. This was as integral to the formation of a musical work as *schaffen*, and can be traced in his sketchbooks.

Some of the most informative documentation on Schumann's improvisations and the pianistic development of ideas survive in his sketchbooks. Of the five sketchbooks which Schumann kept during these early years, *Skizzenbuch I* and *III* are particularly pertinent in this regard.⁵ A

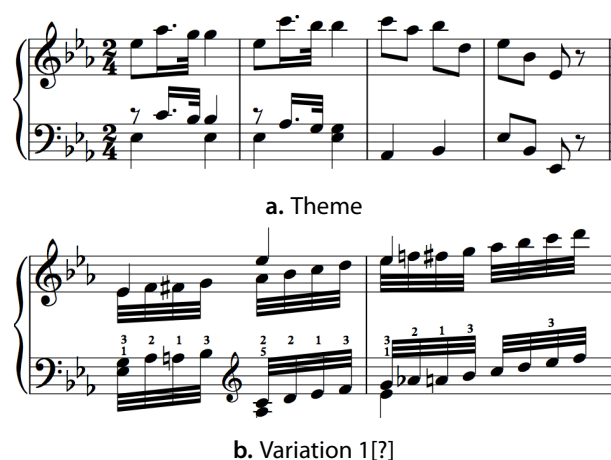
Laura Tunbridge (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2011), 133.

4. Ibid.

5. For an overview of Schumann's sketchbook, cf. page 25.

number fragments bearing three significant features are randomly distributed throughout these books: (1) they are rather short in duration, suggesting to be ideas in their first incarnation; (2) they appear to be written rather quickly, as rough sketches conceived in haste, and (3) they contain textures or markings which are undeniably pianistic. These are by no means reproductions of Schumann's improvisations; instead, they provide a glimpse into the spur-of-the-moment ideas which occurred to Schumann while at the piano, reflecting the sonorities and textures that may have arisen from his improvisations.

An example of such a fragment is an undated sketch from *Skizzenbuch I* for a theme and two variations on Weber's 'Zigeuner March' from *Preciosa* op. 78:⁶



Example 7.1. Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch I', 37. Theme and Variation from *Variationen über Weber's Preziosamarsch* RSW:Anh:F9 (fragment)

According to Schumann's diaries, many of his improvisations were based on set themes according to practices of the day, including folk songs (*O du lieber Augustin*) and tunes by other composers, for instance Friedrich Heinrich Himmel's (1765–1814) *An Alexis send' ich dich* op. 43, Weber's *Aufforderung zum Tanz* or *Trauerwalzer* ('Sehnsuchtwalzer'), D365 no. 2 by Schubert.⁷

6. Robert Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch I' (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn, D-Bnu NL Schumann 13, 1831–1832), 72. Accessed 1 April 2017, <http://digitale-sammlungen.ulb.uni-bonn.de/ulbbnhans/content/titleinfo/1043463> (hereafter cited as SB1); In his edition, Wendt proposes that the second and third system represent two different variations. However, given the similarity of texture between the two fragments, there is reason to argue that these two fragments are merely two different passages of the same variation, cf. Robert Schumann, *Studien- und Skizzenbuch I und II*, vol. 1 of *Neue Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Matthias Wendt, Neue Gesamtausgabe 3 (Mainz: Schott, 2011), 143. As to the date of the fragment, Schumann recorded plans for composing a future set of variations on the theme from 'Weber's *Preciosamarsch*' on 13 October 1831. It is likely that the fragment came into being shortly before this date. ('An Plänen für die Zukunft steht oben an: [...] Variationen [...] zum Preziosamarsch'), cf. Robert Schumann, 1827–1838, vol. 1 of *Tagebücher*, ed. Georg Eismann (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1971), 372 (hereafter cited as TB1).

7. TB1, 109, 160, 177, 178, 182, 335. On other occasions Schumann noted a particular style which in-

Whilst there is no direct evidence that he ever improvised on the 'Zigeuner March', a number of indirect indications nevertheless suggest that this fragment was conceived at the piano during an extemporisation. Firstly, he added fingerings to the left hand which signify a fundamentally pianistic understanding of the passage: the shift from the third finger *b* to the 2–5 thirds (on the second beat of bar 1) demonstrates a sensible approach to keeping a *legato* in the scales, while bringing out the bass notes, as it stabilises the hand and avoids too many changes of the hand position. This type of piano texture was not unknown to Schumann, as he had been introduced to it in his practice on Moscheles' Etude op. 70 no. 3.⁸ It is a particularly pianistic kind of writing which is most easily achieved through experimentation at the keyboard, as the execution of the passages heavily depend on well thought-out fingerings.

Secondly, the brevity and unfinished nature of this sketch implies that it was conceived fleetingly at the piano: the theme is rendered as a basic harmonic skeleton with only the melody and bass line; the theme was probably sketched in a hurry, so that he could focus on the two variations. In the first variation, the time signature was decided on the fly, as the first bar-line is crossed out, and later bars allude to a four-beat metre rather than two beats in a bar. The demisemiquavers running through the first variation conflict with the slower melodic line marked with crotchets; while the maths does not equate, it clearly shows a musical intention from Schumann's side—fast scales running across the keyboard, with a slower melody brought to the fore through double stops. In addition, the absence of slurs, dynamics or accents suggests that Schumann made only the most necessary efforts to capture a musical idea at the earliest stages of the compositional process.

This notion is reinforced by another sketch from *Skizzenbuch V* of the same unfinished work:

spired his playing: 'fantasy á la Schubert'; 'glorious fantasy in pre-Beethovenian style' ('herrliche Fantasie im Vorbeethoven'schen Style'); 'Moorish fantasy in the evening' ('Abends maurische Fantasie'). Schumann referred to Schubert's Trauerwalzer in A^b major, D365 no. 2, as 'Sehnsuchtswalzer'—a title adopted by later editions of the piece.

8. SB1, 94.



a. Theme



b. Variation

Example 7.2. Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch V', 78. Theme and Variation from *Variationen über Weber's Preziosamarsch* RSW:Anh:F9 (fragment)

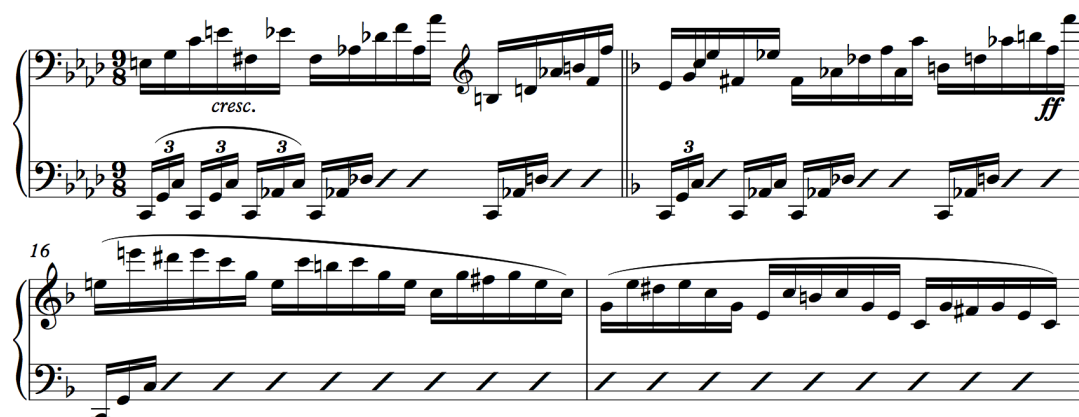
The missing inner parts of the theme are filled in and the first variation is cleaned up: the demisemiquavers have been changed to semiquavers, the right hand upper line has been elaborated significantly, and double stops in the left hand are dropped along with the original fingerings. In addition, the pianistic texture is far more elaborate: the upper part is now in quaver motion, and from bar 3 the left hand crosses over the right hand.⁹ Thus, these two fragments illustrate the difference between a musical idea captured in haste and one that has gone through an early stage of revision (*bilden*).

The *Abegg Variations* were most likely conceived in a similar fashion, as improvisations. As Gooley argues, the 'Finale alla fantasia' contains an 'explicit reference to music of improvisatory character', since he sees the chord progression of the opening phrase as a ground bass, which can be repeated infinitely underneath an ever-flowing improvisation (Example 7.21a and Ex-

9. In this sketch, the passage corresponding to the last fragment of *Skizzenbuch I* is missing here.

ample 6.38 on page 182 and on page 211).¹⁰ 'Each of the seven iterations of the progression-theme [i.e. the opening phrase] varies it with changes of figure, tempo, dynamics, and chord voicings, even superimposing a contrapuntal voice in the case of the first reprise', Gooley states and continues: 'these variations, sometimes minute and subtle, give the impression that Schumann spent considerable time exploring the variative progressions at the piano.'¹¹ This alludes to a practice of improvising, where the bass follows a consistent pattern, giving the player technical freedom and mental room to play as he or she pleases on the top of it.

The short *cadenza*-like passage between the 'Cantabile' and *Finale* was born out of this approach to extemporisation. In an early sketch from *Skizzenbuch I*, the left hand plays a repeated figuration in semiquaver triplets underneath the rising right hand figuration, whose harmonic progression repeats once a bar:



Example 7.3. Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch I', 87–88. *Abegg Variations* op. 1, 'Cantabile', bars 14–17 (fragment)

Whilst the underlying triplet rhythm of this left hand figuration produces a somewhat incessant and repetitive accompaniment, it *feels* like a simple *tremolando* to the player, who will not be disturbed by the inherent polyrhythm between the hands. Whilst Gooley's example clearly reveals the improvisational heritage of the 'Finale alla fantasia', Schumann removed any trace of such a background from this passage: in a later revision from *Skizzenbuch III*, this particular bass triplet figure was replaced by one identical to the published version. The final version features a left hand figure, which follows the right hand towards the top of the keyboard (Example 6.17 on page 171). With the first and second beats played with a light *staccato*, the rhythmical emphasis is placed on the leading notes on the upbeat. This ensures a rhythmical lift—an effect diametrically opposite to that of the first sketch.

10. Gooley, 'Agencies', 145.

11. Ibid.

The improvisational development of ideas was also key to the crafting of sonorous effects. This is seen in the final bar of the ‘Cantabile’, where a pedalled arpeggiated dominant C⁷ chord culminates in a g³–a³ trill, which in turn leads into the ‘Finale alla fantasia’. The notation of this arpeggio implies a calculated sonority, which brings out the A–B^b semitone step emblematic to the ABEGG-motif:



Audio 11

Example 7.4. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, ‘Cantabile’, bar 19

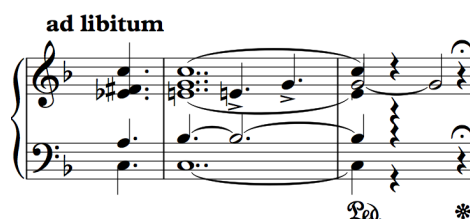
Marked *molto lento*, this arpeggio’s thematic effect should not go unnoticed by the listener. In addition, a slower tempo gives room to expressively emphasise the accentuated As, and allows for a slight prolongation of the separately voiced B^bs. The successful production of this sonority relies on two important factors: the precise application of the pedal and the correct distribution of hands. Schumann experimented with these particular features in an earlier sketch from early August 1831.¹² Given his intention of highlighting the semitone-step characteristic to the work, he settled on the final version with good reason. Firstly, in the early fragment, the pedal is applied at the start of the arpeggio, resulting in a more blurry sonority which masks the semitone motif. Secondly, the hand distribution ensures a prolonging of the As—here played by the right hand—making it difficult to consistently emphasise the B^bs. The later sketch of the ‘Cantabile’ of *Skizzenbuch III* shows Schumann’s progress with this passage: it is nearly identical to the final version, except for the missing *molto lento* marking and the fact that the B^bs are marked completely separately from the right hand’s semiquaver stem. While this slight difference could be coincidental, it could suggest an intent to clarify that the B^bs are integral to the arpeggio, instructing the player to maintain a *legato* throughout. The development of such specific sonorities not only demonstrate a deep understanding of piano sonority, but also attest to an advanced knowledge of the technical and notational means to achieve it.

The use of pianistic experimentation to craft such subtle details leads to the most notable sonorous effect of the *Abegg Variations*, and perhaps in Schumann’s oeuvre in general: the technique of removing the individual notes of a chord, one by one. As discussed in the Introduc-

12. The dating of this sketch was discussed in Chapter 6 on page 159.

tion, this technique is seen in the famous reappearance of the ABEGG motif in the 'Finale alla fantasia', where it is heard through the release of each note (Example 0.4 on page 10). This inversion of sound, which enables a theme to manifest itself not only through the use of rhythm and pitch but also through the application of release and attack, turns the relationship between a musical concept and its aural realisation on its head. To recapitulate Charles Rosen's observation: 'in Bach the notation implies something beyond the reach of every realization, but in Schumann the music is a realization which implies something beyond itself'.¹³ This technique thus presents the paradoxical nature of sound as objectively measurable and sound as it exists in the mind of the listener: each note of the ABEGG-motif is only heard *after* the note has been released; this means that when the sound of each of its notes are perceived, the sound itself has already ceased to exist. Whilst Rosen argues that 'how the released notes communicate the motto to the listener, force it on his attention, gives us the measure of Schumann's sensibility to sound', the true recipient of this effect was not only the listener, but arguably also the performer.¹⁴

This effect was the result of a longer process of experimentation, even after the stage of publication. The commonly heard version of today only appeared in the *Titelaufgabe*, published by Hofmeister between 1842 and 1844.¹⁵ The corresponding passage in the first edition also let the ABEGG motif appear from within a chord, but here each note of this motif had to be restruck:



Example 7.5. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, 'Finale alla fantasia', bars 73–75 (first edition)

Audio 16

The pedal marking at bar 75 lets the harmony fade out into the distance, with the g^1 being sustained by the hand; with the pedal sustaining all the notes of the chord, it makes no difference to the listener whether the g^1 is being held. However, to the player, the sensation of holding this note may nevertheless reinforce the sensation of maintaining the line of the ABEGG motif.

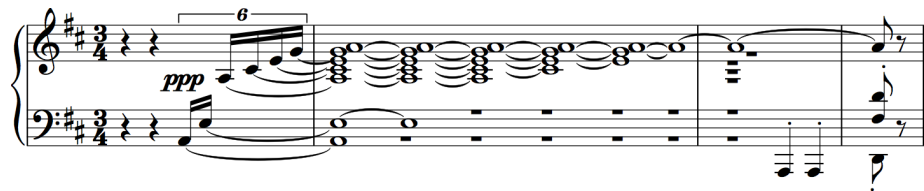
13. Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 10.

14. *Ibid.*, 11.

15. Based on the currency conventions used in the title page prices across Hofmeister's publications, Boetticher estimates that the *Titelaufgabe* was published after 1841. Because another edition appeared by the same publisher in 1845, Boetticher therefore assumes the publication date of the *Titelaufgabe* to be in the years 1842–1844, cf. Wolfgang Boetticher, *Opus 1–6*, vol. 1 of *Robert Schumanns Klavierwerke: Neue biographische und textkritische Untersuchungen* (Wilhelmshafen: Heinrichshofen's Verlag, 1976), 30.

Although there are no fermatas or other notational devices to suggest that the sound of this chord should be sustained for more than two beats of the bar, the tied minims of the g^1 indicate that the sound of the chord should resonate for a longer time. The resulting sonority of the ABEGG-motif appearing from within the dominant C^7 chord on a pedal point c is novel. However, in reproducing the motif this way it does not challenge the fundamental concept of producing and perceiving sound to the same extent as the later version does.

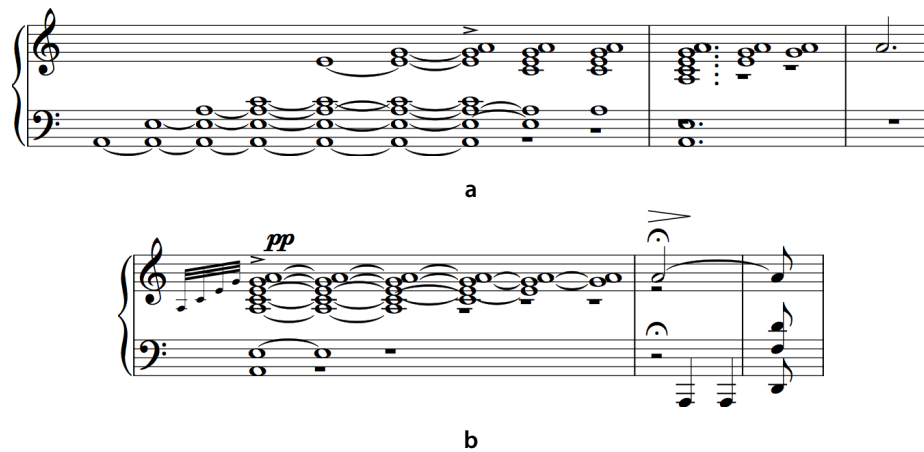
So how did the idea of gradually removing notes from a texture or chord appear? Unfortunately, Schumann left no autographs of the *Abegg Variations*, nor do any sketches produced following the publication of the work survive.¹⁶ However, shortly after the publication of the first edition, the ‘removed notes-technique’ went through a process of experimentation, beginning with the final bars of *Papillons*:



Audio 34

Example 7.6. Schumann: *Papillons* op. 2 no. 12, bars 85–88

Schumann's development of this technique is seen in two fragments written on the bottom of page 87 in *Skizzenbuch III*:

Example 7.7. Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch III', 87. *Papillon* no. 12 (fragments)

16. Based on the appearance of the publisher's plates, Boetticher concludes that the bars of Example 7.5 on page 197 were replaced with those of Example 0.4 on page 10 on the original plates, cf. Boetticher, *Klavierwerke, Opus 1–6*, 47.

