

DLA Thesis

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Dramatic elements in Robert Schumann's a capella
choral works
and ballads with orchestral accompaniment

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I. The research's antecedents

The first comprehensive biography on Robert Schumann in Hungarian language was published in 1958, written by György Kroó.¹ Literature in German is obviously more detailed. Peter Gülke's *Robert Schumann – Glück und Elend der Romantik*² and Martin Geck's *Robert Schumann – Mensch und Musiker der Romantik*³ definitely stands out from the numerous biographies. I based my thesis upon Martin Geck's and György Kroó's works.

Also published in 1958 was a collection of Schumann's letters, edited by Sándor Jemnitz⁴. Previously, a collection of Schumann's publications on music was issued in 1943, by the title *Pillangók és karnevál*.⁵ Fortunately a volume of the author's collected writings was published in 2020 too.⁶ I

¹ Kroó György: *Robert Schumann*. (Budapest: Bibliotheca, 1958.)

² Peter Gülke: *Robert Schumann – Glück und Elend der Romantik* (Wien: Zsolnay Verlag, 2010.)

³ Martin Geck: *Robert Schumann. Mensch und Musiker der Romantik*. (München: Pantheon-Verlag, 2012)

⁴ Jemnitz Sándor (szerk.): *Schumann levelei* (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1958.)

⁵ Robert Schumann: *Pillangók és karnevál* [Ford.: Keszi Imre] (Budapest: Officina, 1943.)

⁶ *Schumann – Válogatott írások* (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa, 2020.)

consulted these works regularly, although I mostly used literature in foreign language for my dissertation. *Schumann Handbuch*,⁷ a basic volume on Schumann and, in addition, a collection of studies *Robert Schumann. Interpretationen seiner Werke*,⁸ which contains important information on Schumann's complete works based upon different views. The previous one is keen at times on analysis and occasionally deals with the conditions that surrounded the birth of a piece in a more detailed manner, the latter concentrates mainly on data concerning birth and presentation in time and space. Common information is frequent in the texts.

As for literature background I mainly leaned upon two Hungarian publications – Zoltán Greguss's studies on ballads⁹ and *The evolution of German ballad*, by István Schwerer - both quite old publications. Greguss's dissertation was first issued in 1865 while István Schwerer's in the 1910s.¹⁰

⁷ Ulrich Tadday (szerk.): *Schumann: Handbuch*. Stuttgart, (Weimar: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2006.)

⁸ Helmut Loos (szerk.): *Robert Schumann. Interpretationen seiner Werke II*. (Lilienthal: Laaber-verlag, 2005.)

⁹ Greguss Ágost: *A balladáról*. (Budapest: Franklin-társulat, 1907.)

¹⁰ Schwerer István: *A német ballada fejlődése. Bölcsészeti értekezés*. (Budapest: Buschmann F. utódai könyvnyomdája, évszám hiányzik.)

The reason why I used such old sources is because I couldn't find any studies which would process this topic with such depth.

Historic and philosophic core was based upon *Romantika. Egy német affér* by Rüdiger Safranski,¹¹ who leads us through how historic events influenced different ideologies and explains interaction between literature and philosophy.

II. Sources

Beside the works mentioned above, a study by Heike Jacobsen, *Robert Schumanns Chorballeden nach Texten von Ludwig Uhland* was extremely important for my dissertation.¹² Methodally analysing Schumann's choir ballad op. 116 entitled *Der Königsson*, based upon key aspects such as allegories behind the pieces, led me to the system of symbols in German fairy tales and to Fried Lenz's *Bildsprache der Märchen*.¹³ Choral ballads have never been explored with such depth previously, as

¹¹ Rüdiger Safranski: *Romantika. Egy német affér*. (Budapest: Európa Könyvkiadó, 2010.)

