Sunrise Music Series (2010/11)

at the First Unitarian Society of Westchester

Robert Schumann - The Piano Music

Commemorating the 200th Anniversary of the Composer's Birth

Fantasy
Carnaval
Papillons
Arabeske
Novellettes
Humoreske
Kreisleriana
Blumenstück
Kinderszenen
Fantasiestücke
Symphonic Etudes
Davidsbündlertänze
Sonata No. 1 in F# minor
Sonata No. 2 in G minor
Sonata No. 3 in F minor (Concerto w/o Orchestra)
Faschingsschwank aus Wien
Toccata
Romances
Waldszenen
Gesänge der Frühe

Presented in 7 Programs

November 21, 2010 – January 9, 2011

Alan Murray, piano

The Sunrise Music Series (2010/11)

The ***Sunrise Music Series*** is a series of early morning musical offerings hosted by the First Unitarian Society of Westchester with the intention of providing members and visitors from the community with an hour of quality weekly listening in a contemplative setting, surrounded by the natural beauty visible from the Society's sanctuary room. The performances are intended to be informal but well-prepared offerings, as an interim step toward concert preparation.

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Robert Schumann – *The Piano Music*

Fantasy, Carnaval, Arabeske	Nov 21
Kreisleriana, Symphonic Etudes, Toccata	Nov 28
Sonata #1 in F-sharp minor, Davidsbündlertänze	Dec 5
Sonata #2 in G minor, Humoreske, Papillons (Butterflies)	Dec 12
Sonata #3 in F minor (Concerto without Orchestra), Fantasiestücke (Fantasy Pieces)	Dec 19
Faschingsschwank aus Wien (Carnival of Vienna), Kinderszenen (Scenes fr Childhood)	Jan 2
Gesänge der Frühe (Songs of Dawn), Blumenstück, Novellettes, Waldszenen, Romances	Jan 9

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Alan Murray studied piano with Frances Wazeter, Allen Weiss and Robert Preston and has appeared as a concerto soloist with orchestra and in solo and chamber music recitals. He holds a degree in physics and languages from Cornell, where he also received a special University award for distinguished piano soloist. A specialist in the Financial Institutions Group at Moody's Investors Service, where he focuses on the U.S., major Latin American and worldwide developing markets, Alan continues his musical interests in part by providing music at the early Sunday morning services of the First Unitarian Society of Westchester, where he enjoys blending diverse musical traditions from around the world.

Alan's near-term projects include programming a series of exhibits and musical events at his studio (***www.Studio-Hollywood.com***), beginning with the ***Masters Series Concerts*** for the September-June 2011/12 season, and others devoted to jazz, classical and diverse cultural music and dance programs, literary readings, and exhibits of paintings, sculpture and live arts.

Alan resides in Hastings with his wife Amada and daughter Celia, where they also own and operate ***Galápagos Books*** (*www.GalapagosBooks.com*), a bookstore devoted to world language, children's and general interest books and multimedia educational materials.

Sunrise Music Series (2010/11)

at the First Unitarian Society of Westchester

Sunday, November 21, 2010

Robert Schumann (200th Anniversary) – The Piano Music

Fantasy, Op. 17

I. Durchaus phantastisch und leidenshaftlich vorzutragen - Im Legendenton - Adagio
II. Mässig. Durchaus energisch - Etwas langsamer - Viel bewegter
III. Langsam getragen. Durchweg leise zu halten - Etwas bewegter

Arabeske, Op. 18

Carnaval, Op. 9

Préambule
Pierrot
Arlequin
Valse noble
Eusebius
Florestan
Coquette
Réplique
[Sphinxes]
Papillons
A.S.C.H. - S.C.H.A: Lettres Dansantes
Chiarina
Chopin
Estrella
Reconnaissance
Pantalon et Colombine
Valse allemande – Intermezzo: Paganini
Aveu
Promenade
Pause
Marche des "Davidsbündler" contre les Philistins

Alan Murray, piano

Sunrise Music Series (2010/11)

at the First Unitarian Society of Westchester

Sunday, November 28, 2010

Robert Schumann (200th Anniversary) – The Piano Music

Kreisleriana, Op. 16

Ausserst bewegt
Sehr innig und nicht zu rasch – Intermezzo I & II – Erstes Tempo
Sehr aufgeregt
Sehr langsam
Sehr lebhaft
Sehr langsam
Sehr rasch
Schnell und spielend