While the first fragment introduces the dominant A⁷ chord as a gradual addition of each note of the chord, the second does exactly the opposite by removing each note of the chord, one by one. While being pianistically interesting in itself, its effect is primarily that of a written-out diminuendo; what turns this into an 'inverted' theme is the addition of accents.

The idea of introducing accents to these notes does at first seem peculiar; since the notes have already been struck, how would one play them and to which effect? Despite reproducing this particular notation from the *Titelaufgabe* in her edition of the work, even Clara Schumann seemed unconvinced about this passage, as she noted in her copy of the Gesamtausgabe:

The sound effect intended with the accents on the sustained notes is barely achievable on the piano. Instead, it prompts the player to strike each note sonorously, sustaining them for their full duration.¹⁷

This suggestion offers a practical solution, which is indeed readily comprehensible to the listener. However, it does not render the effect that Schumann initially conceived. Instead, it can be argued that the accents are supposed to signal the release of the keys rather than initiating each note to be struck again. The accents could be understood as a swift, decisive release of each key, just like a 'traditional' > would normally imply a quicker strike of a note. Such a rendering of the accents could have two intended effects, both of which are imperceptible to the audience, unless deliberately conveyed through visual cues. The first outcome relates to the action of the instrument, where the quick release of each key will instigate a strident fall of the dampers, which, in turn, produces slight vibrations from the strings. As Audio 15 demonstrates, this effect was easily achievable on Friedrich Wieck's Stein grand piano, where the notes of the ABEGG-motif resonate softly as the keys are released—too soft for an audience to notice, too loud to be ignored by the performer. The second result of performing the accent in conjunction with the release of the notes has to do with the player's internal sensation of playing this particular passage. As observed in Chapter 5, the physical sensation of executing a note was just as important as the aural sound itself when assessing the quality of tone. In this context, the accents in question could be interpreted not only as a more decisive release of each note; they could also be an instruction to lift the fingers off their individual keys. This would invariably amplify the physical sensation of each release, and thereby consolidate the mental image of these notes. While lacking a physical representation in the form of audible sound, the sheer act of lifting the fingers one by one would produce an experience of the ABEGG-

17. Boetticher, *Klavierwerke, Opus 1–6*, 40. 'Die durch den Accent über den gehaltenen Noten beabsichtigte Klangwirkung ist auf dem Clavier kaum ausführbar. Er veranlasse jedoch den Spieler, die Noten klangvoll anzuschlagen und nach ihrem Werthe auszuhalten'. For the reproduction of this passage in Clara Schumann's edition, cf. Robert Schumann, *Variationen über den Namen Abegg*, op. 1, ed. Clara Schumann, Robert Schumanns Werke (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1879), 10.

motif inside the performer's mind, which is just as vivid as the audibly perceptible suggestion offered by Clara Schumann. Likewise, where Rosen interprets the pedal marking at the last accent as 'the most humorous suggestion in the score' (Example 0.4 on page 10) and finds the interpretation of the 'the delicate thump of the pianist's foot' as a 'musical event' to be no more than an absurd paradox, it could be argued that this particular pedal marking represents the last 'G' of the ABEGG-motif.¹⁸ Indeed, the application of pedal makes little sense from an aural perspective, but the sensation of depressing the pedal gives the player the experience of playing the final note of this motif.¹⁹

Not only does this demonstrate a ground-breaking approach to music notation, it attests to Schumann's persistent experimentation with sound, even *after* the work had been published. This brings up an important point about Schumann's piano works: one should be cautious in deeming the published version of a composition to be 'final', but rather perceive them as a 'snapshot' of a work. What is presented in the score is thus only a representation of a temporary state. While the 'removed notes technique' demonstrate the most radical use of the accent, it was by no means the only outcome of Schumann's experimentation with sound which can be found in the *Abegg Variations*. Exemplified by his engagement with *staccato* and accentuation marks, the following shall therefore examine his use of tone production techniques throughout the work.

***Staccato* Touches: Expressive and Structural Pillars**

More than any other type of touch, the *staccato* challenged the still-hand principle of the day. As already observed in Chapter 5, the constraints of this seemingly finger-exclusive school allowed for the engagement of invisible playing agents, including the application of weight from the hand. This technique was intrinsically most effective when playing *legato*, where the varying degrees of pressure from the hand would ensure the smooth transition from note to note. However, when performing a succession of notes in *staccato*, the release of the key and the consequential silence between the notes are just as crucial to the sound as the stroke of the note itself. This encourages the use of gestures involving the wrists and to a lesser extent the arms, adding a visual element to the performance foreign to the virtues of the still-hand technique. Only occasionally used, such techniques produced a special effect reserved for passages of particular expressive or structural significance.

However, despite the wealth of possible *staccato* techniques, only two notational symbols

18. Rosen, *Romantic Generation*, 10–11.

19. In the next chapter, the use of the pedal as a trigger of imagined sound will be explored in further depth.

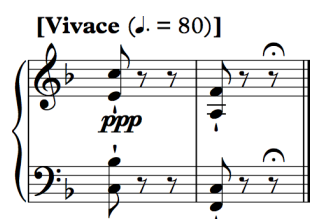
prescribe this type of touch: the dot and the stroke.²⁰ There has been some debate about the general meaning of these signs, and whilst Brown argues that the 'recognition of two signs' for *staccato* was 'more or less universal' by the second half of the nineteenth century, 'the relationship of theoretical explanations to the practices of specific composers remains highly problematic': 'there has been little consensus even in the matter of which composers used both dots and strokes to mean different things and which used a single mark with a more variable meaning'.²¹ Unfortunately, there is a similar lack of evidence when it comes to the use of *staccato* in Schumann's music. His piano works include dots as well as strokes, but surviving written sources reveal nothing about the execution of these signs. To untangle the technical subtleties of the *staccato* touch in Schumann's early piano music, it is necessary to turn to the works themselves by adopting what Brown describes as an 'eighteenth-century attitude towards musical context'.²² The following thus examines a variety of possible *staccato* techniques to identify how and to which effect they were applied by Schumann in his *Abegg Variations*.

The only type of *staccato* touch which completely avoided any exertion of the hands and arms—and thereby fully complied with the still-hand principle—was the finger *staccato*. Not surprisingly, this is the most commonly used type of *staccato* technique in the *Abegg Variations*. Being played *from* the key, i.e. with the finger already in contact with the surface of the key before playing the note, the finger *staccato* lends itself to *pizzicato*-like left-hand accompaniment figurations, which requires a light attack and fine dynamic control for optimal balance and clarity. This technique is applicable across the work using dots, particularly in Variations 1 (Example 6.15a on page 170) and 3 (Example 6.21 on page 173). This did not mean that the dot was specifically tied to this playing technique, nor that the stroke could represent a similar type of touch. In the coda of the 'Finale alla fantasia' the stroke is repeatedly used in passages which naturally encourage the use of a finger *staccato*. For instance, the very last two chords of the work require the finest control of touch due to the soft dynamic marking (*piano pianissimo*)—something which only a finger *staccato* offers:

20. In the following Brown's term 'stroke' will be used for the notational symbol frequently referred to as a 'wedge', cf. Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750–1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 200–201.

21. Ibid., 201.

22. Ibid.



Audio 18

Example 7.8. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, 'Finale alla fantasia', bars 104–105

Schumann's reason for choosing a stroke thus affected the sound: the stroke could suggest a slightly more accentuated touch, still to be executed solely by the fingers. Similarly, in an earlier passage of the 'Finale', Schumann changes the *staccato* marking from stroke to dot, without suggesting a change of playing technique:



Example 7.9. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, 'Finale alla fantasia', bars 89–92 (right hand)

Here, the speed of the semiquavers offers the player no alternatives but to use a finger *staccato* throughout all four bars, but because the following phrase begins *mezzoforte*, Schumann possibly wished for the preceding phrase to end with lighter *staccatos* in bar 92 and thereby appear softer. As these examples demonstrate, the finger *staccato* did in no way challenge the established principles of the still-hand technique, regardless of the notational symbol. Conversely, the *wrist staccato* added a visual element to the performance, and is applicable in a number of passages in the *Abegg Variations*. Despite its use of the wrist as the principal moving joint, the movement is primarily instigated by the elbow. The understanding of his use of this technique therefore relies on a deeper understanding of the general use of the arms in Schumann's piano technique.

Whereas the use of the arms is invaluable to the production of sound in modern piano technique, arm movements principally served practical purposes in Schumann's day. As a guide to the hands when playing chords or leaps, Logier admitted that the upper arm could indeed have 'a slight motion', but that 'the less that motion is employed the better'; the principal movement should therefore be 'horizontal'.²³ Hummel agreed, noting that 'the arm must not move too much, nor must the hands be lifted up too far from the keyboard'.²⁴ Schumann was similarly

23. Johann Bernhard Logier, *Peculiar Method of Teaching the Art of Sciences and Music* (London: J. Green, 1828), 5.

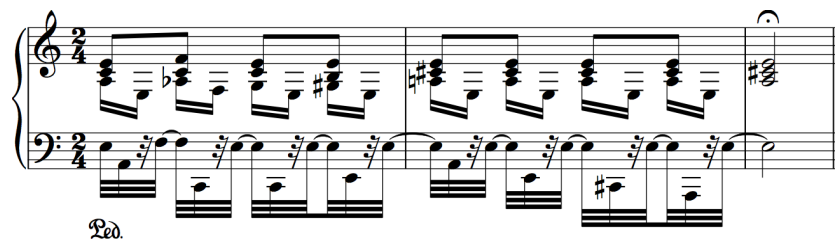
24. Johann Nepomuk Hummel, *A Complete Theoretical & Practical Course of Instructions on the Art of Playing the Piano Forte* (London: Boosey, 1828), 212.

aware of leaps as a technical issue, and the arms would certainly have been used to assist quick changes of hand positions: although the right-hand double notes appear to be of principal importance in the second *Paganini Study* from op. 3, Schumann argued that the left hand is 'an exercise [...] in leaps':²⁵



Example 7.10. Schumann: *Paganini Studies* op. 3 no. 2, bars 1–12

Similarly, *Beethoven-Exercise A5* is an etude primarily for the left hand to study leaps spanning up to a twelfth:

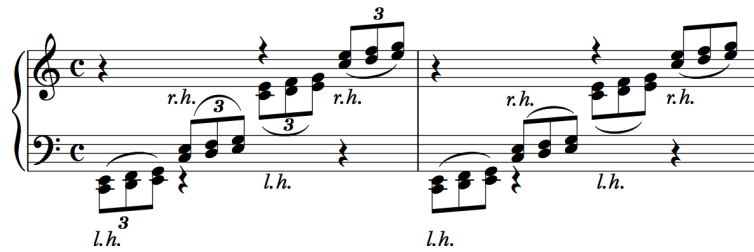


Example 7.11. Schumann: *Beethoven-Exercises*, A5, bars 17–19

Another situation in which arm movements would be activated would be in hand crossings. As Barnum notes, this technique had been in use since Scarlatti and Mozart, and Hummel too employed this technique in his Piano Sonata in F# minor op. 81, which Schumann played during 1831.²⁶ Wieck's piano study no. 11 explicitly instructs the player to 'cross the hands lightly and easily' in an ascending motion:

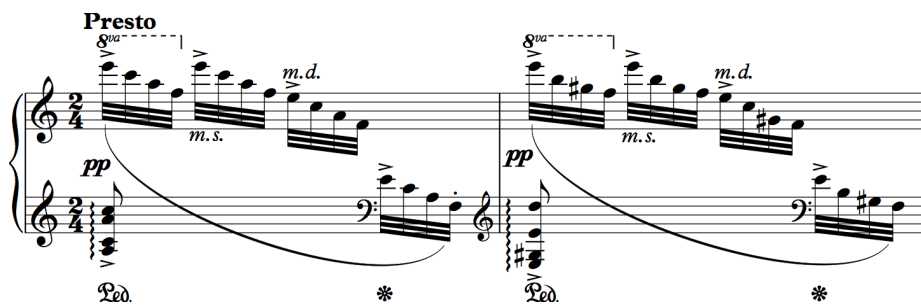
25. Robert Schumann, *Etudes pour le Pianoforte d'après les Caprices de Paganini*, op. 3, 1st ed. (Leipzig: Friedrich Hofmeister, [n.d.]), 4. 'Die zweite Caprice kann als Uebung in Doppelgriffen für die rechte Hand und in Sprungen für die linke angesehen werden.' (Hereafter cited as RS3-Hof); Translated in Robert Schumann, *Paganini-Etuden*, op. 3, ed. Ernst Herttrich (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2009), xv (hereafter cited as RS3-Henle).

26. Marion Phyllis Barnum, 'A comprehensive performance project in piano literature and an essay on J. N. Hummel and his treatise on piano playing' (PhD, The University of Iowa, 1971), 100.



Example 7.12. Wieck, *Studien*, exercise 11

This technique was well-known to Schumann as well, and his *Beethoven-Exercise A2* treats this subject with descending hand-crossings:



Example 7.13. Schumann: *Beethoven-Exercises*, A2, bars 1–2

Other than this, the arm was given a relatively passive role in piano playing. According to Wieck's teachings, the arms from the elbow joint down would occasionally be employed in octaves and in 'full chords'. However, 'such passages would sound more beautiful when played with a supple wrist and less strength', as the 'fullness of tone' generated by a softer touch from the wrist would 'outweigh' the strength of a tone produced by the arm, as the string would suffer from being over-played.²⁷ Therefore, Wieck taught a 'light touch of the keys from the fingers, and of whole chords from the wrist', and Logier argued that in playing chords and octaves, 'the wrist will perform that action which the fingers did in playing single notes'.²⁸ Thus, Logier argued that wrist movements could support the finger when a *staccato* needed 'great force and spirit', and Wieck suggested that the wrist could be used with a 'completely quiet hand' to create a '*staccato à la Hummel*'.²⁹ This type of *staccato* employed a 'bouncing' motion from the wrist

27. Friedrich Wieck, *Materialen zu Friedrich Wieck's Pianoforte-Methodik*, ed. Alwin Wieck (Berlin: Simrock, 1875), 4. 'Doch schliesst dies die gemachte Erfahrung nicht aus, dass solche Passagen schöner klingen, wenn sie nur mit lockerem Handgelenk ausgeführt werden und wird die (übrigens nur scheinbar) geringere Stärke des tones durch das vollere Austönen der Saiten vollständig aufgewogen, wenn nicht übertroffen.' (Hereafter cited as *Materialen*).

28. *Materialen*, 11; Logier, *Method*, 5. Wieck's principle of playing single notes from the fingers and chords from the wrists is somewhat similar to Franklin Taylor's observations of Clara Wieck's piano technique, cf. Chapter 5 on page 146.

29. *Materialen*, 4; Logier, *Method*, 5.

whilst keeping the hand and fingers passive. Schumann, too, embraced this technique, as seen in his 'Erste Uebungen' of his *Klavierschule*. Amongst the various touches which he indicated throughout these exercises, the '*staccato à la Hummel*' appeared in Exercise 11. According to Wieck, this technique could be applied to a number of different textures, for instance in 'full chords' where the student's attention should be directed at the 'middle fingers', or in 'octaves' where one should pay extra 'consideration' to the 'clear touch of the fifth finger'.³⁰

The '*staccato à la Hummel*' can be beneficial in Schumann's music, particularly when playing double stops. *Exercice pour le Pianoforte* contains long stretches of chords and octaves in parallel motion, in which a purely finger-based technique will not suffice:

a. Bars 1–2

b. Bars 100–101

Example 7.14. Schumann: *Exercice pour le Pianoforte* (1830)

This type of wrist *staccato* also found its use in Variation 3 of the *Abegg Variations* (Example 6.3b on page 163). Similarly to the aforementioned example, the left-hand double sixths and octaves are difficult to execute without the involvement of the wrists. Incidentally, it is during these bars that the music rises to the climax of the variation—both in terms of dynamics, where a *crescendo* peaks at a *con forza* marking, as well as the ambitus, with the hands reaching both extremities of the keyboard. With the '*staccato à la Hummel*', Schumann provided a visual cue to the listener to emphasising the weight of this structurally significant passage.

The *carezzando* touch takes this concept of visual signposting one step further. This touch, which Oscar Bie described as a 'special kind of sensuously charming touch' was, according to him, 'a favourite practice of Kalkbrenner and Kontski in Paris'.³¹ In his *Complete Course of In-*

30. Materialien, 4.

31. Oscar Bie, *A History of the Pianoforte and Pianoforte Players* (London: J. M. Dent, 1899), 190.

struction for the Piano Forte, Kalkbrenner alludes to a 'caressing' ('caessant la touche') of the key as a possible way to alter the tone.³² It was, however, Kontski who refined this touch to become a signature of his. Adolf Kullak summarises Kontski's own description of this technique:

A special variety of the mezzo staccato is the *carezzando*, discussed in detail by Kontski in his Method. This is executed by stroking the keys, and was frequently employed in practice by the above virtuoso. Kalkbrenner mentions the same under the similar term *caresser*, and Chopin is also said to have employed it, although stroking the key in exactly the contrary direction to that of Kontski's style. According to Kontski, the finger strokes the key with the inner fleshy face of the tip-joint, touching nearly in the centre, gliding gently towards the front edge, and in the middle of this path causing, by gradual pressure, the hammer to strike. Such gentle, gradual approach of the latter to the string necessarily results in a very soft tone.³³

Kontski noted that the gliding motion should not be executed by the means of the finger alone; instead, the forearm should slide the finger towards the back of key 'as soon as it lies' flat on its surface.³⁴ Rather than attempting to connect the notes by the means of a finger *legato*, drawing back the arm would initiate an early release of the key, so that each note is only held for three-quarters of its value. Instead, the pedal is sustained to create what Kontski describes as a 'glasschord' or 'violin harmonic' type of sonority.³⁵ Such a technique challenged the curved hand position, which was the norm at the time. Kullak elaborates:

More important, however, Kontski's theory for holding the hand, which stands in opposition to that in vogue since Bach's time, and, without knowing goes back to the style of the earliest period. Whereas the other methods require the fingers to be bent, and the back of the hand horizontal with the forearm, some even demanding an elevation of the wrist, Kontski would have the latter held lower, and the fingers stretched nearly straight. He looks upon the finger-tip as the least sensitive part of the finger, and giving dry tone, whereas according to ordinary experience a fine sense of touch is peculiar to this very part.³⁶

32. Friedrich Kalkbrenner, *Anweisung das Pianoforte mit Hülfe des Händleiters Spielen zu lernen* (Leipzig: Fr. Kistner, [1833]), 19; Friedrich Kalkbrenner, *Complete Course of Instruction for the Piano Forte* (Edinburgh: Alex Robertson, [n.d.]), 11. Kalkbrenner's *Complete Course* was published before 1832.

