

DLA Theses

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ROBERT SCHUMANN: FANTASY OP.17.

Interaction of performing praxis and analysis

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- **Antecedents of the Research**

As the topic of my dissertation, I chose one of the most significant and exciting pieces of work in piano literature. Schumann wrote “Durchaus fantastisch und leidenschaftlich vorzutragen” at the top of the first movement. But what does “Durchaus fantastisch” actually mean? What is Fantasy as a genre in itself? These are the questions that underpin my research in the course of the analysis of the piece.

Owing to the very form, composition, and structure of the piece, the function of the instruction “Durchaus fantastisch” is self-explanatory as the piece could not be interpreted in any other way. Its message even appears somewhat meaningless, as the question one must answer is what the performer has to do to add to the piece’s fantastic nature present in the notation.

I attempt to give clear and self-explanatory suggestions to resolve this issue, even if based on a subjective approach. My attempt is supported by a close reading of the phenomena present in the music itself and by features found through analysis and realised in the performer’s interpretation of the piece. Through these methods, I attempt to combine theoretical and practical aspects.

This dissertation aims to articulate the following principles of performance: the enactment of speech likeness, manifestation of prosody in the notes, clarity of articulation and time management, making clear the novel form of the piece, structuring the relations of emphasis and the transparency of texture. The dissertation may present itself as unconventional as there is a high emphasis on conclusions drawn from my own performing and teaching experiences. However, it seems to me nonetheless worthwhile to collate my experiences of studying the score.

This is not a conventional analysis of the piece, instead an observation of the sequentiality of its phenomena, keeping in mind how analysis and performance complement each other. In no way is this intended to be a handbook for the

interpretation of the piece, instead a collection of possibilities of interpretation thought of by myself.

I quote examples from the following academic literature, expanded on by my observations in instances where they are necessary to make my points or reveal my thoughts on specific possibilities of interpretation.

- **Sources**

For my analysis, I drew help from the following sources:

Daverio, John: Schumann's „Im Legendenton" and Friedrich Schlegel's „Arabeske".

19th-Century Music 11/2 (1987, Autumn): 151.

Jensen, Eric Frederic: Schumann. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. 163-164.

Kossmaly, Carl: „Ueber Robert Schumann's Claviercompositionen".  
Allgemeine

Zeitschrift für Musik (1844. Januar): 20.

Marston, Nicholas: Schumann Fantasie, Op. 17. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. 68.

Rozanski, Mark Rudy: Thematic Unification in Robert Schumann's Fantasia, Op. 17.

DMA disszertáció, The University of British Columbia, 1988. 35.

Schleuning, Peter: „Ein einziger Liebesschrei”—„An die ferne Geliebte”. Der erste

Satz von Schumanns Klavierfantasie Op. 17. In: Hanns-Werner Heister és Hartmut

Lück (szerk.): Musik, Deutung, Bedeutung: Festschrift für Harry Goldschmidt zum 75.

Geburtstag. Dortmund: Edition V im Pläne-Verlag, 1986. 80-85.

Schumann, Robert: Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke, Serie III/4. Mainz: Schott Music

GmbH, 2016. 86.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Schlage nur eine Weltsaite an, Briefe. 1828-1855. Frankfurt am

Main und Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2006. 274.

\_\_\_\_\_, Schumann, Clara: Jugendbriefe. Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel,

1886

During the comparative examination of the content of the score, I used the following editions:

The original printed fair copy of the Fantasy is located in the National Széchényi Library in Budapest.

(Stichvorlage), (catalogue number: Ms. Mus. 37.),

Breitkopf und Härtel, Leipzig, 1879

Henle Verlag, München, 1983

Robert Schumann: Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke, Serie III/4., Schott Music GmbH, Mainz, 2016

### **III. Research Method**

The autograph of a fair copy located in the music collection of the National Széchényi Library in Budapest appended with amendments and significant changes by Schumann's hand. Its examination and comparison with the forementioned editions were an interesting and exciting working process. The different placings of the dynamic and emphasis signs raised several questions related to performance.

The corrections and entries added by Schumann, which were only partially or incorrectly included in the editions, indited a list of possible solutions for the researcher.

The presentation, evaluation, and interpretation of these corrections and entries made from the perspective of a performer and teacher with many years of experience served as the main body of my dissertation.

### **IV. Research Results**

In the introduction of this dissertation, I raised the question; what does a Fantasy really mean? The following thoughts are my possible answers:

“Generally we can argue that a Fantasy is a genre in which elements are placed side by side, varied, transformed, partially or wholly expanded, reduced, or reversed. However, these acts are not done in a conventional order or structure.

There is no solid boundary between the conventional and the unconventional. However, an inner connection and order are always present. The role of the performer is to convey this unconventional order. The analysis and close reading of the piece’s texture, motifs, and harmonic development and their sequentiality have made it clear that this Fantasy is a deeply thought through, and mindfully composed piece.

Schumann’s poetic and artistic world lives and breathes in such complete symbiosis with the structural character of the Fantasy, that to this day the emotional palette created by the amalgamation of the two has a great effect on both the performer and the audience.

## **V. Concerts related to the topic of the dissertation**

October 2012 Budapest, F.Liszt Academy of Music, Great Hall. Schumann: Fantasy Op.17

November 2017 Shanghai, International Piano Festival. Schumann: Fantasy Op.17