Toccata, Op. 7

Symphonic Etudes, Op. 13

Tema. *Andante*
Etude I. *Un poco più vivo*
Etude II. *Marcato il canto – espressivo*
Etude III. *Vivace*
Etude IV.
Etude V. *Scherzando*
Etude VI. *Agitato*
Etude VII. *Allegro molto*
Etude VIII. *Sempre marcatissimo*
Etude IX. *Presto possibile*
Etude X. *Con energia sempre*
Etude XI. *Sotto voce, ma marcato*
Finale. *Allegro brillante*

Alan Murray, piano

Sunrise Music Series (2010/11)

at the First Unitarian Society of Westchester

Sunday, December 5, 2010

Robert Schumann (200th Anniversary) – The Major Works

Davidsbündlertänze (Dances of the Davids-band), Op. 6

Lebhaft
Innig
Mit Humor – Etwas hahnbüchen
Ungeduldig
Einfach
Sehr rasch un in sich hinein
Nicht schnell und mit äusserst starker Empfindung
Frisch
Lebhaft
Balladenmässig. Sehr rasch
Einfach
Mit Humor
Wild und lustig
Zart und singend
Frisch
Mit gutem Humor
Wie aus der Ferne
Nicht schnell

Sonata No. 1 In F# minor, Op. 11

Introduzione – Un poco Adagio – Allegro vivace
Aria
Scherzo e Intermezzo: Allegrissimo – Intermezzo – Tempo I
Finale: Allegro un poco maestoso – Presto – Più Allegro

Alan Murray, piano

Sunrise Music Series (2010/11)

at the First Unitarian Society of Westchester

Sunday, December 12, 2010

Robert Schumann (200th Anniversary) – The Major Works

Papillons (Butterflies), Op. 2

Humoreske, Op. 20

Einfach – Sehr rasch und leicht – Wie im Anfang
Hastig – Nach und nach immer lebhafter und starker – Adagio
Einfach und zart – Intermezzo
Innig – Sehr lebhaft – Mit einigem Pomp
Zum Beschluss – Adagio – Allegro

Sonata No. 2 in G minor, Op. 22

So rasch wie möglich
Andantino
Scherzo: Sehr rasch und markirt
Rondo: Presto - Prestissimo

Alan Murray, piano

Sunrise Music Series (2010/11)

at the First Unitarian Society of Westchester

Sunday, December 19, 2010

Robert Schumann (200th Anniversary) – The Major Works

Fantasiestücke, Op. 12 (Fantasy Pieces)

Des Abends (In the Evening)
Aufschwung (Soaring)
Warum? (Why?)
Grillen (Whims)
In der Nacht (In the Night)
Fabel (Fable)
Traumes Wirren (Dream's Confusions)
Ende vom Lied (End of the Song)

Sonata No. 3 in F minor ('Concerto without Orchestra'), Op. 14

Allegro brillante
Scherzo: molto commodo
Quasi variazioni: Andantino de Clara Wieck
Finale: Prestissimo possibile

Alan Murray, piano

Sunrise Music Series (2010/11)

at the First Unitarian Society of Westchester

Sunday, January 2, 2011

Robert Schumann (200th Anniversary) – The Major Works

Kinderszenen, Op. 15 (Scenes from Childhood)

Von fremden Ländern und Menschen (Of foreign lands and peoples)
Kuriose Geschichte (Curious story)
Haschemann (Blind man's bluff)
Bittendes Kind (Pleading child)
Glückes genug (Happy enough)
Wichtige Begebenheit (Important event)
Träumerei (Dreaming)
Am Kamin (At the fireside)
Ritter vom Steckenpferd (Knight of the hobby-horse)
Fast zu ernst (Almost too serious)
Fürchtenmachen (Frightening)
Kind im Einschlummern (Child falling asleep)
Der Dichter spricht (The poet speaks)

Faschingsschwank aus Wien (Carnival of Vienna), Op. 26

I. *Allegro. Sehr lebhaft*
II. *Romanze. Ziemlich langsam*
III. *Scherzino*
IV. *Intermezzo. Mit grösster Energie*
V. *Finale. Höchst lebhaft*

Alan Murray, piano

Sunrise Music Series (2010/11)

at the First Unitarian Society of Westchester

Sunday, January 9, 2011

Robert Schumann (200th Anniversary) – The Major Works

Conclusion

Novellette in F major, Op. 21, No. 1

Blumenstück (Flower Piece), Op. 19

Three Romances, Op. 28

No. 1 in B-flat minor
No. 2 in F-sharp major
No. 3 in B major

from Waldszenen (Forest Scenes), Op. 82

Eintritt (Entrance)
Vogel als Prophet (The Prophet Bird)

Gesänge der Frühe (Songs of Dawn), Op. 133

I. Im ruhigen Tempo
II. Belebt, nicht zu rasch
III. Lebhaft
IV. Bewegt
V. Im Anfange ruhiges, im Verlauf bewegtes Tempo

Novellette in D major, Op. 21, No. 2

Alan Murray, piano

ROBERT SCHUMANN,
A LITHOGRAPH BY
JOSEPH KRIEHUBER, 1839

A composer doomed to music.