33. Adolf Kullak, *The Aesthetics of Pianoforte-Playing*, ed. Hans Bischoff, trans. Theodore Baker (New York: G. Shirmer, 1907), 195.

34. Anton de Kontski, *L'Indispensable du pianiste*, op. 100 (Berlin: T. Trautwein, 1872), 16.

35. Ibid., 16. For more information on the glasschord, cf. note 76 on page 51.

36. Kullak, *Aesthetics*, 79.

Similarly to the wrist *staccato*, the *carezzando* not only alters the tone, the flat hand position combined with the movements of the forearm also creates an effect which is notably visible to the audience. It therefore finds its utility when emphasising sections of particular expressive or structural importance, especially because—as Kullak argues—‘this shade of tone grows enervating’ when applied for too long, ‘and robs the pianoforte of its classic vigor of timbre’: ‘it can claim only transient practical use’.³⁷

Unfortunately, Kullak did not disclose exactly when it would be appropriate to apply the *carezzando*, and only noted that it would be ‘best adapted for chord-like passages or melodious notes in slow tempo’.³⁸ It was in these settings that the *carezzando* would find its use in Schumann’s piano music. Although Kontski suggested the use of an *o* above the note to indicate the *carezzando* touch, this symbol never became universal. In terms of notation, the most characteristic feature to distinguish the *carezzando* from other detached or semi-detached types of touches was instead found in the fingering. Because the arm acts as the primary agent of movement, the brushing motion is not only comfortably executed with one finger alone, the repeated use of the same finger ensures a certain evenness of tone. Along with the aforementioned shortening of individual notes and the generous application of the pedal, the repeated fingers were therefore the defining traits of the *carezzando* touch, which easily translate to a printed music example. This is seen in Kontski’s demonstration from in his *L’Indispensable du pianiste* op. 100 where he compares the notation of a particular melodic passage with its actual execution:

37. Ibid., 195.

38. Ibid.

Example 7.15. Kontski, *L'Indispensable*, 17

[Andante con espressione ♩ = 92]

Example 7.16. Herz: *Variations de Bravoure sur la Romance de Joseph* op. 20, Theme, bars 4–5 (right hand)

[Andante]

Notation

ppp dolcissimo

[Andante]

Execution

ppp dolcissimo

Red * Red * Red *

Example 7.19. Kotski, *L'Indispensable*, 17

In a similar fashion, the double-thirds of *Paganini Study* no. 4 encourage the application of *carezzando*:

Allegro

dolce ————— *diminuendo*

Example 7.20. Schumann: *Paganini Studies* op. 3 no. 4, bars 1–2

As in Kotski's example, Schumann chose to use the second and fourth fingers with a *portato* marking. Despite the tempo indication of *Allegro*, Schumann found this étude to be less about speed than sonorous expression. As he wrote in his preface to this study:

The fourth capriccio may be rendered with great passion and in the most brilliant

of colours; not a single note should be without expression. If, in the second capriccio [‘La Chasse’], the player was made to concentrate on perfect precision in the double-stops, here he is permitted to break the chromatic thirds lightly and briefly while using the same fingers.³⁹

Schumann’s *carte blanche* for the performer to *break* the double-thirds is remarkable from a modern-day pianist’s point of view. Whilst it would be technically awkward to execute such double-thirds with the fingers alone and impossible to break them in a controlled manner with a bouncy ‘*staccato à la Hummel*’, the brushing motion of the key allows for swiftly breaking the double-stops, while maintaining a certain lightness of sound.

The use of the *carezzando* in an environment of double-notes leads back to the discussion on dots and strokes, as well as the structural use of this technique. Compare the opening thematic figure of the ‘Finale alle fantasia’ and its recapitulation:

Vivace (♩. = 80)

p *semplice e tutto crescendo* *f*

a. Bars 1–4

Audio 12

Vivace (♩. = 80)

p *crescendo* *ritenuto*

b. Bars 74–78

Audio 17

Example 7.21. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, ‘Finale alla fantasia’, bars 1–4 and 74–48

Other than the replacement of the b^1 with an f^2 in bars 3 and 75 respectively, the notes in the first phrases of these two examples are identical. What differentiates these two places are

39. RS3-Hof, 6. ‘Die vierte Caprice mag leidenschaftlich bis zum Contrast und im glänzendsten Colorit vorgetragen werden; keine Note darf hier ohne Ausdruck sein. — Wenn in der zweiten der Spieler auf präzises Zusammenschlagen der Doppelgriffe zu achten hatte, so kann er hier die chromatischen Terzen leicht und kurz mit denselben Fingern brechen.’ Translated in RS3-Henle, xvii.

their musical environments and consequently their performance instructions: in the opening, the first phrase presents itself as something new—a fresh beginning appearing from the preceding *cadenza*-like interlude of the ‘Cantabile’ variation. It should be played *legato* and *semplice*. The recapitulation, on the other hand, follows the dynamic and structural climax of the entire work, after a general pause prolonged by a fermata. There is a fragility and cautiousness to the reintroduction of the opening phrase, which is hinted at with the change of articulation to a *portato*—first marked with dots, later with strokes. Based on previous observations of the *carezzando* touch in Schumann’s piano music, this passage would naturally lend itself to this technique. Not only would the ethereal sonority produced by this touch be well suited here, it would also give the listener a visual marker to pinpoint an important change of musical character.

Accentuation Marks: Tone Colours and Voicing

As demonstrated, the dot and the stroke implied a variety of touches and techniques for playing detached notes, ranging from the finger *staccato* through the ‘*staccato à la Hummel*’ to the *carezzando* touch. Likewise, Schumann used a host of accentuation markings to emphasise certain notes in a rhythmic figure, add expression to a melodic turn, or colour a dense texture—often requiring a delicate control of touch. Similarly to the *staccato* markings, a single symbol could point to a number of musical effects, and a specific touch or sonority could conversely be indicated through different signs.

Just as the dot alluded to a lighter touch than the stroke, the most common accentuation markings—the accent hairpin (>), *le petit chapeau* (^), and the *sforzando* (***sf***)—follow a fairly consistent order of strength, which roughly aligns with Brown’s observations. Although Brown is cautious about generalisations, he does consider the ***sf*** ‘for the most part to be a fairly powerful accent’, and therefore only used sparingly in ‘piano passages’.⁴⁰ Following this came the ^, a fraction weaker, in turn ‘normally denoted a degree of accent greater than >’.⁴¹ It should be added that they convey slightly different musical meanings, which go beyond a weak-to-strong scale. A few examples from Schumann’s earliest piano works pinpoint their individual roles and purposes. These fall roughly under three categories: (1) *dynamic accents*, which seek to clarify the structure of a phrase or emphasise certain notes in a figuration for a rhythmical effect; (2) *expressive accents*, which highlight notes and harmonies of particular expressive importance; and finally there is the (3) *textural accents*, used to colour and nuance pianistic textures for the sake of sonority.

40. Brown, *Performing Practice*, 86.

41. *Ibid.*, 122.

The order of strength which Brown proposes is most evident in the dynamic accents. In their most discreet applications, they prescribe the direction of a phrase, bringing the attention of the performer to its dynamic peak. An obvious application of this is found in the very opening of the *Abegg Variations*, where the consistent > on the top note of each sequential step suggests a degree of direction in terms of dynamics and pace, or in *Papillons* no. 9, in which the same type of accent clearly signposts the point of gravity for each individual phrase:



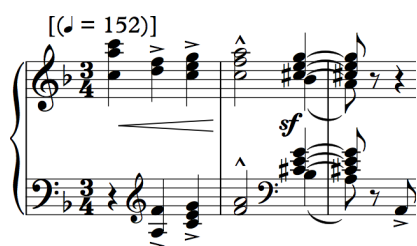
Example 7.22. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, Theme, bars 1–8

Audio 4



Example 7.23. Schumann: *Papillons* op. 2 no. 9, bars 25–27

Schumann's choice of accent clearly depends on the dynamic setting; whereas these two examples are to be played *mezzoforte* and *pianissimo* respectively, his use of accents to support *crescendos* towards greater dynamics require stronger markings. Thus, the *crescendo* in bar 31 of *Papillon* no. 6 results in a *fortissimo* at the end of the movement, aided by two > and the slightly stronger ^ at the dynamic peak:



Example 7.24. Schumann: *Papillons* op. 2 no. 6, bars 31–32

In the same manner, bars 34–37 of the ‘Finale alla fantasia’ in the *Abegg Variations* (Example 6.4 on page 164) demonstrate a change of accent markings during a *diminuendo*. Beginning *fortissimo*, the emphasised third and sixth beats are marked *sf* in bar 34, and following a gradual dynamic fade, the accentuation in bars 35–36 are reduced to *^*.

The dynamic accents also found their utility quite commonly as markers of rhythmic displacement, emphasising syncopated notes or weaker beats of the bar for a rhythmical effect. In such places, Schumann also chose an accent appropriate for the musical setting. The sixth *Papillon* is essentially a parody of a clumsily danced waltz:



Example 7.25. Schumann: *Papillons* op. 2 no. 6, bars 1–2

Audio 25

To characterise its awkward heaviness, Schumann has accentuated the third beats of the *ritornello* with an *sf*. However, in passages of perpetual motion, he opted for the gentler accentuation marks, even in an environment of strong dynamics:



Example 7.26. Schumann: *Paganini Studies* op. 3 no. 1, bars 13–15

Here, the off-beat displacements of the horn-fifths in the left hand are marked with a \wedge , and in a similar left hand figure in the 'Finale alla fantasia' of the *Abegg Variations*, which skews the feel of the underlying $\frac{6}{8}$ meter he only uses the $>$ accent—probably to avoid breaking the musical flow of the right-hand passagework:



Example 7.27. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, 'Finale alla fantasia', bars 68–69

Audio 14

Similarly to the dynamic accents, the expressive accents primarily sought to clarify an underlying musical intent from Schumann's side, ensuring that notes of particular expressive importance received sufficient attention. This was especially the case with pitches of the scale which were flattened for expressive purposes. In contrast to the dynamic accent, it would rarely be suitable to merely accentuate such a note by playing it stronger; instead, the use of timing would be more effective, by delaying or even hurrying the note as appropriate. This is seen on the minor third in Variation 2 as well as the 'Cantabile', where Schumann added $>$ to the a^b1 to ensure an expressive rendition of these notes:



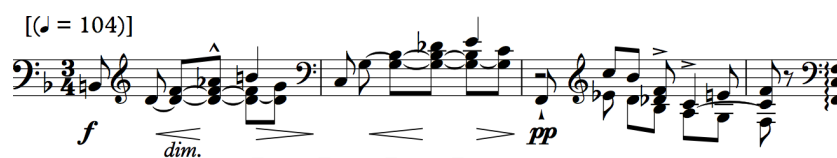
Example 7.28. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, Variation 2, bars 21–22



Example 7.29. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, 'Cantabile', bars 12–13 (right hand)

Audio 10

This was, however, not limited to the melodic parts; there are examples of the same approach in left-hand accompaniments, including the a^b1 on the diminished seventh (bar 13) and the minor subdominant in the first variation (bar 15):



Example 7.30. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, Variation 1, bars 13–16 (left hand)

Other places feature similar applications of the \wedge in places where it would have aided Schumann technically, considering his issues with the third finger. In the third variation Schumann thus advised a 2–3 fingering between the c^2 and d^2 . Despite the *legato* slur, the speed of the piece undoubtedly encourages a leap of the hand rather than a finger-crossing (Example 6.21 on page 173). Not only does the \wedge give the flattened sixth d^b2 expressive weight, it also allows for the hand to land freely on this note.

It is, however, the more densely notated passages which highlight the most inventive uses of accentuation marks. In his early works, Schumann used expression marks to counterbalance notational density: the greater the complexity of texture, the more prolifically he used accents, articulation marks and slurs to clarify his musical intent. Such notational devices enabled him to colour certain harmonies and bring the listener's attention to specific parts of the texture. Observe how this is realised in the *Abegg Variations*—from the shading of a melodic line in octaves to the fine-tuning of voices in a polyphonic setting. Perhaps the simplest form of textural colouring was the dynamic shading of a melodic line in double octaves. This was a practice known to be used by Clara Schumann during the 1840s; in her annotated scores of Beethoven's piano sonatas, she marked the parts to be emphasised:⁴²



Example 7.31. Beethoven: Piano Sonata op. 10 no. 1, 1st mvt., bars 118–123 (right hand; annotations by Clara Schumann)



Example 7.32. Beethoven: Piano Sonata op. 10 no. 1, 1st mvt., bars 150–153 (right hand; annotations by Clara Schumann)

In Example 7.31, the upper part is highlighted, probably to add brilliance and clarity to the

42. Ludwig van Beethoven, 'Piano Sonatas', with annotations by Clara Schumann (D-Zsch 5999,1-A4/D1, Archiv des Robert-Schumann-Haus Zwickau), 4–5.

melody. Conversely, in Example 7.32 on page 216 the right hand appears in a higher register of the keyboard where the tone gets significantly thinner, especially on a Viennese piano. Emphasising the lower part provides a clarity of melody, a warmer sonority, and ensures that the performer will not attempt to over-play the fragile upper register of the instrument. There is clear evidence that not only was Robert Schumann aware of this practice very early on; it was an ingrained part of his compositional vocabulary as early as his first published works:



Example 7.33. Schumann: *Papillons* op. 2 no. 10, bars 59–63 (right hand)

Audio 30

In bars 59–63 of the tenth movement from *Papillons*, Schumann doubled the waltz melody with a lower octave, however he took care to notate the double octaves as two individual melodic parts. The separation of octaves could possibly mean that the > only applies to the upper part, the lower part adding a darker shade of colour to the sonority.

This approach of highlighting also found its way into the *Abegg Variations*. In the first variation, Schumann used the > to highlight entries of voices in the two-part texture (Example 6.15a on page 170). Whilst the > clarifies the interplay between the two parts of the octave, it demonstrates Schumann's engagement with this use of the accent, opening up the possibility of applying it in other places with melodic double octaves. Thus, the opening of the 'Cantabile' benefits from an emphasis on the lower part of the octaves similar to Example 7.32 on page 216 (Example 4.9 on page 130), and in bars 45–47 of the 'Finale alla fantasia' the division of the parallel octaves between the two hands enables the playful change of focus between the two parts at a note-by-note level:



Example 7.34. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, 'Finale alla fantasia', bars 45–47

Audio 13

The opening of the 'Finale alla fantasia' demonstrates the application of accents in a more densely notated texture (Example 6.38 on page 182). The left hand continues its chordal pro-

gression of the opening bars, embellished by semiquaver passagework in the right hand. Although Schumann continued to clarify the direction of each left-hand phrase with > on the c¹s in bars 7 and 11, the right hand begins a rise from the middle to the top of the keyboard from bar 9 onwards, coinciding with a *crescendo* towards *forte*. The semitone steps of this rising sequence are highlighted by the addition of a second part in the right hand, accentuated by > markings—easily executed by applying weight to the thumb side of the hand. As the sequence rises to the upper section of the keyboard, Schumann draws the attention away from the thumb part to the semiquavers by removing the accent, instead adding accents to the last quaver of each bar; this is possibly to give each one-bar phrase a sense of direction. Without the accents in the thumb, the left hand joins the right hand in the sequential rise from bar 9 onwards, and as the music is about to reach its peak at *forte*, supporting accents are introduced in the lower part of the left hand. At the *vivace* pace, the changes of dynamic emphasis from part to part, along with various directions to phrasing which the accents supply, happen rapidly. Balancing and developing each voice this way must almost certainly have been the result of hours of experimentation at the keyboard.

As these examples demonstrate, the application of *staccato* and accentuation marks were not only integral to Schumann's style of writing for the piano, they were also defining elements of his virtuosic idiom. These markings represent a temporary outcome of his exploration of piano sound, captured for posterity by the publication of the work, but to Schumann this was possibly a preserver of the 'magic that will always remain the soul of art'.⁴³ It would seem that Schumann saw these qualities in his idealised image of Paganini, and that the exploration of sound was therefore fundamental to his understanding of Paganinian virtuosity, evident in his *Paganini Studies* op. 3. Similarly to the *Abegg Variations*, these studies reveal a markedly different approach to virtuosity, where the exploration of sound is fundamental to the pianistic realisation of Paganini's setting, and presents a contrast to a more familiar figure in relation to romantic piano virtuosity, namely Liszt.