¹² Heike Jacobsen: *Robert Schumanns Chorballeden nach Texten von Ludwig Uhland*. Inaugural-Dissertation. Heidelberg: Ruprecht Karls Universität, 2001. (Kézirat)

¹³ Friedel Lenz: *Bildsprache der Märchen*. (Stuttgart: Verlag Urachhaus, 1976.)

far as I know, but Elizabeth Mott provides important additional information on all four ballads in her PhD dissertation entitled *The choral works of Robert Schumann*. Peter Jost's comparative study on Wagner's *Lohengrin* and Schumann's *Genoveva* were also extremely important factors for the thought trajectory which defines my dissertation.¹⁴

III. Method

Before writing my essay I had been translating from different pieces of German music literature for years. György Kroó's biography was an important starting point, but I felt that a more recent source was necessary, so I translated the book that Martin Geck had written on Schumann. It was Geck who directed my attention to the different types of souls opera authors might have and he also quotes Peter Jost's study in his book. I thought it was important to position Schumann's dramatic works in the context of romantic ideologies, so I extended my research to the historic

¹⁴ Peter Jost: „Schumanns und Wagners Opernkonzeptionen. *Genoveva* versus *Lohengrin*. In (szerk.: Ulrich Tadday): *Der späte Schumann* [Ulrich Tadday: *Musik Konzepte. Neue Folge. Die Reihe über Komponisten. Sonderband.*] (München: Richard Boorberg Verlag, 2006.)

and philosophical background. This explained why politics and history turned Schumann's attention towards dramatic genres.

While analysing I strongly relied on Schumann's choir works, which I already knew and had been exploring deeply. However, most of the analysed choir works were put in focus during the analysis. As in my previous research, I concentrated mainly on the relation between music and lyrics. My goal was to compare the choir work with music written by different composers on the same text.

IV. Results

At the end of my University studies, during my final concert I conducted two a capella choral works by Schumann: *Schön-Rohraut* (op. 67/2) and *John Anderson* (op. 67/5). Another piece I knew well was *Der Wassermann* (op. 91/3), a momentum for female choir. The tiny dialogues, witty musical solutions and elaborated composition turned my attention towards the dramatic side of Schumann's choral works. Schumann's music is usually analysed from its lyrical side so this approach promised to be a new one. Apart from mentioning dramatic elements, my intention was to put into context choral works featuring

dramatic elements. Also I tried to highlight choral ballads, which are virtually unknown in Hungary. This way dramatic genres came into focus. Among my goals was to look for the reason why Schumann turned his attention towards them.

V. Documentation of the activities related to the dissertation's subject matter

Concerts by Female Choir Chorus Matricanus presenting works by Schumann, conducted by Anna Fúri:

2015 Gorizia, International Choir Competition, category: romantic

Franz Liszt. *O salutaris hostia*

Robert Schumann: *Der Wassermann*

3rd October 2015 Százhalombatta Choir Festival

Schumann: *Der Wassermann*

Franz Liszt. *O salutaris hostia*

Zoltán Kodály: *Táncnóta*

Lajos Bárdos: *Magos a rutafa*

24th November 2018, Százhalombatta

Chorus Matricanus 30 Anniversary Concert

Benjamin Britten: *Three Christmas Carols*

Béla Bartók: *Cipósütés, Ne hagyj itt!, Resteknek nótája,*

Csujogató

Schumann op. 91/1-5

Schubert: *Psalm no. 23* (conductor: Zoltán Czier)

3rd July 2019, Dresden

Concert by Chorus Matricanus and Fritz Wolf Mixed Choir

Program by Chorus Matricanus:

Mendessohn: *Hebe deinen Augen auf*

Brahms: *O bone Jesu*

Schumann: *Romanzen und Balladen op. 91/1-5*

Bartók: Female Choirs

Kodály: *Dance Song*

Karai: *Sárközi karikázó*

Common works:

Bárdos/Eric Weisheit: *Kocsi, szekér*

Koilev: *Polegnala e Tudora*

Schumann/Brahms : *Wenn ich ein Vöglein wär*

Night of Choirs 15th October 2020, Budapest

F. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy: *Hebe deine Augen auf*

Johannes Brahms: *O bone Jesu*

Robert Schumann: *Romanzen und Balladen op.91/1-5.*