Picture Archive of the Austrian National Library

CLARA SCHUMANN, NEE WIECK

Great pianist, loving wife, professional widow.

Picture Archive of the Austrian National Library

Robert Schumann: Florestan & Eusebius

(excerpts from 'The Lives of the Great Composers', by Harold C. Schonberg)

With Robert Schumann romanticism came to full flower. Every aspect of romanticism was reflected in him. He was introspective, idealistic, closely allied spiritually with the literary aspects of the age, an innovator, a critic, a propagandist for the new – and a great composer. His music at first almost entirely dispensed with old forms. He was the first of the completely anti-classic composers, and form – as it previously existed – meant little to him, though he was a superior theorist and as well informed as any musician then alive. While composers of his day were writing sonatas, symphonies and variations, Schumann was writing music named *Carnaval, Fantasy, Arabesque, Kreisleriana, Davidsbündlertänze, Kinderszenen*. These are caprices bundled together; they are spiritual diaries as well as music. A critic once rebuked him for not writing orthodox sonatas. Schumann's response was fervid, and it represented the romantic attitude: *"As if all mental pictures must be shaped to fit one or two forms! As if each idea did not come into existence with its form ready-made! As if each work of art had not its own meaning and consequently its own form!"* This is an important, and very modern, statement. For the first time in music is found the expressed statement that content and idea dictate form, not the reverse. More than any composer, more even than Chopin, whose forms also to a large extent were anti-classic, Schumann established an entire aesthetic that verged on impressionism. In this concept, a short statement can be as valid as a long speech, and perhaps more so. Schumann, along with Chopin (although the two worked independently of each other), demonstrated that forms existed not for the academicians but for the creative mind: that pure idea could impose its own forms, and that a small but perfect form, one that captured and exploited a single idea, could be its own aesthetic justification.

Mood, color, suggestion, allusion – these were important to Schumann, much more important than writing correct fugues, rondos, or sonatas. Invariably his music has a capricious and unexpected turn, a kaleidoscopic texture and emotion, and intensity of personal utterance that can be measured only in astronomical units. Naturally, every pedant and academician in Europe promptly set Schumann up as a whipping boy. To them his works were the end of music, a sign of the degeneracy of the times. His music appeared strange, formless, anarchic, from the void. It was a music tied up with poetry, painting, personal allusions, and romantic aesthetics. To Schumann it was all one. *"The aesthetic experience,"* he once wrote, *"is the same in any art, only the materials differ."* Liszt would write essentially the identical words in his "Life of Chopin". Few major composers have been so disliked in their own time, and even fewer have been so little performed. Wagner, for instance, was hated in many quarters, but he received plenty of performances, and his work was discussed all over Europe. Wagner knew how to promote himself. The gentle Schumann never did.

A quiet man, medium-sized, with a sensitive face and lips that were always pursed as though her were whistling to himself, he never really fought back, as Wagner and Berlioz did. When he did fight, and he did so as a critic, it was for the new music and not for himself. Big-hearted, generous, dedicated, in love with music, he lent a helping hand to all young talent. In the meantime his pungent harmonies, his unusually strong dissonances and syncopated rhythms, his new concept of free but functional form – all were being described by the conservatives as the work of a madman. Fortunately, Schumann had friends and disciples, and his admirers saw to it that his music was spread around. He also had a wife who was one of the best pianists in the world. Little by little his music made progress, though – unlike Chopin – it was not until after his death that he was accepted as one of the immortals.