Schumann's Idiom of Paganinian Virtuosity

As a reinterpretation of Paganini's Violin Caprices op. 1, the *Paganini Studies* op. 3 and their extended preface reflect on Schumann's understanding of Paganinian virtuosity and its translation to the idioms of the piano. In these studies, he endeavoured 'to remain as faithful as possible to the original', but rather than merely providing 'a simple bass accompaniment' he adapted

43. See Chapter 2 on page 82.

the Caprices to the 'character and mechanical properties of the pianoforte'.⁴⁴ Yet, he did not dare 'to alter an iota of Paganini's expression marks, no matter how whimsical or idiosyncratic' they might appear.⁴⁵ Still, he occasionally took the liberty of changing 'lengthy *semi-portato* violin passages into fully *legato* ones for the piano, reducing the register of excessive leaps, turning awkward intervals into more manageable ones, and suchlike [...] without damage to the original'.⁴⁶

Attempting to approximate Paganini's text, Schumann's fingerprint primarily shows in the details. Thus, rather than excessively altering the original, he added a layer of performance directions to bring out fine nuances of the musical textures. These included notational devices which encourage the player to explore a variety of playing techniques and fine gradients of touches, such as accents and articulation markings. An example of this is seen in its most concentrated form in the first *Paganini Study*, corresponding to Caprice no. 5:



Example 7.35. Paganini: Caprice op. 24 no. 5, bar 2

From Paganini's hand, the *Agitato* section is to be played *détaché*, and achieves its 'specific character [...] by an unusual and extremely difficult bow stroke – a series of three rebounds in the downstroke and one in the upstroke, the whole maintained from beginning to end', as de Barbieri observes.⁴⁷ Schumann was doubtlessly well aware that maintaining this articulation would result in a different expression on the piano, degenerating into a mechanical and incessant character. Therefore, he provided a transcription which offers varied articulations, voicing and rhythmic interplay between the two hands:

44. RS3-Hof, 2. 'Der Herausgeber hat nicht gewagt an Paganini's Bezeichnung des Vortrags, so launenhaft-eigenthümlich sie ist, etwas zu ändern. Wenn er aber hier und da ergänzte oder claviermässiger machte, d.i. dass er lang-fortgesetzte halbgetragene Violinpassagen in völlig-gebundene veränderte, zu grosse Sprünge in der Octave verkleinerte, unbequemliegende Intervalle in nähere verkehrte und dgl., so geschah dies, ohne dass das Original gerade beschädigt wurde.' Translated in RS3-Henle, xii.

45. RS3-Hof, 2. For original quote, cf. previous note. RS3-Henle, xii.

46. RS3-Hof, 2. My italics. For original quote, cf. previous note. RS3-Henle, xii.

47. Nicoló Paganini, *24 Caprici für Violine Solo*, op. 1, study score, ed. Renato Barbieri, Alberto Cantù and Ernst Herttrich (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 1990), 67.

Audio 35

Example 7.36. Schumann: *Paganini Studies* op. 3 no. 1, bars 2–9

The variation of touches and playing techniques is even richer than in the passage shown in Example 6.38 on page 182, and must similarly have been the result of a similar process of pianistic experimentation. For instance, the swift changes between *portato* and *legato* in bars 2–3, the addition of an inner voice in the thumb in bar 4, or the emphasised bass line in bar 8 require the pianist to draw on virtuosic skills much different from those of his contemporaries: instead of relying on speed as the principal source of bravura, this study equally depends on colour of sound.

However, the pianistic currents at the time were tending towards a completely different approach to virtuosity than Schumann's. Liszt, for example, chose pianistic solutions in his adaption of Paganini's Caprices—the *Etudes d'Exécution transcendante d'après Paganini* (1838)—which first and foremost produced the most dramatic musical effect.⁴⁸ Despite different selections of Caprices, both Schumann and Liszt produced studies based on Caprice no. 9 ('La Chasse'). This provides an opportunity to compare the pianistic differences between them by examining two specific sections of the studies: the opening *ritornello* and the first episode.

The first example highlights the difference of approach to sonority to approximate the sound of other instruments. In the opening of the ninth violin Caprice, Paganini asks for the double

48. Liszt revised the set in 1851, and published the etudes as *Grandes Etudes de Paganini*. Both versions were dedicated to Clara Schumann.

stops to played *dolce*, with the first phrase imitating the sound of flutes *sulla tastiera*, and the second phrase mimicking the sound of French Horns on the G and D strings:



Example 7.37. Paganini: Caprice for violin solo op. 1 no. 9, bars 1–11

This shift of sonority is handled in demonstrably different ways by Schumann and Liszt. Liszt maintains double stops played by both hands in unison throughout the two phrases, the only differentiator in terms of sonority being a radical shift of register and dynamics:

Example 7.38. Liszt: *Études d'exécution transcendante d'après Paganini*, S. 140 no. 5, 'La Chasse', bars 1–12

Schumann, on the other hand, chooses a more colourful option, using a left hand accompaniment to emphasise the difference of character between the two phrases (Example 7.10 on page 203). Thus, the accompaniment for the 'flute'-phrase is based on lightly articulated double stops, whereas the the following 'horn'-phrase is supported by accentuated octaves in the bass. With its simple, but technically more demanding texture, the imitation of flutes and horns in Liszt's etude is not implied by the notation itself, making it necessary to explicitly instruct the player to mimic these instruments. However, because of the sonorities created by the left hand, Schumann's version can—when played as written—evoke the difference of character between

the two instruments, even without the player ever knowing about Paganini's original intention.

The second example from 'La Chasse' demonstrates Schumann's affinity with lyricism—a certain 'melodic definition' which he also tried to cultivate in his practice of the Chopin Variations, even at the expense of the dramatic effect. To do so, Schumann occasionally strayed from Paganini's Caprice. For instance, in the first episode, Paganini raises the dynamics to *forte*, but keeps the melodic line detached:



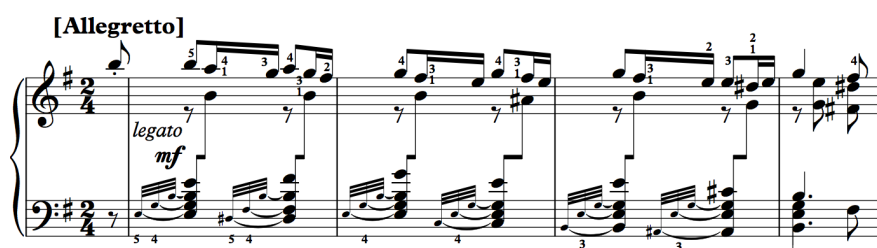
Example 7.39. Paganini: Caprice for violin solo op. 1 no. 9, bars 1–11

Despite the fuller chords and additional top line octaves, Liszt clearly attempts to reproduce Paganini's intent; he even slows the tempo a fraction to give more space to play the section more *marcato*:



Example 7.40. Liszt: Étude d'exécution transcendante d'après Paganini, S. 140 no. 5, 'La Chasse', bars 33–36

Schumann, on the other hand, clearly aimed to turn the episode into a more lyrical *minore*, by keeping the melodic line *legato* and the dynamic no more than *mezzoforte*:



Example 7.41. Schumann: Paganini Studies op. 3 no. 2, bars 17–20



Although Schumann never left a precise definition of his virtuosic ideal, this chapter proposes a variety of touches, tone colours and sonorities to be important. By using standard expression marks, including the dot, stroke, *sf* and various accents, Schumann encouraged the engagement with tone production techniques, which gave his piano writing a colourful and expressive dimension. These notational symbols found their way into the *Abegg Variations*, where his use of the wrist-based 'staccato à la Hummel', the *carezzando* touch, as well as the voicing of octaves, chords or polyphony through the application of weight from the hand, provided sonorous and occasionally even visual means to colour textures or signify important structural events. While simple on the surface, Schumann's expression marks offered a sophisticated set of pianistic tools to support the musical expression.

Schumann's engagement with these techniques was the result of an extensive process of experimentation at the keyboard, which stemmed from his many hours of improvisation. It was during these sessions that he was most at ease with his playing, feeling free to recreate the 'magic' and 'spirit' which he so vigorously tried to transfer to his concert pieces. The evidence suggests that the aforementioned expression markings appeared as a temporary result of this experimentation—an exploration with sonority which continued beyond the publication of the work. As his first set of *Paganini Studies* testifies, this warranted a vastly different approach to virtuosity than that of his contemporaries, including Liszt. Schumann's virtuosity was calculated to dazzle to a lesser degree; instead, it was founded on the curiosity of the 'fresh spirit', in which the spur-of-the-moment enhances and reinvigorates the composition. Schumann's virtuosity was not bound to the 'dry, cold keys', but a creation of his musical fantasy. The various touches and tone production techniques were his means, the result was a virtuosity of the imagination.

Chapter 8

Exploring Pedalling: Tokens of ‘True Music’ in *Papillons* op. 2

The last chapter seeks to examine the agency of sonority in a broader artistic context, by exploring its utilisation as a trigger of imaginative virtuosity and a means to realise his ideal ‘true music’.¹ To study this, the pedal markings of his second published work, *Papillons* op. 2, present an ideal case. Firstly, in *Papillons*, Schumann precisely indicates the use of the pedal in a selection of passages.² Whilst few in number, these markings more accurately communicate his sonorous intentions than the generalised ‘mit pedal’ indications of his later piano works. Secondly, similarly to the *Abegg Variations*, *Papillons* was formed during his years as piano student, and the shaping of the work was most likely informed by his own instrumental practice. Thus, although published in 1832—after he had given up a regular practising routine—the work was compiled from a mosaic of sketches and early compositions produced during Schumann’s time as aspiring pianist. Thirdly, with a variety of surviving sketches as well as an autograph manuscript, the compositional process of *Papillons* is relatively well-documented. Schumann’s continual experimentation with sonority during the work’s creation is therefore more easily traceable, compared to other of his early works. Further, the instrumental style of *Papillons* lends itself to a pianistic study of sonorous effects. Sporting a Schubertian idiom, this work represents Schumann’s first published departure from postclassical virtuosity. Its simpler textures makes it easier to dissect and quantify the sonorous effects which the pedal markings may induce. This enables the study of Schumann’s imaginative virtuosity in its purest form.

1. Portions of this chapter have been published as Balder Neergaard, ‘In the Footsteps of Jean Paul: Sonority and Pedalling in Robert Schumann’s *Papillons*, op. 2’, in *Interpreting Historical Keyboard Music: Sources, Contexts and Performance*, ed. Andrew Wooley and John Kitchen (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 243–257.

2. This applies to a number of early piano works, including *Abegg Variations* op. 1, *Paganini Studies* opp. 3 and 10, *Intermezzi* op. 4, *Impromptus über ein Thema von Clara Wieck* op. 5, *Toccata* op. 7 and *Allegro* op. 8.

In addition, *Papillons* was Schumann's only known compositional encounter with a musical programme. During his work on the composition, he highlighted a number of incipits from the last chapters in his copy of Jean Paul's unfinished novel, *Flegeljahre* ('The Awkward Years', 1804–05), each associated with specific movements of this work. Since then, the programmatic connection between the two works has proved problematic to scholars, partly due to a lack of clear correlations between Jean Paul's text and Schumann's music, and partly because of Schumann's eventual concealment of any reference to *Flegeljahre* in the published version. However, the idea of applying a layer of extra-musical inspiration to a musical work was not new to him. During his crisis over the summer of 1831, Schumann conceived the idea of relating events from *Don Giovanni* to variations from Chopin's op. 2, which developed into his first published review, *Ein Werk II*.³ Struggling to reach his 'inner ideal' of the work, this programme served as inspiration for his performance, and offered a means to elevate his interpretation above postclassical bravura. Despite Schumann's failure to realise the programme of *Ein Werk II* in performance, it nevertheless demonstrates his use of extra-musical abstraction to invigorate his musical imagination. In the same manner, Schumann's selection of incipits from *Flegeljahre* may inspire the performance of *Papillons*, even though the programmatic links are too vague and inconsistent for further hermeneutic enquiry.

Following a brief account of *Papillons*—its genesis, sources, programmatic identity and pedal markings—this chapter studies Schumann's imaginative virtuosity in a selection of pedalled environments from the work. By including discussions regarding the production of sound on contemporary instruments, the application of a variety of tone production techniques, the study of Schumann's experimentation with sound as part of the compositional process, as well as the use of extra-musical inspiration to pursue an artistic goal, the present investigations will draw on knowledge gained from previous chapters. Not only will the discoveries made in this chapter demonstrate Schumann's compositional use of sonority to realise an artistic ideal out of his reach as performer, it will also illustrate how the understanding of Schumann the pianist may benefit performers and listeners of his music.

***Papillons* op. 2: Genesis, Sources and Programmatic Inspiration**

Papillons was the outcome of a fragmented compositional process, and it was by no means bound to materialise as a unified cycle for piano solo. Thus, its twelve movements are in fact a collage of a variety of sketches: nos. 5 and 11 were originally conceived as early as 1828 as part of a set of eight polonaises for four-hand piano, and nos. 2, 6 and 7 were realisations of sketches for a planned set of six waltzes. In total, Daverio traces seven movements back to

3. Robert Schumann, 'Ein Werk-II', *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 33 (1831): 805–808.

Schumann's days as a student in Heidelberg, and identifies three additional movements which were dropped prior to the work's publication.⁴ Further, a number of projected movements from Schumann's notebooks never appeared in the drafted set, but were adopted later in *Carnaval* op. 9 (1834–35), *Bunte Blätter* op. 99 (1836–49) and *Albumblätter* op. 124 (1832–45).⁵ During the formation of *Papillons*, two notable features took shape, both of which are important to the performance of the work: a somewhat enigmatic programme related to Jean Paul's novel *Flegeljahre*, as well as a number of pedal markings added to the score prior to the publication of the work.

It was during the process of assembling *Papillons* that the idea of a musical programme emerged. At the time, Schumann's fascination with Jean Paul was at its highest, and by 1831 Schumann had read all of his major novels. In 1941, Boetticher's publication on Schumann's recently discovered copy of Jean Paul's unfinished novel *Flegeljahre* pointed to a possible relation between these two works, as Schumann had underlined passages from the penultimate chapter and added numbers next to these passages, corresponding to movements of *Papillons*.⁶ This chapter describes a scene from a masked ball, attended by the main characters, Walt Harnisch (dressed as a wagoner), his brother Vult (disguised as a female personification of Hope, or the figure of Spes) and a girl, Wina (dressed as a nun), whom they are both secretly in love with. As Walt arrives at the ball, he recognises Wina and takes her out for a dance. Jealously watching the two, Vult takes Walt aside and persuades him to exchange costumes. Wearing Walt's wagoner costume, Vult sets out to dance with Wina. He compliments her and is replied by a confession of love, as Wina believes that she is dancing with Walt. Realising that Wina is in love with Walt, Vult leaves the ball in fury. He feels defeated and decides to leave the city. As Vult departs in the morning, he plays his flute; half asleep, Walt hears Vult's tune, but does not realise that it is the sound of his brother disappearing from his life.⁷

Boetticher's discovery of the incipits turned out to be problematic, as Schumann's selections of passages were so ambiguous that these 'only served to confuse the matter'.⁸ Firstly, 'the excerpts made reference to only ten of the twelve pieces comprising *Papillons*', and the passages which Schumann had selected skipped several events that were important to the plot. Secondly, Schumann's 'musical representation seemed vague, inconsistent, and at times implausible'—not

4. John Daverio, *Robert Schumann: Herald of a 'New Poetic Age'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 80.

5. Robert Schumann, *Papillons*, op. 2, ed. Hans-Christian Müller, Wiener Urtext (Vienna: Schott/Universal Edition, 1973), i.

6. Wolfgang Boetticher, *Robert Schumann: Einführung in Persönlichkeit und Werk* (Berlin: Deutsche Robert Schumann-Gesellschaft, 1941), 611–613.

7. Jean Paul Richter, *Siebenkäs. Flegeljahre*, vol. 2 of *Werke*, ed. Gustav Lohmann (München: Hanser, 1959), 422–439; All translations from Daverio, *Robert Schumann*, 493–501.

8. Eric Frederick Jensen, 'Explicating Jean Paul: Robert Schumann's Program for "Papillons," op. 2', *19th-Century Music* 22, no. 2 (1998): 128.

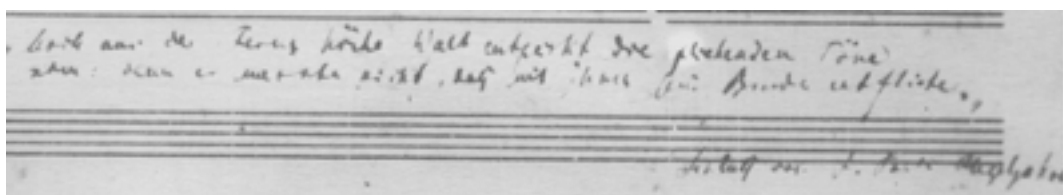


Figure 8.1. Motto from *Papillons*: 'Noch aus der Ferne hörte Walt entzückt die fliehenden Töne reden: denn er merkte nicht, daß mit ihnen sein Bruder entfliehe. Schluß von J. Pauls Flegeljahren.' (engraver's copy)

surprising considering its conception as a mosaic of shorter movements.⁹ However, the question of the two 'missing' incipits may pinpoint the stage at which Schumann conceived the idea of relating *Flegeljahre* to *Papillons*. Daverio suggests that the annotations appeared when the work was projected to comprise only ten movements. As Schumann was constantly experimenting with the order of movements, the final structure of the work could be slightly different than the sketch on which the annotations were based.¹⁰ For instance, at the bottom of one leaf, Schumann listed a sequence of ten movements for *Papillons*, another note lists an alternative—possibly later—order comprising twelve movements.¹¹ Nevertheless, the idea of connecting the two works remained with him: in the twelfth movement the *Großvateranz* (traditionally played at the end of a ball) fades away as the clock strikes six, quite literally referring to the masked ball drawing to an end. In the surviving engraver's copy (Figure 8.1) Schumann had even included the last sentence of *Flegeljahre* as motto for the entire work.¹² Although the motto was removed from the first edition, it challenges the notion that Schumann 'underlaid the text to the music, and not the reverse', as he wrote in a letter to Henriette Voigt in 1834.¹³ Instead, the link was made at such an early stage that *Papillons* underwent a significant amount of reworking after Schumann added his annotations to *Flegeljahre*.

Still, it is clear that *Papillons* is not a work of programme music. Not only does it lack a proper programme, defined by Liszt as a 'preface' to 'safeguard against a wrong poetical interpretation', but Schumann's attempts to conceal any ties to *Flegeljahre* would have the exact opposite effect.¹⁴ Even with the incipits at hand, the reader would be left baffled about the plot.

9. Jensen, 'Explicating Jean Paul', 128.

10. Daverio, *Robert Schumann*, 84.

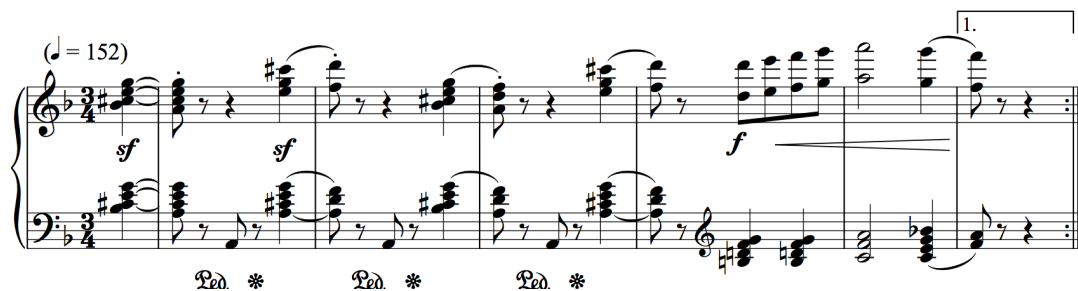
11. Robert Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch III' (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn, D-Bnu NL Schumann 15, 1832), 53, 88, accessed 1 April 2017, <http://digitale-sammlungen.ulb.uni-bonn.de/ulbbnhans/content/titleinfo/1043491> (hereafter cited as SB3).

12. Robert Schumann, 'Papillons', op. 2. Engraver's Copy (F-Pn 43762777, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 1831), title page.

13. Daverio, *Robert Schumann*, 84.

14. Roger Scruton, 'Programme Music', in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed 1 April 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/22394>.

In his selections, Schumann repeatedly focussed on the characters' emotions and the colourful descriptions of the scene, rather than reproducing the narrative in music. Thus, the text selections suggest that he wished to capture the moods and sentiments of *Flegeljahre* rather than to guide the listener through the work. At times, the music reflects Schumann's incipits closely, which has also been observed in previous scholarship. Daverio observes the 'oddly accented main theme' of no. 6, corresponding to Vult mocking his brother: 'For up to now—don't be offended—you've glided through the hall, horizontally as the wagoner and vertically as the miner, with good imitation-waltzes, but my friend, an English dance! and which one? It was devilish, not even Irish'.¹⁵



Example 8.1. Schumann: *Papillons* op. 2 no. 6, bars 1–6

Audio 25

Likewise, Jensen notes that Schumann makes a 'wonderful attempt at illustration' which 'begins with ponderous octaves, cleverly leading to a brief canon' to depict the scene where Walt is 'drawn to a giant boot that was gliding along, wearing and carrying itself'.¹⁶

15. Richter, *Siebenkäs. Flegeljahre*, 1076; Daverio, *Robert Schumann*, 83–84, 498. 'Deine Walzer bisher, nimm nicht die Nachricht übel, liefen als gute mimische Nachahmungen, teils waagrechte des Fuhr-, teils steilrechte des Bergmanns, im Saale durch, aber einen Englischen, Freund! und welchen? Ein teuflischer, nicht einmal ein irländischer wirts.'

16. Richter, *Siebenkäs. Flegeljahre*, 1071–72; Daverio, *Robert Schumann*, 494. 'Am meisten zog ihn und seine Bewunderung ein herumrutschender Riesenstiefel an, der sich selber anhatte und trug [...]'; Jensen, 'Explicating Jean Paul', 140.



Audio 21

Example 8.2. Schumann: *Papillons* op. 2 no. 3, bars 17–26

However convincing these references may seem, the links between text and music are more elusive in many places. Jensen therefore argues that the programmatic ties first and foremost are hidden within the style and language of the music, identifying four significant stylistic characteristics which appear to be influenced by Jean Paul: (1) Schumann's brief, 'almost aphoristic musical statements', (2) the 'mystery and concealed meaning' in the music, (3) his widespread use of self-quotation, and (4) the juxtaposition of contradictory temperaments, such as 'grotesque humour' immediately followed by 'elements of profound sentiment'.¹⁷ In addition, Reiman argues that the digressive style of Jean Paul's language is reflected in *Papillons* at a bar-to-bar phrase-structure level as well as at an overall cyclic level.¹⁸ While these observations may have some legitimacy, the question remains to which extent, if at all, the programme can be used as an aid in the study of this work. The answer may reside in Schumann's own practice as pianist.

As a performer, Schumann experienced the utility of the programme to invigorate the 'fresh spirit' of his playing. Amidst his 1831 crisis, Schumann crafted a programme to the Chopin Variations op. 2 in an effort to overcome the 'period of despair', in which 'only the dry, cold keys' remained. Unable to get past the second stage of his self-defined three-stage learning process, the programme turned his attention away from pure mechanics towards imagery. Linking characters of *Don Giovanni* to Chopin's work, this notion initially appeared during July: 'Eusebius said: Don Giovanni, Zerlina, Leporello and Masetto are the acting characters in the Variations'.¹⁹ Over the following months, this idea was developed into the review, *Ein Werk II*,

17. Jensen, 'Explicating Jean Paul', 133–134.

18. Erika Reiman, *Schumann's Piano Cycles and the Novels of Jean Paul* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 39.

19. Robert Schumann, 1827–1838, vol. 1 of *Tagebücher*, ed. Georg Eismann (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für

which was his first ever to be published and appeared in *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* on 7 December 1831:

At midnight I found him [Florestan] lying on the sofa with his eyes closed. "Chopin's variations", he began as if in a dream, "are constantly running through my head; the whole is dramatic and Chopin-like; [...] The variations, the finale, the adagio, these are indeed something; genius burns through every measure. Naturally, dear Julius, Don Juan, Zerlina, Leporello, and Masetto are the dramatic personæ; Zerlina's answer in the thema has a sufficiently enamoured character; the first variation expresses a kind of coquettish courteousness,—the Spanish grandee flirts amiably with the peasant girl in it. This leads of itself into the second, which is at once comic, confidential, disputatious, as though two lovers were chasing each other, and laughing more than usual about it. How all this is changed in the third! It is filled with moonshine and fairy magic; Masetto keeps at a distance, swearing audibly, without making any effect on Don Juan. And now the fourth, what do you think of that? [...] how wantonly it springs forward to meet the man, though the adagio [...] is in B^b minor, as it should be, for in its commencement it presents a moral warning to Don Juan. It is at once mischievous and beautiful that Leporello listens behind the hedge, laughing and jesting, [...] and that the B^b major, in full bloom, correctly designates the first kiss of love. But all this is nothing compared to the last; [...] that is the whole of Mozart's finale, popping champagne corks, ringing glasses! Leporello's voice between the grasping, torturing demons, the fleeing Don Juan—and then the end, that beautifully soothes, and closes all."²⁰

Avoiding any overt analysis of the work, this programme was not so much a narrative as a series of reflections on the moods and characters, and thus barely conveyed the plot of *Don Giovanni* in any cohesive way. Stefaniak eloquently describes it as 'a process in which Chopin's music and Don Juan's story merge into one dreamlike vision', and continues: 'by describing a syn-aesthetic state in which words, images, and music become one, Schumann's review models a specifically poetic state of transcendence'.²¹ Chopin would surely have scoffed at Schumann's programme; after reading a similar review by Wieck he was said to have found the idea of ap-

Musik, 1971), 351. 'Eusebius sagte: Don Juan, Zerline, Leporello u. Masetto, wären die handelnden Personen in d. Variationen.' (Hereafter cited as TB1).

20. Robert Schumann, vol. 1 of *Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker von R. Schumann*, 5th ed., ed. Martin Kreisig (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1914), 6–7; Martin Kreisig, ed., *Music and Musicians: Essays and Criticisms by Robert Schumann* (London: William Reeves, 1877), 6–7.

21. Alexander Stefaniak, "Poetic Virtuosity": Robert Schumann as a Critic and Composer of Virtuoso Instrumental Music' (PhD, Eastman School of Music, 2012), 95.

plying a programme to his Variations ‘really very stupid’.²² Schumann was well aware that the programme was subjective and had little in common with Chopin’s intentions: ‘I bow my head to this genius, his efforts, his diligence and his fantasy’.²³ There must have been a significant divide between the two contemporaries in their understanding of the work, and Stefaniak observes: ‘if Chopin designed the innovative features of his work to better dazzle his audiences with its novelty and difficulty, though, Schumann saw them as elevating the bravura variation-set beyond its conventional orientation towards accessible entertainment and giving a familiar musical commodity a transcendental touch of unfamiliarity and otherworldliness’.²⁴

As covered extensively in Chapter 2, Schumann had relied on extra-musical evocations as a catalyst of self-expression in his improvisations, going as far back as his pre-Wieck days in Leipzig. Challenged by the deepest crisis of his career, applying a programme for the Chopin Variations could indeed have injected much-needed inspiration to produce a spirited performance, similar to his extemporisations. Whilst the hand injury eventually kept this goal beyond his reach, Schumann’s *Werk-II*-idea still illustrates his use of a programme-like vision to invigorate his imagination. There are no traces of him disclosing his programmatic idea for the Chopin Variations during his 1831 crisis, as he was aware that it had little to do with Chopin’s vision for the work. Had he performed the work in public, the programme would most likely have remained concealed to the audience, but its presence inside his mind would doubtlessly have warranted a more vibrant, imaginative performance. Thus, what is important is the very presence of a programme and not the contents of the programme itself—or as Schumann wrote in his diary: ‘tones in and of themselves cannot actually mill anything which has not already been ground by the feeling’.²⁵ This means, in relation to *Papillons*, that it is perfectly in the Schumannian spirit to use the incipits as a source of inspiration for interpretative exploration, regardless of their authenticity in relation to the published work. Ignoring the incipits would, on the contrary, disregard an important aspect of Schumann’s approach to musical performance. Using the imagery of the *Flegeljahre* will therefore only enhance the imaginative depth of the sonorities created with the aid of the pedal.

22. Alexander Stefaniak, *Schumann’s Virtuosity*, Criticism, Composition, and Performance in Nineteenth-Century Germany (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2016), 68.

23. TB1, 351. ‘So subjectiv, meint’ ich, dies alles sey u. so wenig Absicht gewiß der Chopin gehabt hätte, so beug’ ich doch mein Haupt seinem Genius, seinem festen Streben, seinem Fleiß und seiner Fantasie!’

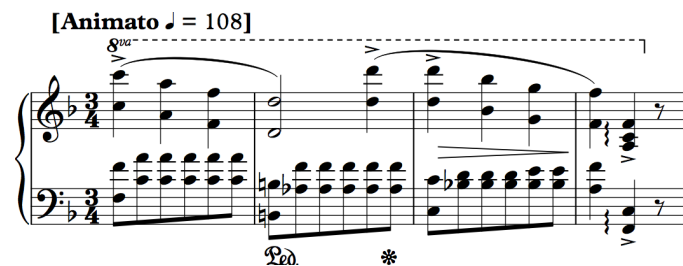
24. Stefaniak, ‘Poetic Virtuosity’, 89.

25. TB1, 333. For full quote, cf. Chapter 2 on page 83.

The Pedal Markings of Schumann's Early Works

The pedal markings of *Papillons* were added at late stage in the compositional process, at a point when several movements of the work were finalised to resemble their published counterparts closely: whilst all of the indications found in the published version also appear in the engraver's copy, only few markings are to be found in prior sketches.²⁶ On the surface, these markings demonstrate an approach to pedalling which is characteristic of Schumann's earliest piano works. Contrary to the general 'mit pedal' indications at the opening of each movement which became customary in his later piano works, *Papillons* sports only few pedal markings which, however, clearly instruct the depression *and* release of the pedal. Symptomatic of this sparing use of pedal markings, there are only sixteen in *Papillons*, spread across seven of the work's twelve movements. Even where textures clearly call for the use of the pedal, indications are still missing. Of these sixteen occurrences, four are actually groups of several pedal changes, with durations of up to three bars; the remaining places refer to single pedal markings.

That the pedal markings of this period are characterised by their scarcity is seen in the theme of the *Abegg Variations* where the only pedal marking appears towards the end, and in the opening of the *Allegro* op. 8 where there is a short pedal marking before the following *a tempo*:



Example 8.3. Schumann: *Abegg Variations* op. 1, Theme, bars 29–32

Audio 5

26. Schumann's sketches and fragments rarely contain pedal markings. For instance, none of the many sketches for the Piano Concerto RSW:Anh:B3 include pedal markings, although many passages imply its use. Pedal markings thus only appear in fragments of the first, fifth, seventh and twelfth movements of *Papillons*, cf. SB3, 51, 52, 81, 93.



Example 8.4. Schumann: *Allegro* op. 8, bar 1 (end)

In both cases, Schumann clearly wished to enhance the sonority for expressive purposes, but based on the score alone it is unclear how the music should be pedalled in places where indications are missing—whether Schumann specifically wanted the pedal to be used only in the instances where it had been marked or it should be applied at the discretion of the performer. While the performing practices of the Austro-German region in the 1830s supports the former, the indications in Schumann's later piano works may point to the fact that he was indeed accustomed to the relatively new technique of continuous pedalling.

Indeed, in comparison with the rapid developments of English and French piano making, the makers in Austria and Germany remained relatively conservative and were slow at adopting the latest construction methods and industrial advances (Chapter 4 on page 112). This also applied to composers and performers of the region, who adopted the pedal and its latest techniques at a much slower pace. Several distinguished pianists of the early nineteenth century—including Czerny, Moscheles, Hummel, and even Friedrich Wieck and later Clara Schumann—were extremely reluctant to use the sustaining pedal, and syncopated pedalling was, according to David Rowland, 'not universally accepted' in Europe in general by the end of the nineteenth century.²⁷ However, the emerging virtuosos of Schumann's generation relied heavily on the pedal: the 'three-hand technique' of which Thalberg's became famous for required continuous pedalling to sustain all three parts in the texture, and Liszt was well-known for his—to Clara Schumann's taste—excessive pedal use.²⁸ While Schumann only became familiar with Liszt and Thalberg later on, several works of his performing repertoire included careful pedal markings, which demonstrate a near-continuous use of the sustaining pedal, including the first movement of Kalkbrenner's Piano Concerto op. 61 and the Introduction of Herz's *Carafa Variations*. When Schumann was completing *Papillons*, he was therefore with certainty aware of the new, grander style of pedalling that was prevalent among his contemporaries in other parts of Europe.

By 1835, Schumann as a budding music critic was well aware of the musical developments

27. David Rowland, *A History of Pianoforte Pedalling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 118–120.

28. David Rowland provides accounts of Thalberg's and Liszt's use of the pedal in *ibid.*, 121–122.

outside his own region, and the general pedal markings of his later works definitely show a more relaxed attitude towards pedalling notation. Beginning with *Carnaval* op. 9, Schumann introduced a 'mit pedal' (or, occasionally, 'ohne pedal') marking at the beginning of a number of movements, possibly to leave any application of the pedal at the performer's discretion. This is a strong indicator that Schumann was so accustomed to continuous pedalling that he found it excessive to mark every single pedalling. However, he had possibly adopted this practice of implied pedalling much earlier, despite not having introduced the 'mit pedal' indication yet. As he wrote in the preface to *Paganini Study* op. 3 no. 3, the question of pedalling should be left to the 'discretion of the conscientious player'.²⁹ Thus, at the time of completing *Papillons*, the use of the pedal is often implied, even when there are no pedal indications. For instance, while Schumann marks no application of the pedal in *Papillon* no. 4 whatsoever, it can indeed be used during long portions of this movement. As the pedal suggested indications, marked in Example 8.5 on the following page, show, the general use of the pedal is quite 'modal': either is it used more or less continuously to obtain a suitably resonant sonority (bars 1–16 and 33–48), or it is left out completely for the sake of clarity and articulation (bars 17–32).³⁰ When the pedal is applied, the changes happen less frequently than on a modern grand piano. Firstly, due to the shorter decay of tone, the sound gets less muffled even with longer pedalling, and secondly the pedal mechanism is generally less responsive than on a modern instrument, making swift changes of pedal less feasible.

Even when pedal markings are absent, the pianistic textures may still require a fair amount of pedalling, and the performer is expected to use the pedal accordingly. The pedal markings are therefore reserved for special effects or sonorities which are not readily implied by the musical context. This approach is perfectly in line with masters that Schumann himself admired. When they do appear, the markings of these composers are mostly limited to effect pedalling, and it is indeed this style of indicating pedal use which Schumann also adopted. A contemporary example of the effect pedalling is found in one of Beethoven's most daring compositions in terms of the use of piano sonority, the Piano Sonata op. 109. In the first movement, with its concise sonata form, the second subject occurs in bar 9 at the *Adagio espressivo* tempo change:

29. Robert Schumann, *Études pour le Pianoforte d'après les Caprices de Paganini*, op. 3, 1st ed. (Leipzig: Friedrich Hofmeister, [n.d.]), 5. '[...] bei weiser Benutzung des Pedals, das dem denkenden Spieler überlassen bleibt.' (Hereafter cited as RS3-Hof); Translated in Robert Schumann, *Paganini-Etüden*, op. 3, ed. Ernst Herttrich (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2009), xvi (hereafter cited as RS3-Henle).