If ever a composer was doomed to music it was Robert Schumann. There was something of a Greek tragedy in the way music reached into his cradle, seized him, nourished him, and finally destroyed him. From the beginning, his emotions were over-strung, abnormally so. His mind was a delicate seismograph upon which music registered violent shocks – shocks that would not even be noticed by people with less sensitive receiving apparatus. He himself once described how, as a child, he stole at night to the piano and played a series of chords, weeping bitterly all the while. He was so moved by the writings of Jean Paul that the intensity of the pleasure drove him (in his own words) to the *"verge of madness"*. When he heard of Schubert's death he wept the whole night. Anybody with sensibilities refined to such a pitch is apt to lose control, and Schumann eventually did. Sometime around 1851, five years before his death, he began having hallucinations. He would hear harmonies from heaven. One night he imagined that the spirits of Schubert and Mendelssohn had brought him a theme, and he leapt out of bed to write it down. Like William Blake, he had visions. Unlike Blake, he could not live with them, and his mind finally gave way. But he accomplished much in the forty-six years of his life. His daemon dictated to him a kind of music that no composer up to that time had begun to visualize. The derivative forces in the music of Bach, Haydn, Handel, Mozart and Beethoven can easily be traced; those in Berlioz and even Chopin too. But Schumann from the beginning struck off entirely on his own, and it is hard to find a precedent for his music.

Robert was an avid reader, his father being a bookseller and publisher, as well as a writer of romances. He grew up conditioned by literature, and in no other composer is there such an attempted fusion of sound with literary idea. His favorite writer was Jean Paul (Richter), and that great romantic and visionary was constantly making remarks about music – remarks that the young Schumann devoured. *"Sound"*, wrote Jean Paul, *"shines like the dawn, and the sun rises in the form of sound; sound seeks to rise in music, and color is light."* Also: *"It is music alone which can open the ultimate gates to the Infinite."* To Schumann, romantic literature in general and Jean Paul in particular were governing processes of life itself. *"If everybody read Jean Paul"*, he wrote to a friend when he was eighteen, *"we should be better but more unhappy.*

Sometimes he almost clouds my mind, the rainbow of peace and the natural strength of man bring sweet tears, and the heart comes through its ordeal marvelously purified and softened." Inspired by literary heroes, Schumann tried his hand at poetry and fiction. He also attempted composition. Indeed, he had been doing so from the age of seven. He had easily learned how to play the piano and had a strong talent for improvisation. But his musical education was almost nil, and he had to pick everything up by himself.

At the death of his father, when Robert was just sixteen, and following the suicide of his mentally and physically challenged younger sister, his mother sent him to Leipzig to study law. But he did not study much law in Leipzig; there was too much music in the city. He would go to concerts, or he would get up early and practice the piano eight or nine hours a day, smoking innumerable cigars in the process. At night he would summon his friends and play for them. Or he would read Goethe, Shakespeare, Byron and of course Jean Paul, committing to memory page after page of their work. He was a romantic par excellence, affecting a Byronic pose, falling in and out of love, dabbling in the arts, arguing about music, life and aesthetics through the night and well into the morning.

All this was very fine, but musically speaking it was not very professional. Not until Schumann was eighteen did he take his first serious musical instruction. In 1830, upon returning to Leipzig, he came across a piano teacher named Friedrich Wieck. The best testimonial to Wieck's pedagogical theories was his daughter, the nine-year-old Clara. She was a formidable prodigy and she developed into one of history's outstanding pianists. Wieck was enthusiastic about Schumann's potential. He wrote to Schumann's mother, promising that Robert would "be one of the greatest pianists within three years." She was not happy about this, but Robert moved into Wieck's house, practiced hard, started composing, and also took lessons in composition. But his career as a professional pianist ended before it began: trying to achieve a short-cut to finger independence, the impetuous Schumann invented a contraption that permanently ruined one of his fingers. He did not appear to have been greatly distressed by the accident; already he must have known that his future was in composing.

In 1831 his first published composition appeared, the Abegg Variations. Characteristically, he constructed the theme on the letters of a girl's name. Soon came his Op. 2, the *Papillons*, a musical rendering of the ballroom scene from Jean Paul's *Flegeljahre*. This appeared in 1832 and Schumann saw the whole world opening up to him: *"On sleepless nights I am conscious of a mission which rises before me like a distant peak. When I wrote Papillons I began to feel a certain independence. Now the butterflies (papillons) have flown off into the vast and magnificent universe of spring; the spring itself is on my doorstep looking at me – it is a child with celestial blue eyes."*

His head was full of new music and he started putting it on paper. He also started reviewing concerts and new music for the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* and the *Komet*. One of his first reviews introduced Chopin to the German readers, proclaiming: *"Hats off, gentlemen! A genius!"* and amounted to a prescient summary of Chopin's startling new music and what it stands for.