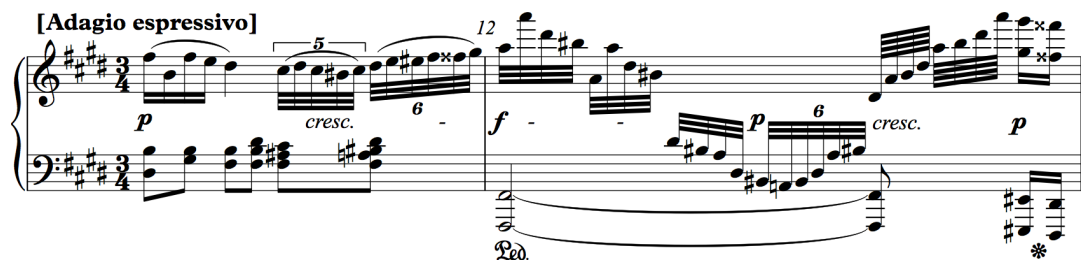
30. Due to the construction of the pedal mechanism, half-pedalling is generally not feasible on Viennese instruments from this period.

Presto ♩ = 108

Measures 1-40 of Schumann's *Papillons* op. 2 no. 4. The score includes dynamic markings such as *p*, *f*, *cresc.*, *decresc.*, *pp*, *sf*, and *ff*. Performance instructions include *ritenuto*, *a Tempo*, and *accelerando*. Pedal markings (*Ped.*) are indicated throughout the piece. A first and second ending bracket is shown over measures 11-15. An *8va* marking is present above measures 11-15 and 39-41.

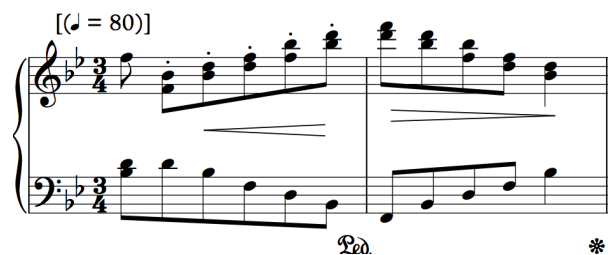
Audio 22

Example 8.5. Schumann: *Papillons* op. 2 no. 4. Pedal markings as performed in Audio 22.



Example 8.6. Beethoven: Piano Sonata op. 109, 1st mvt., bars 11–12

Only three bars into the *adagio*, in bars 12 and 13, the second subject reaches its dynamic climax with two grand arpeggiated chords that span most of the keyboard's range. To sustain the sonority of each of these arpeggiated chords and to amplify their roles as dynamic peaks, Beethoven has added a pedal marking under each of the bars, instructing the player to only release the pedal at the harmonic changes. When compared with the final bar of the fifth *Papillon*, it is clear that Schumann aims for an effect not dissimilar to Beethoven's, as Schumann's pedal marking sustains the sonority of the broken tonic chord, also spanning much of the keyboard (Example 8.7):



Example 8.7. Schumann: *Papillons* op. 2 no. 5, bars 25–26

Audio 24

This pedal marking is more subtle, as the effect provided by the pedalling underlines the difference between the unpedalled *portato* of the penultimate bar and the sonorous richness of the last bar. Also, note the placing of the pedal indication at the last beat of bar 25: when performed exactly as notated, the pedal catches the sound from the vibrations of the last note of this bar, creating a fluent transition from one sonority to another. Schumann settled on this particular indication shortly before publication; although the layout of Example 8.7 also appears in the engraver's copy, it was originally pasted on top of an earlier version, which offers a much different sonority:



Example 8.8. Schumann, 'Papillons (Engraver's Copy)', 5 (original)

Pedalled throughout, it combines broken thirds in the right hand with *staccato* in the left, both of which can be produced with a *carezzando* touch. Also note the swapped *crescendo* and *diminuendo* hairpins to indicate that the top notes at bar 26 must be played softest, going against the natural inclination to play melodic lines stronger towards their peak. Although Schumann eventually opted for a simpler solution, the elaborate nature of the earlier version attests to the care he took in crafting sonorous effects, and illustrates the extent of his sonorous experimentation—even at a late stage in the compositional process.

Thus, the inclusion of pedal indications were the outcome of an iterative process of sonorous experimentation, making them as integral to the work as the notes. Their placement within the work's structure attest to this. Although few in number, many of the pedal markings appear at places of structural significance, such as the introduction or reappearance of a motif, or a change of musical character—on a macro level. As Jensen points out, one of the main stylistic characteristics of Jean Paul's writing that Schumann mimicked is a widespread use of self-quotation.³¹ This applies not only to thematic or harmonic material, but also to sonority. This is evident in the opening movement, where the main motif is represented by the easily recognisable rising scale, played in octaves by the right hand:

31. Jensen, 'Explicating Jean Paul', 140. The examples of self-quotation to which Jensen refers are all themes and motifs originally used in other works, such as the reappearance of the ABEGG theme from op. 1 in op. 4, or the quotation of the *Großvateranz* from 'Marche des Davidsbündler contre les Philistines' in *Carnaval* op. 9.

Example 8.9. Schumann: *Papillons* op. 2 no. 1

Audio 19

This motif became something of an obsession for the composer, not only in this work, but also as demonstrated by his use of the same rising scale in the 'Florestan' movement of *Carnaval* op. 9. Its structural significance is underlined by its reappearance in important places of the score of *Papillons*: in the middle of the work (no. 7), transposed to F minor, and in the final movement, where it is heard against the sound of the *Großvatertanz*.

The pedalling marked towards the end of the opening movement (bars 12–14) may, at first sight, serve the simple function of assisting the player in sustaining a dominant seventh g in the left-hand part, which cannot be executed by the fingers alone (Example 8.9). However, this pedalling changes the colour of the dominant seventh within the musical texture, giving it extra resonance, while the outer voices become increasingly muffled. In the final movement, the link between the opening movement and the sonority of a pedalled dominant seventh becomes evident. Following the opening *Großvatertanz*, the rising-scale motif recapitulates the beginning of the work:

Audio 32

Example 8.10. Schumann: *Papillons* op. 2 no. 12, bars 13–22

The re-entry of this theme occurs in bar 21, but the sound of the pedalled dominant seventh in bar 20 anticipates this event, bringing the listener's attention back to the opening. Even without the following right-hand melody, this reference remains intact, due to this easily recognisable sonority.³² In other words, the sonority of the pedalled dominant seventh becomes a thematic motif in itself that is as easily recognisable as a traditional pitch-based motif. This note is by nature a strong leading note to the third of the tonic D major chord, which is resolved in the left hand in bar 22.³³ Thus, this note captures the development from dominant to tonic, or—in poetic terms—the metamorphosis from caterpillar to butterfly ('papillon').

The pedal markings of *Papillons* were thus carefully placed. The following examples will demonstrate how Schumann produced moments of heightened expression through the use of the pedal throughout this work. In these places, Schumann encourages the performer to invoke sonorous effects which not only require a careful balancing of touches and tone production techniques; they were the result of an extensive process of hands-on experimentation from Schumann's side, and opens up a wealth of interpretational possibilities to the performance, as demonstrated by the current discography.

Extended Pedal Markings: Romantic Distance

One of the most notable uses of the pedal in *Papillons* is the effect of distance created by the fading of sound over a sustained pedalling. Indeed, the notion of distance is a defining trait

32. There is another pedal marking on a dominant seventh G (no. 11, bars 12–13, as well as in the corresponding bars of the recapitulation, bars 48–49). Due to the fast tempo of this movement, the dominant seventh does not get to resonate long enough to make any kind of sonorous reference back to the opening movement, and it is therefore unlikely that these pedal markings carry any motivic significance.

33. The corresponding g in Example 8.9 on page 239 is similarly resolved by the left hand in bar 15.

of the work's identity. This is demonstrated by the last sentence of *Flegeljahre*, which Schumann chose as a motto for the entire cycle, in the Engraver's copy: 'Enchanted, Walt heard the vanishing sounds still speaking from afar: for he did not notice his brother vanishing with them'.³⁴ Extending Novalis' notion that everything becomes Romantic in the distance, Berthold Hoeckner claims that 'dying away into the distance, prose turns into poetry, speech into vocalise, language into music'.³⁵ As the choice of motto shows, this train of thought was clearly familiar to Schumann. Hoeckner makes the observation that Schumann—consciously or not—made a slight alteration to the motto so that 'aus der Gasse herauf' ('from the street') became 'aus der Ferne' ('from afar'), adding a feeling of poeticism to the motto.³⁶ In *Papillons*, there are two instances in which Schumann uses pedal markings to convey such a notion.

Most notably, the famous pedal marking in the final movement which spans no fewer than twenty-nine bars (bars 43–71; Example 8.11 on the next page), supports a three-layered texture consisting of the theme of the opening movement in the top voice, the *Großvatertanz* in the middle, and a pedal point D in the bass. When held for its full duration, this pedalling creates a mist of sound, in which the strings of the entire instrument are set in vibration. Combined with the long drawn-out *diminuendo* (marked at bar 59), this haze gradually dominates, while the two melodic lines, as well as the tonic pedal point D, seem increasingly distant.

As a series of fragments illustrate, the creation of this elaborate effect was the product of an iterative process, in which the textural layers were added one by one. An early fragment demonstrates Schumann's intent to reintroduce the first movement theme, gradually letting it disintegrate on top of the *Großvatertanz* (Example 8.12 on page 244). In this very early draft, there are no pedal indications to suggest that the player should sustain the pedal from bar 29 onwards (corresponding to bar 43 in the final version, Example 8.11 on the next page).³⁷ A later sketch suggests that it was the introduction of the pedal point D and Schumann's subsequent wish to sustain this note which triggered the addition of the pedal marking (Example 8.13 on page 245). Not only is the pedalled passage closer to the published version, it also includes the indication of releasing the pedal at the 24–25 barline (corresponding to the 69–70 barline

34. Schumann, 'Papillons (Engraver's Copy)', 2; John Daverio, 'Schumann's Ossianic Manner', *Nineteenth-Century Music* 21, no. 3 (1998): 501. 'Noch aus der Ferne hörte Walt entzückt die fliehenden Töne reden: denn er merkte nicht, daß mit ihnen sein Bruder entfliehe. Schluß von J. Pauls Flegeljahren.'

35. Berthold Hoeckner, 'Schumann and Romantic Distance', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 50, no. 1 (1997): 56. Hoeckner is sceptical about Novalis' use of 'Romantic' as a generic term, due to the multitude of applications that it covers. Thus, Romantic distance is an aesthetic category, 'no more ... nor less'.

36. Ibid., 66.

37. Several indicators suggest this fragment could feature an early incarnation of the coda. This is partly due to the misalignment between the right hand melody and the left harmonic structure in bars 43–44 (which explains the brackets at the barline to the scribbled out bar 44), partly due to the numerous harmonic errors in the right hand. These include the F^{#2} and F^{b2} on beats 1 and 2 of bar 57; C^{#3} on beat 2 of bar 58; E^{b2} and F^{#2} on beat 2 and 3 of bar 59; and C^{#3} on beat 3 of bars 64 and 66 respectively.

The musical score is for Schumann's *Papillons* op. 2 no. 12, bars 37-88. It is written for piano in 3/4 time, key of D major. The score is divided into systems of staves, with measures 45, 52, 59, 67, 77, and 85 marked at the beginning of their respective systems. The notation includes various dynamics such as *sfz*, *p*, *poco*, *a*, *dimi*, *nuen*, *do*, *ma p*, *pp*, *ppp*, and *ritardando*. There are also articulations like *Ped.* and ** Ped.*. The score ends with a double bar line and a final chord.

Audio 33

Example 8.11. Schumann: *Papillons* op. 2 no. 12, bars 37–88

in the final version), and the following coda was also added. Yet it is the addition of six bell-like a^2 s—possibly to signal the clock striking six as the masked ball is ending, in line with the work's original motto—from bar 58 (Example 8.11 on page 242), which gives the passage its sonorous depth. With the strings already in vibration, they resonate sympathetically with the a^2 s, creating an echoing effect across the instrument. The full bar of general pause even lets the sound of this passage resonate.

With its relatively short decay, an instrument from Schumann's time would naturally balance the three layers of the texture well. Indeed, the pedal point D fades away rather quickly, but the haze created by the interplay between the *Großvateranz* and the first movement motif never overpowers the six a^2 s. On a modern grand piano, it is still possible to make a reasonable rendition of this pedalling, and even though the longer decay and voluminous resonance of such an instrument invariably amplifies the haze of sound created by the two middle parts of the texture, one can still achieve a convincing effect without the need for interim half-pedal changes to clear the sound. Under these circumstances, it may be advantageous to play these two middle parts softer and slightly non-legato for clarity. To bring the accented top notes out, the a^2 s can be played with a more distinct attack from the key, and to round the pedalling off, the pedal may be released gradually during bar 69 to avoid any abrupt breaks in the sound. In terms of sonority, the contrast to the coda that follows is striking (bar 70 onwards); it is not pedalled, and the staccato markings in the left-hand part on the second and third beat contribute to an especially dry sonority.

Such dryness implied by the release indications may produce a sonorous effect as significant as the application of the pedal, and Schumann appears to have used it consciously. A notable example of this is seen in the fifth movement, in essence a slow polonaise (Example 8.14 on page 246). Although it should be noted that leaps are a characteristic of the polonaise genre in general (in which, to be sure, leaps requiring the use of judicious sustaining pedal are commonplace), Schumann's approach to pedal markings in this movement is noteworthy, especially at bars 13–15. Here, the pedal marking sustains the octaves in the bass to maintain the three-bar pedal point, and is therefore musically natural. It is, however, unclear why Schumann did not apply similar markings to the following two bars (14–15). One reason may be that he expected the player to apply the same pedalling to the following bars, but the two other instances where there are patterns of pedal markings speak against this: in the opening bars of the sixth movement, Schumann has taken care to notate all three pedal markings (Example 8.1 on page 229), even though they follow exactly the same pattern, and the same is true earlier in the fifth movement, where he has notated all four pedal markings for what appears to be similar arpeggiated chords (bars 6–8). It is therefore unlikely that he added only a single pedal marking in bar 13, assuming that the player would copy this pedalling in the following bars.

Con maesta

f *diminuendo* *p* *8va* *8va* *pp* *ppp*

Example 8.12. Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch III', 53, 90. *Papillons* op. 2 no. 12, bars 15–71 (fragment).

The musical score is for a piano and voice piece in 3/4 time, key of D major. It consists of six systems of music. The piano part features a continuous eighth-note pattern in the right hand and chords in the left hand, with frequent pedal markings (p.). The vocal line enters in the second system with the lyrics 'mi - nuendo -'. The score includes various dynamics: *mf* (mezzo-forte) at the beginning, *pp* (pianissimo) at measure 35, and *ppp* (pianississimo) at measure 42. Performance instructions include 'Ped.' (pedal), 'ritard.' (ritardando), and 'mi - nuendo -' (vocal line). The score ends with a double bar line and a final chord in the piano part.

Example 8.13. Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch III', 52. *Papillons* op. 2 no. 12 (fragment).

Perhaps the main purpose of this pedal marking is not to sustain the pedal point. In the engraver's copy, the indication showing when the pedal should be lifted is missing, making the pedal marking appear 'open-ended'. In general, Schumann made a number of corrections during the publication process, which included supplying the end mark to the pedal marking in bar 13, so that it eventually appeared in the first edition.³⁸ An 'open-ended' pedal marking would support the argument that the pedal was utilised to sustain the pedal point, but as the example shows, Schumann specifically wanted the pedal to be lifted much earlier. Because of the short duration of this pedalling, the sustaining effect that the application of the pedal provides is in itself only limited. However, the momentary blur of the sound produced by this pedalling, makes the following bars appear more distinct, the middle-part polonaise rhythm in particular. Similarly, the dryness of the coda in the *Papillon* no. 12 puts the previous musical events into perspective (Example 8.11 on page 242), making it appear even more distant, and highlights the last nineteen bars as an epilogue—an afterthought by the narrator: *der Dichter spricht*.

Another notable occurrence of distance reflected in the music is found in the tenth movement. Following the repeated 16-bar structure of long melodic phrases on top of a consistent accompaniment pattern (bars 25–40; Example 4.5 on page 127), the waltz is interrupted by fragmented three- and four-note arpeggios in the left hand:

Example 8.15. Schumann: *Papillons* op. 2 no. 10, bars 41–48

Audio 29

These eight bars seem to have been inserted out of nowhere, an abruptness heightened by the Neapolitan harmony at bar 45, the *pianissimo* indication and, most importantly, the four bars of uninterrupted sustaining pedal. Combined with the change of texture, this pedal marking signals a shift in the musical expression, which, carefully rendered, may evoke a feeling of distance

38. Schumann, *Papillons* (*Wiener Urtext*), i.

and uncertainty.

Sonority played a fundamental role to the process of shaping this digression from the waltz-idiom. Whilst the main waltz of *Papillon* no. 10 can be traced back to a fragment in E major, in which the melodic notes were to be played on the third beat each bar, thus anticipating the harmony of the following bar, Schumann had settled on a texture close to the published version by the time the passage corresponding to bars 41–44 were added:³⁹



Example 8.16. Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch III', 54. *Papillons* op. 2 no. 10, bars 41–44 (fragment).

In its earliest surviving version, the first four bars are merely repeated. However, a later sketch—which resembles the final version until the coda of the movement—includes the passage corresponding to bars 45–48:



Example 8.17. Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch III', 79. *Papillons* op. 2 no. 10, bars 41–48 (fragment).

This sketch is largely identical to what later became published, down to the *mf* at the beginning, the accents at bars 41–44 as well as the slurs. Still, the differences observed in bars 45–48 seem to have served a different expressive purpose: the dynamics were indicated as *p* and not *pp*, and rather than letting the music fade with a *diminuendo* as seen in the published version, it finishes with an accent on the last g³. Creating the effect of distance was therefore not simply a matter of applying the pedal at bars 45–48, but also to change the expressive instructions of this phrase entirely.

39. SB3, 88.

The outcome is a phrase which acts a contrast to the preceding four bars, and even though there is nothing in the score to indicate any tempo changes, this shift has clearly inspired fluctuations in the tempo in the discography of the work. In Sviatoslav Richter's 1962 recording of *Papillons*, he makes a slight *ritardando* before bar 41, and at the onset of bar 41 he immediately picks up the pace, making bars 41–48 quicker than the surrounding music.⁴⁰ Alfred Cortot takes an opposite approach in his recording from 1935 by going straight into bar 41 without taking time at all, but highlights the pedalled bars 45–48 with a tempo that gets increasingly slower.⁴¹ In both cases, however differently, the pianists infer a tempo change despite the lack of any indications: the pedal marking is not only about the pedal, but affects other areas of the musical rendition as well. As Audio 29 illustrates, the sonorous effect of distance can be further enhanced on a period instrument by applying the moderator pedal. The effect of the harmonic digression coupled with sonorous distance captures the incipit from *Flegeljahre* corresponding to this movement, in which Vult whispers in Wina's ear: '[He] let slip more and more Polish expressions—mere whiffs of the language: half-mad, sea-blown butterflies from a distant isle. His speech wafted down to Wina like that rare lark-song in late summer.'⁴²

Tactile Pedal Markings: Triggers of Imagined Sonority

In *Papillons*, Schumann's use of the pedal went beyond audible effects. The rising-scale motif emblematic to *Papillons* makes a reappearance in the seventh movement (this time in F minor) as a simple tune in the upper register of the keyboard, accompanied by a chordal texture with an articulation pattern resembling that of the previous movement; it resolves into a contrasting second section in A^b major which has a denser four-part texture. However, its two pedal markings (bars 8 and 18) are, if anything, the most enigmatic indications in this work:

40. Robert Schumann, 'Papillons', op. 2, on *Fantasy in C/Faschingsschwank aus Wien/Papillons*, perf. Sviatoslav Richter, recorded 1963, EMI B001IJRJTC, 2005, CD.

41. Robert Schumann, 'Papillons', op. 2, on *The Schumann Recordings*, perf. Alfred Cortot, recorded 1935, Andromeda ANDRCD5012, 1995, CD.

42. Richter, *Siebenkäs. Flegeljahre*, 1078; Daverio, *Robert Schumann*, 499. 'Spät am Ende des Tanzes ließ Vult im eiligen Händereichen, im Kreuzen, im fliegenden Auf- und Ableiten sich immer mehrere polnische Laute entweichen – nur Hauche der Sprache – nur irre, aufs Meer verwehte Schmetterlinge einer fernen Insel. Wie ein seltner Lerchengesang im Nachsommer klang Wina diese Sprache herab.'

Semplice (♩. = 58)

a. Bars 1–8

[Semplice (♩. = 58)]

b. Bars 17–20

Audio 26

Example 8.18. Schumann: *Papillons* op. 2 no. 7

These have a few things in common. Firstly, their durations are of one bar each; secondly, their appearance corresponds with the only two diminished seventh chords in the movement (on *f/b*); and thirdly, they seem, at first, to be included for practical purposes, helping the player to sustain all the notes across widespread chords. However, taking a closer look at the textures around the second of these two pedal markings, it is evident that the stretches are too wide for even the biggest hands to sustain all four parts of the texture as notated, and that a general application of the pedal in the second part of this movement (bars 9–24) is necessary. Due to the pace of the harmonic changes, it is quite logical to change pedal once a bar, just as Schumann has notated in bar 18. By analogy, it seems absurd that there is only one pedal marking in this section, as the texture requires general pedal use. Either he intentionally omitted this pedal marking on the assumption that the performer would apply the pedal anyway, or he forgot to add the markings to each bar.

To appreciate the meaning of the pedal marking in bar 18, it is necessary to understand the expressive purpose of the second half of the movement. According to Schumann's sketchbooks, he had originally a different section in mind:

Example 8.19. Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch III', 82. *Papillons* op. 2 no. 7 (fragment). Pedal markings as performed in Audio 27.

Audio 27

There are signs that this version was captured at a fairly early stage in the creational process. In this version, Schumann had not yet settled on the main key, still using B \flat minor and not F minor.⁴³ Except for the simplified left hand accompaniment, the first half of both versions are fairly comparable. However, the second half of the piece shows a greater level of experimentation. In both versions, Schumann achieved a high degree of contrast between the two sections in the binary form. In the published version, this was achieved mainly through a simple shift to the relative key of A \flat major, and a significant change of textures with no motivic resemblance to the opening half. Prior to this version, Schumann experimented with a solution where the opening motif is inverted in the left hand in bars 9 and 11, and later runs across both hands between bars 13 and 15. To achieve the effect of contrast between the two sections of the piece, the listener's attention is drawn towards the modulations of the second half, through a sudden shift to the major tonic via a secondary dominant on the last beat of bar 12. Still, the layout of piano textures is fairly rudimentary in the early version: the left hand part of the first half (bars 1–8) is limited to simple chords on the first beat of each bar, with the third of the chord missing

43. Schumann's attempts to find the right structure for *Papillons* demonstrates a consistent awareness of key relationship across movements, cf. SB3, 53, 88.

in bars 1 and 5; in the second half (bars 9–16), the accompaniment is based on the repetition of the same rhythmic motif, which appears heavy even with the *piano* marking in bar 9. Despite its apparent lack of musical detail, it attests to a concern with contrasting the two sections of the piece. To clearly render the difference between the two sections of the work, a performer may be inspired by Walt's two-part request featured in the incipit from *Flegeljahre* corresponding to this piece, in which Vult takes Walt aside, pleading with him to exchange costumes:

"If you've ever harboured any love for your brother," he began with a parched voice, taking off his garland and untying his woman's garb, "if the fulfilment of one of your brother's most sincere wishes, the importance of which you'll learn in twenty-four hours, means something to you; and if you're not indifferent to his experience of the smallest or greatest joys, in short, if you want to grant one of his most fervent entreaties: then get out of your clothes (that's half the request); dress up as Hope, and I'll take the wagoner's costumes (that's the whole of it)."⁴⁴

Like the majority of sketches of *Papillons*, this early version contains no pedal markings, and while bars 9–16 lend themselves to the use of the pedal (Audio 27) its use is by no means mandatory. However, for the upper part to be played *legato* in the published version of the corresponding bars (9–24), the pedal was a necessity. This circumstance can be dated back to Schumann's initial conception of the four-part texture of the final version, captured in another sketch—the only surviving fragment of this movement following Schumann's decision to settle on F minor as the main key of the movement:



Example 8.20. Schumann, 'Skizzenbuch III', 51. *Papillons* op. 2 no. 7 (fragment).

The use of the pedal seems integral to this short passage. Except for the biggest hands, the right hand is forced to make a leap from the c^1 – e^b1 quavers of the lower part to the f^2 of the upper part in bar 9, thus breaking the top line melodic *legato*. As this can easily be remedied by the pedal, this fragment was probably conceived with the pedal in mind, despite the obvious lack of indications. When the work eventually appeared in print, it is therefore no less surprising that

44. Richter, *Siebenkäs. Flegeljahre*, 1075; Daverio, *Robert Schumann*, 497. "Wenn du je Liebe für deinen Bruder getragen", begann er mit trockner Stimme und nahm den Kranz ab und lösete das Weiberkleid auf, "wenn dir die Erfüllung eines innigsten Wunsches desselben etwas gilt, dessen Wichtigkeit du 24 Stunden später erfährst; – und ist es dir unter deinen Freuden nicht gleichgültig, ob er die kleinsten oder größten haben soll, kurz wenn du eine seiner flehentlichsten Bitten erhören willst: so ziehe dich aus; dies ist die halbe; ziehe dich an und sei die Hoffnung, ich der Fuhrmann; dies die ganze".

Schumann omitted any general pedal markings in this movement. Yet, it remains unclear why he would add an indication in bar 18, when the performer is likely to apply the pedal anyway.

It is possible that this marking indicates a moment of heightened expression, without any changes in the actual application of the pedal. In a work mainly consisting of fast movements—waltzes and polonaises—the slower pace of this movement makes it the centre of gravity in terms of expressiveness. It is self-evident that the diminished seventh chords with pedal markings (functioning as the dominant's dominant in both F minor as well as A^b major) carry more expressive weight than the remaining harmonies in this movement—tonics, subdominants, dominants, parallels and Neapolitans—and Schumann has highlighted this by adding an accent to bar 8 and a *crescendo* hairpin marking to bar 18. Indeed, Schumann added pedal markings to passages of particular expression in other parts of the work. See, for instance, the pedal markings on two B⁷ secondary dominants in the tenth and eleventh movements:



Example 8.21. Schumann: *Papillons* op. 2 no. 10, bars 53–57

Audio 30



Example 8.22. Schumann: *Papillons* op. 2 no. 11, bars 32–34

Audio 31

Similarly to *Papillon* no. 7, these indications appear in passages which feature no other pedal markings. However, they are placed specifically where the pace of harmonic progression is momentarily broken, allowing for longer pedalling.⁴⁵ Still, this is not the case in bar 18 of the seventh *Papillon*, where the marking indicate a per-bar change already applicable throughout the second half of the movement.

45. As previously discussed, the harmonic changes in *Papillon* no. 10 encourages the player to change the pedal once per bar; in no. 11 the pedal would be changed on each crotchet.

Rather than affecting the use of the pedal, this indication could be rendered with an observable effect in the voicing or timing. Such an effect is seen in the sixth movement, where the second-beat pedal markings serves a rhythmic purpose (Example 8.1 on page 229). Applying the pedal as marked will doubtlessly make the second-beat appear more resonant. However, invoking the pedal in conjunction with the octave leaps in the left hand may delay the bass notes slightly, providing a sense of clumsiness, best described by the incipit highlighted by Schumann in his copy of *Flegeljahre*. Although more subtle, the effect of the pedal marking of *Papillon* no. 7 (Example 8.18 on page 250) is audibly noticeable in selections of the *Papillons* discography. Whilst notable pianists, including Yves Nat, Murray Perahia, Wilhelm Kempff and Vladimir Sofronitsky all play this bar without giving it any significance, the recordings of Sviatoslav Richter and Alfred Cortot stand out:⁴⁶ Richter delays the first beat of bar 18 to add expression to the diminished seventh chord, continuing with a slight *ritardando* throughout the bar.⁴⁷ Cortot takes an opposite stance by rushing through this bar 18, emphasising its importance by exaggerating the *crescendo*.⁴⁸ A more understated effect is found in Andrei Gavrilov's recording, where there are no obvious changes in timing or dynamics in this bar.⁴⁹ Instead, he brings out the semiquavers in the lower part of the right hand in bar 17 and 18. While these recordings represent inventive exceptions, there is no clear tendency in the discography to suggest any significant audible effect of this pedal marking.

Perhaps this pedal indication was not even supposed to be perceived by the listener at all. As discussed in Chapter 7 in relation to the 'removed notes'-technique, one fundamental aspect of sound production was the importance of the tactile feedback of playing, and that it in its most extreme capacity could replace the performer's experience of actual sound, as was the case with the ABEGG-motif, which appeared through the 'accentuated' release of each note, one by one. Likewise, the pedal assumes a similar function in this particular passage. While the pedal marking itself remains concealed to the listener, the pianist experiences its effect through the sensation of depressing and lifting the pedal. The physical manifestation of the pedalling thus triggers the performer's imagination—consciously or not—to hear a sonority which only

46. Robert Schumann, 'Papillons', op. 2, on *Ses Enregistrements 1930–1956*, perf. Yves Nat, recorded 1954, EMI B000BS6Y74, 2006, CD; Robert Schumann, 'Papillons', op. 2, on *A Portrait of Murray Perahia*, perf. Murray Perahia, recorded 1976, CBS Records B002MHEW1W, 1987, CD; Robert Schumann, 'Papillons', op. 2, on *Schumann: Piano Works*, perf. Wilhelm Kempff, recorded 1964, Deutsche Grammophon, Eloquence ELQ4806636, 2013, CD; Robert Schumann, 'Papillons', op. 2, on *Schumann: Papillons op. 2, Carnaval op. 9; Mendelssohn: Variations Sérieuses*, perf. Vladimir Sofronitsky, recorded 1952, Urania B001FPN7UE, 2002, CD.

47. Robert Schumann, 'Papillons', op. 2, on *Fantasy in C/Faschingsschwank aus Wien/Papillons*, perf. Sviatoslav Richter, recorded 1963, EMI B001IJRJTC, 2005, CD.

48. Robert Schumann, 'Papillons', op. 2, on *The Schumann Recordings*, perf. Alfred Cortot, recorded 1935, Andromeda ANDRCD5012, 1995, CD.

49. Robert Schumann, 'Papillons', op. 2, on *Carnaval/Papillons/Faschingsschwank aus Wien*, perf. Andrei Gavrilov, recorded 1987, Warner Classics 2435730065, 2005, CD.

exists inside the player's mind.



In *Papillons*, Schumann achieved what he was unable to reproduce in his performance of the Chopin Variations: the third stage of learning. As an improviser, he relied on the powers of extra-musical evocations to elevate his playing from mundane mechanics to an idealised, inspired state, experiencing imagined sonorities which no one but he could ever appreciate. However, this practice proved hard to transfer to his performances. Without significant progress on the Chopin Variations, he nevertheless attempted to apply a programme to the work based on Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, probably to invoke a similar experience to that of his extemporisations. Whilst the magic remained absent from his performance of Chopin's work, the 'Werk-II-experience' taught him more than shaping the 'dramaturgical arch' of a composition; he also learned about triggering the imagination through external inspiration.⁵⁰ Schumann kept any direct reference to *Flegeljahre* away from the score to *Papillons*, and even the work's motto which quotes Jean Paul was omitted from the published version. It is therefore impossible to assess the extent to which Schumann eventually relied on *Flegeljahre* as the work took shape. Nevertheless, his engagement with the novel clearly demonstrates his transient attempts to transfer a method of invigorating the spirit from his piano playing to his compositions.

It was not only in his use of extra-musical inspiration that *Papillons* linked Schumann's identities as pianist and composer. His experimentation with piano sonority—an important characteristic of his improvisations—was demonstrably integral to the compositional process. As source material for *Papillons* nos. 10 and 12 (Examples 8.11 to 8.15 on pages 242–247) testify, the extensive pedal markings were part of a process of refinement, in which other expressive elements were altered to adopt the sonorities invoked by the pedal. However, these indications were not intended as mere novelties; they were placed at structurally important points in the work. Similarly, Schumann used the pedal to strengthen internal thematic ties of *Papillons*, as in the last movement, where the pedal foreshadows the recapitulation of the opening theme by one bar (Examples 8.9 to 8.10 on pages 239–240). To successfully bring these pedal markings to life, the performer is required to not only depress the pedal, but use one's sonorous imagination to carefully balance the pianistic textures and attentively listen to the resulting sound. Thus, they encourage the player to go in Schumann's footsteps, exploring the sonorous resources of the instrument and the technical possibilities of varying the touch. This may lead to an enhanced, more vibrant performance, which can be appreciated by the pianist as much as the listener.

50. For more on Hans-Joachim Köhler's concept of the 'Werk-II-Experience', see on page 159.

These pedal markings were audibly different from the surrounding music: either they instructed the pedal to be sustained significantly longer than their musical environment, or, as is the case in Example 8.10 on page 240, the marking reintroduces the pedal after a *senza pedale* section. In this regard, the pedal markings of *Papillon* no. 7 makes for a special case. Buried within a texture which naturally requires continuous pedalling, the existence of this indication will not be heard by the listener, but is only experienced by the player due to the sensory perception of pressing and releasing the pedal. By this point in his compositional career, Schumann had clearly discovered the world of imagined sound as a means to reach the ‘true music’.

Conclusion

The previous chapters have explored Schumann as aspiring piano virtuoso, examining his engagement with the piano from his early lessons with Wieck to the composition of his first published works. Reaching the end of the investigations, it is appropriate to revisit the question which was formulated in the Introduction: how could a largely self-taught, relatively unsuccessful piano student become one of the greatest, most innovative, composers of the piano in music history? The answer resides in three main observations made in the past eight chapters:

- i Sound was a formative agent in Schumann's early musical development. Not only was it a core value to his piano playing, it was a principal means of musical expression.
- ii The lack of a public performing career was no barrier to his development of a deep understanding of the piano and its playing techniques. This involved the use of visible and invisible playing agents, as well an engagement with tactile feedback as part of the tone production process.
- iii Schumann took a pianistic hands-on approach to composition, which meant that the process of composing was inseparable from piano playing. The ideals which he was unable to live up to as performer found their realisation in his early piano compositions.

These points shall be elaborated briefly.

i. Sound was a formative agent in Schumann's early musical development. Not only was it a core value to his piano playing, it was a principal means of musical expression. Schumann grew up in a time when timbre, tone production and sonorities were fundamental values in piano making and performance: pianists or piano makers sought to produce or accommodate a beautiful tone, and the various sound ideals which dominated Europe throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were amongst the most important differentiators between the prevailing piano schools and ideologies. During the first decades of the nineteenth century, developments in the piano world accelerated. New inventions and innovations in piano making combined with the rise of postclassicism sparked a revolution in piano playing, which led to the development

of new techniques and sound ideals. However, in provincial Zwickau, Schumann knew little of the trends from the rest of Europe. He received no formal training and was largely left to his own resources. This meant that he knew practically nothing of practice strategies or routines, but was driven by a *con amore* approach of improvising and sight-reading.

In particular, extemporisation was central to his early musicianship. In the solitary hours of improvising, he felt drawn into ‘magic circles’ where he could express his innermost feelings through the piano, creating vivid soundscapes which existed only inside his own mind. Improvisation thus gave him a creative space where the music came to life, without having to worry about mechanics or technical execution. In 1831, Schumann described a similar experience from his piano practice when learning new works: ‘in the first [week] the mere life, fresh spirit and charm elevate the mechanics above themselves’.¹ This initial stage of the learning process was a state of inspired curiosity, which contained an element of ‘magic that will always remain the soul of art’; to Schumann this was fundamental to what he believed to be ‘true music’.²

ii. The lack of a public performing career was no barrier to his development of a deep understanding of the piano and its playing techniques. This involved the use of visible and invisible playing agents, as well an engagement with tactile feedback as part of the tone production process. To realise the ‘true music’, one first had to go through the hardships of the second stage, where ‘the blossom of fantasy gradually fades away’ and ‘only the dry, cold keys remain’.³ Previously, Schumann had successfully overcome this ‘period of despair’ but, following the decision to pursue a career as pianist, he found himself increasingly unable to live up to his own expectations. This led to a major crisis over the summer of 1831 which he never recovered from, due to a hand injury that eventually forced an early termination of his career. Whilst there is no conclusive evidence to establish what initiated the crisis, sources on his piano practice and early compositions suggest that his playing was suffering from a series of technical limitations, mostly relating to the right hand, the third finger in particular (Chapter 6).

Regardless of the crisis, it is impossible to gauge whether or not he had the personality, persistence or pianistic skills to make a career as pianist. However, it is important to separate his personality and general aptness for the profession from his understanding of the instrument, its sonorous possibilities and playing techniques. As demonstrated by Chapter 3, Schumann took a broad stance on the piano ideologies of the time with respect to tone production: he did not side with one specific school of playing, but would freely adapt to the playing style of any

1. Robert Schumann, 1827–1838, vol. 1 of *Tagebücher*, ed. Georg Eismann (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1971), 333. For original text in German, cf. note 71 on page 75 (hereafter cited as TB1).

2. Robert Schumann, *Paganini-Etüden*, op. 3, ed. Ernst Herttrich (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2009), xxii. For full quote, cf. page 82 (hereafter cited as RS3-Henle).

3. TB1, 333, 354. For original text in German, cf. note 71 on page 75.

of the leading pianists of his time. However, Chapter 4 highlights his exclusive knowledge of the Viennese pianos, which due to their action, construction and materials prioritised colour of tone over volume and power. On these instruments, the musical expression was largely a product of the minute shadings of touch, balancing of voices and clear articulation. To emulate the sound of the different schools of playing, one therefore had to rely on a finely controlled technique and a sensitivity to sound.

The admission to Wieck's class in 1828 offered Schumann the possibility of acquiring the necessary technical skills to realise a broad palette of tonal colours on the Viennese piano. Wieck's teaching supported this, as he found it paramount to the development of sound piano technique to first cultivate a beautiful tone and a nuanced touch. As Chapter 5 shows, this involved more than just pure finger action. Despite the prevalence of the still-hand principle, the acquaintance with Wieck introduced Schumann to a school of piano pedagogy where the whole body was considered part of the playing apparatus, and where early modern concepts—including the application of weight from the hand—were integral to piano playing. In particular, one aspect of Wieck's approach resonated with Schumann: the cooperation between mind and body in the tone production process. Wieck believed that the mind should prepare each note by imagining its sound coupled with the physical sensation of executing it. However, Schumann took this idea one step further by applying a similar method, which reversed the order of cause and effect. Whilst Wieck used the imagined physical sensation *before* playing a note to guide the actual production of tone, Schumann used the tactile feedback *after* striking a note to assess its quality. By purposely engaging the sensory system in the act of playing, Schumann added a new dimension to the experience of performing, giving the music both an audible as well as a physical representation. To the player this meant—in the most wide ranging interpretation of this concept—that the experience of the music was not dependent on any audible sound, but could exist solely as a physical manifestation within the performer's body. This was a sophisticated concept, which demanded a dextrous technique, a strong aural imagination, and, not least, a highly sensitive sensory system.

iii. Schumann took a pianistic hands-on approach to composition, which meant that the process of composing was inseparable from piano playing. The ideals which he was unable to live up to as performer found their realisation in his early piano works. Whilst the hand injury prevented Schumann from overcoming the second phase as performer, he nevertheless reached the third stage of 'true music' as composer. By utilising common symbols—such as *staccato* marks, accents and pedal indications—his notation conveys a variety of touches, tone production techniques and sonorous effects. These symbols were the transient result of an ongoing process of experimentation at the keyboard, which not only led to the freshness of spirit throughout the compositional process,

but continued to inspire new ideas beyond the publication of the work. In Schumann's works, the printed score does therefore not represent the work in a conclusive form, but only captures the state of his exploration of sound at a given moment in time. The expressive markings in the score are by nature as ephemeral as his improvisations.

This particular notion is important to the understanding of Schumann's concept of virtuosity. Virtuosity had always been integral to his musicianship. Since his adolescence, his repertoire had centred around bravura works of the Viennese and French postclassical traditions, and Schumann's later aspirations to become a pianist were driven by an ambition to become a virtuoso himself. More than any other contemporary musician, Paganini embodied Schumann's image of instrumental virtuosity. Not only did Paganini master his instrument from a mechanical perspective, the expressive and communicative powers of his artistry were subject to Schumann's idolisation as well. In other words, Paganini incarnated the amalgamation between the two ideals which formed 'true music': that of 'mechanics' and 'expression'. While Stefaniak suggests that Schumann's 'ideal of expression' contained an element of 'otherworldliness' which 'elevated' the bravura of the postclassical style to a kind of 'expressive virtuosity', there is little evidence to define this aspect of Paganinian virtuosity in a more tangible way.⁴ However, as the *Paganini Studies* op. 3 demonstrates, the continual exploration of sound seems to have been fundamental to it.

The *Paganini Studies* originated as a reimagination of Paganini's Violin Caprices, in which Schumann sought to render his arrangements as closely to the original as possible. To capture the spirit of the Caprices, Schumann utilised similar notational devices present in the *Abegg Variations*, including *staccato* marks and accents. These markings would encourage the player to employ a host of touches and tone production techniques for a playful, imaginative, yet expressive performance. They are idiosyncratically pianistic and therefore undoubtedly conceived at the piano, but the virtuosity they represent does not rely on the player's ability to impress through technical prowess. Instead, it is the inventiveness and virtuosity of the imagination which can dazzle. There is thus a layer of 'imaginative virtuosity' concealed under a musical surface of figurations and textures typical of the postclassical style. As such, the virtuosity in the *Abegg Variations* can be seen as two-sided: to the listener, the work is first and foremost a bravura set of variations—not unlike those of many of his contemporaries—but to the performer there is a virtuosic element in which the aural imagination and the production of tone converge.

In *Papillons*, Schumann juxtaposed the musical surface and the underlying imaginative virtuosity even more distinctly. Where the *Abegg Variations* reveals one type of virtuosity to mask

4. Alexander Stefaniak, "Poetic Virtuosity": Robert Schumann as a Critic and Composer of Virtuoso Instrumental Music' (PhD, Eastman School of Music, 2012), 89.

another, *Papillons* does not even attempt to emulate postclassical virtuosity in any conceivable way, but adheres to a Schubertian idiom of waltzes and dances. This rejection of postclassical virtuosity nevertheless conceals an elaborate artistic vision, in which the pedal markings are crucial. As surviving source materials suggest, these were the outcome of a process of sonorous experimentation, in which the application of the pedal induced changes to dynamics, accents and other expression marks. Most of these pedalling effects are perceptible to the observant listener, but in *Papillon* no. 7 Schumann added a pedal marking which can only be experienced by the performer. While the texture of this piece implies a continuous use of the pedal, Schumann has nevertheless included an indication to use the pedal which in essence makes no difference whatsoever to the audible result; it exists only as a musical event through the pianist's sensation of pressing down the pedal. Schumann's vision for *Papillons* is not fully perceivable to the listener, but is heard by the aural imagination and felt within the body of the player. The virtuosity which Schumann demanded from his performers in the *Abegg Variations* and *Papillons* combines the elements of the first and second stages of learning, or, in other words, the 'ideal of expression' with that of 'mechanics': extra-musical imagery and evocation of feeling realised through sound—imagined and real. The result is 'true music'.



This study has explored Schumann's engagement with sound during an early phase of his career. However, his views on the instrument—and, consequently, his use of sound—were by no means static. As already observed in the Introduction, there are signs that by the mid-1830s Schumann's utilisation of sound was becoming less tied to the mechanism of the piano (pages 7 to 17). This was part of a move away from the Viennese piano at first, later from the instrument at large. In a letter to Clara Wieck from 1838, he admitted to be 'longing' for an English piano, and asked if she would like to have such an instrument. Schumann obviously appreciated its preciousness, as he would reserve the piano for Clara, the concert artist, to use.⁵ At this time, Schumann was in Vienna, and was probably persuaded by an English piano which he encountered there. Following this, he bought a Härtel grand piano as a wedding present for Clara, and much evidence points to later purchases of grand pianos by French maker Samuel Wirth, as well as the Düsseldorf-based maker, Bernhard Klems.⁶

5. Hans Eijssink, 'Robert Schumann', in *12 komponisten en hun klavier*, ed. Jan Nuchelmans (Utrecht: Holland Festival Oude Muziek, 1988), 44. 'Mein Flügel wird nämlich bald zu schlecht, und ich muss an einen neuen denken. Da steht nun meine Sechsucht schon lange nach einem englischen. Has du diese gern? Daran zu komponieren (an den englischen) geht nicht—den brauchten wir dann später [...]' (17 March 1838).

6. Eijssink, 'Robert Schumann', 45–47; Kurt Hahn, 'Schumanns Klavierstil und die Klaviere seiner Zeit', in *Robert Schumann: Aus Anlass seines 100. Todestages*, ed. Hans Joachim Moser and Eberhard Rebling (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1956), 123; Gerd Nauhaus, ed., *The Marriage Diaries of Robert & Clara Schumann*, trans. Peter F. Ostwald (London: Robson, 1994), 253.

The same letter to Clara shows that Schumann was also re-evaluating his belief in the piano as his ideal vehicle of musical expression, as he thought that the piano was ‘getting too limited’ to him.⁷ Up to this point, all of Schumann’s published music was written for solo piano, but from around 1840, piano music began to play a less prominent role in his life. Firstly, Schumann turned his interest to the song, the orchestra and to chamber music, and the piano was rarely used as a solo instrument. Secondly, whereas the piano had been a central tool in Schumann’s compositional work, he would gradually release himself from the instrument, and from 1851 there was not even a piano in his workroom.⁸ The prevailing idiom for Schumann’s compositions became the score rather than the piano. It will be for a future study to fully evaluate how his gradual disassociation from the instrument—first as a performer, later as a composer—affected his approach to piano sound.

It is thus in his earliest compositions that Schumann’s music was at its most intimate with the instrument and pianist. Barthes’ reflections on playing Schumann’s piano music captures this proximity between the composer and performer:

Schumann lets his music be fully heard only by someone who plays it, even badly. [...] It is because Schumann’s music goes much farther than the ear; it goes into the body, into the muscles by the beats of its rhythm, and somehow into the viscera by the voluptuous pleasure of its melos: as if on each occasion the piece was written only for one person, the one who plays it; the true Schumannian pianist—*c’est moi*.⁹

As this study has shown, these observations are at least as pertinent to the *Abegg Variations* and *Papillons* as they are to *Carnaval*, *Davidbündlertänze*, *Symphonic Etudes*, *Kreisleriana* and the other major works from the 1830s. In these early works, Schumann transcended the constraints of technical execution to realise his imagination, which he had been unable to do as a pianist. As he wrote in August 1831 when his crisis was at its peak: ‘now I will go away into my silent art: because I know where it is, it must therefore also be attainable; if I only had no fingers, and could play with my heart on other hearts’.¹⁰ It was thus in the capacity as composer he could play on the ‘hearts’ of his performers. As Barthes points out, his works went ‘much farther than the ear’ and ‘into the body’ of the player, whether the paradoxical non-existing reappearance of the ABEGG-motif in the ‘Finale alla fantasia’ which only materialises as a tactile sensation by the player, or the enigmatic pedal marking of *Papillon* no. 7 which serves no audible purpose,

7. Clara Schumann, ed., *Early Letters of Robert Schumann*, trans. May Herbert (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1888), 268 (hereafter cited as Letters).

8. John Worthen, *Robert Schumann: Life and Death of a Musician* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2007), 322.

9. Roland Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms*, trans. Richard Howard, *Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1985), 295. Full quote, cf. pages 11 to 12.

10. TB1, 360. ‘Nun will ich denn fortgehn in meiner stillen Kunst; da ich weiß, wo sie ist, so muß sie auch zu erreichen seyn; hätt’ ich nur keine Finger und könnte mit meinen Herzen spielen auf anderen!’ (14 August 1831).

but which triggers a change of musical expression felt by the right foot. These features were only possible for the performer to perceive, and when Barthes felt the music as being written exclusively for him, it is not only because the performer is the ‘true Schumannian pianist’: the true *audience* of Schumann’s music—*c’est moi*, the pianist.

In this way, composition became Schumann’s magician’s act. It was in this ‘silent art’ that he could produce music which will never exist anywhere outside the minds and bodies of the initiated, and while Schumann undoubtedly took many of the ideas that inspired him—his musical self-references, poetic allusions—to his grave, it is as performers that we can experience his piano music as fully as possible. This thesis therefore stands as an encouragement to anyone interested in understanding Schumann the pianist to experience his music from the keys of the piano, and be drawn into the ‘magic circles’ of his extraordinary musical imagination.

Appendix: Pagination in Schumann's *Skizzenbücher*

In the various publications of Schumann's sketch books ('Skizzenbücher'), a host of pagination systems have been employed. To resolve any potential confusion, the table on page 267 provides an overview of all sketch book pages which have been cited in this thesis, along with page numbers according to the different numbering schemes currently in use.

Skizzenbuch I

Of Schumann's five sketch books, only the first contains continuous autograph pagination.¹ Subsequently, a number of folios were removed, causing breaks in the numbering sequence.² To restore continuity in the pagination, new numbers were later added by pencil by an unknown author.

In the two present publications of *Skizzenbuch I*, different approaches to pagination have been taken. Wendt has adopted Schumann's original page numbers in the *Neue Schumann Ausgabe*, whilst the Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn (ULB) refers to the pencil-marked page numbers in their table of contents.³ In addition, ULB provides an alternative pagination in the page viewing window, which is based on a count of all pages in the document; this includes front and back cover, as well as blind folios. In the page selection dropdown menu on the ULB website, page numbers are provided with the total page count in square brackets, followed by the pencil-marked page numbers. For instance, the page numbered as '105' by Schumann, is presented as '[103] 101'.

1. This is the page numbering written with ink.

2. The intricacies surrounding the removal of folios is described in further in detail by Wendt, cf. Robert Schumann, *Studien- und Skizzenbuch I und II*, vol. 1 of *Neue Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Matthias Wendt, Neue Gesamtausgabe 3 (Mainz: Schott, 2011), 259.

3. The table of contents is found at <http://digitale-sammlungen.ulb.uni-bonn.de/ulbbnhans/content/structure/1043463>.

Skizzenbuch III

Schumann's third sketch book did not originally contain pagination. However, as is the case with *Skizzenbuch I*, numbers were added with pencil; these have been adopted by Wendt in the *Neue Schumann Ausgabe* and are used in ULB's table of contents.⁴ This scheme is also cited in this thesis.

Skizzenbuch V

At the time of writing, Schumann's fifth sketch book has not appeared in print as part of the *Neue Schumann Ausgabe*. Similarly to *Skizzenbuch III*, the page numbers marked with pencil has been adopted in this thesis, and are used in the table of contents at the ULB website.⁵

4. The table of contents is found at <http://digitale-sammlungen.ulb.uni-bonn.de/ulbbnhans/content/structure/1043491>.

5. The table of contents is found at <http://digitale-sammlungen.ulb.uni-bonn.de/ulbbnhans/content/structure/1043629>.

<i>Skizzenbuch</i>	Autograph	Pencil	Page Count	Cited on
I	4	4	6	page 104
I	13	13	15	page 105
I	17	17	19	pages 134, 137, 145 and 150 and 151
I	23	23	25	page 177
I	25	25	27	page 158
I	26	26	28	page 158
I	29	27	29	page 158
I	30	28	30	page 158
I	32	30	32	page 170
I	37	35	37	page 192
I	53	51	53	pages 102, 103 and 158
I	54	52	54	pages 102, 103 and 158
I	55	53	55	page 158
I	56	54	56	page 158
I	65	63	65	pages 102, 103 and 158
I	66	64	66	pages 102, 103 and 158
I	72	70	72	page 192
I	73	71	73	page 158
I	74	72	74	page 158
I	75	73	75	pages 158 and 159
I	76	74	76	page 158
I	78	76	78	page 158
I	79	77	79	pages 102 and 103
I	87	85	87	pages 158 and 195
I	88	86	88	pages 158 and 195
I	93	91	93	pages 78, 82, 138, 175 and 180
I	94	92	94	pages 138 and 193
I	95	93	95	page 138
I	96	94	96	page 138
I	97	95	97	page 177
I	104	100	102	pages 166 and 167
I	105	101	103	pages 109 and 134
I	106	102	104	pages 92 and 134
I	107	103	105	pages 134, 148 and 167
III	—	10	18	page 158
III	—	17	25	page 158
III	—	51	59	pages 233 and 252
III	—	52	60	page 233
III	—	53	61	pages 228, 244 and 251
III	—	54	62	page 248
III	—	60	68	page 108
III	—	79	87	page 248
III	—	81	89	page 233
III	—	82	90	page 251
III	—	87	95	page 198
III	—	88	96	pages 228 and 251
III	—	90	98	page 244
III	—	93	101	page 233
V	—	13	19	page 158
V	—	78	84	page 194

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