Soon he fell in love with Clara, then about 13, and they became engaged three years later, in 1837. The old man Wieck took it hard. More than that, he did everything in his power to stop the marriage. He had made Clara the outstanding woman pianist of the day. Now, just when he was ready to reap the financial rewards, she was 'throwing herself away on a penniless composer, a vague idealist, a radical musician whose theories were being called mad, an impractical and disorganized man.' Wieck looked around and could find plenty of material to support his arguments. Nobody thought much of Schumann's music at the time. In Paris, Chopin was poking fun at it. And Liszt himself, the great Liszt, had tried to play some Schumann music in public and had failed. If Liszt, the greatest of matinee idols, could not establish Schumann's music, who could? Wieck spread rumors that Schumann was a dipsomaniac, unreliable and the like. Schumann would write to Clara: *"Your father calls me phlegmatic. Carnaval and phlegmatic! F-sharp minor Sonata and phlegmatic! Being in love with such a girl and phlegmatic! … the Zeitschrift has had about eighty sheets of my own ideas… besides which I have finished ten major compositions in two years… And you mean to say all my industry and simplicity, all that I have done, is quite lost upon your father?"* Finally the lovers had to go to court for permission to marry without Wieck's consent. They were married in 1840.

It turned out to be an idyllic marriage, the union of two extraordinary minds. She was the stabilizing force in his life; he was the spiritual beacon in hers. Adjustments had to be made. His work came first, even if it meant that she had to go long periods without practicing; and she worried about that. And Schumann was difficult when he was in one of his moods. In one respect Clara was a bad influence on Robert. Perhaps it was a subconscious wish for Schumann to be "respectable." She wrote in her diary before they were married: *"It would be best if he composed for orchestra. His imagination cannot find sufficient scope on the piano… His compositions are all orchestral in feeling."* She was also blind to his other musical lapses, such as when it was suggested that Robert had better refrain from conducting. This was in Dusseldorf, where he went as musical director and promptly ran the orchestra and chorus into the ground. She fought for him, but by then must have realized his problems.

In his own publication – the *Neue Zeitschrift fur Musik* – which he used as a forum in which good music could be praised and bad music spanked, Schumann could indulge his fancy for romantic byplay. He invented a society (based on a concept proposed by Jean Paul) known as the *Davidsbund* – the Band, or League, of David – and gave pen names to the members who would discuss music and write reviews. Schumann himself had two names, Florestan (representing the exuberant side of his nature) and Eusebius (the reflective side). There were also Master Raro (a fusion of the last two letters of Clara's name and first two letters of Robert's), Chiara, Jonathan, and so on. All were real people. Chiara was Clara; Master Raro was Friedrich Wieck. All of the Davidites were leagued together to combat the Philistines, those unimaginative bourgeois or pedants or musical tricksters who immersed themselves in safe or meretricious music.

As a critic, Schumann was knowledgeable, conscientious, and open-minded. He was ready to praise a composer unreservedly if he detected any sign of talent. But he was merciless toward sham and pretentiousness in music and he was not afraid to engage those current heroes, Rossini and Meyerbeer, in combat. The test of a great critic, in any case, is not how many talents he overpraises, but how many geniuses he fails to recognize. On these grounds, Schumann's record was near-perfect. One of his first reviews introduced Chopin, and his very last introduced Brahms. Berlioz, Mendelssohn, Liszt, and Wagner came in between, although he cited weaknesses in these that are still generally agreed upon today. He clarified the music of the later Beethoven and the virtually forgotten Schubert, and his many articles on Bach were a vital part of the Bach renaissance. *"It is not enough that a newspaper mirror the present,"* he wrote. *"The critic must be ahead of his times and ready armed to fight for the future."* That was his credo as a critic, and he adhered to it, as he adhered to all of his principles.

Schumann's last years were sad, and his illness must have left a permanent scar on Clara, who outlived him by forty years, surviving until 1896. As his mind became progressively unbalanced, Schumann withdrew into his own world. Toward the end, the Schumann family was in trouble. It was large (eight children, five of whom survived) and there was not much money around. Schumann was not able to work, and he started having hallucinations. Early in 1852 he attempted suicide by throwing himself off a bridge into the Rhine. At his own request he was placed in an asylum. There are harrowing accounts of Schumann's last days, written by Clara and friends of the family, and also by Johannes Brahms, who had been living with the Schumanns. At least there was the consolation that at the time of Schumann's death, on July 29, 1856, his music had started to make an international reputation.

Although Schumann, as a critic, could well understand and explain to the public the view of other composers, few could understand his. His message was too unconventional and too personal. Unconventionalities aside, what made his music hard to understand fully – and the same is true today – is the personal nature of the content. It is almost autobiographical. *"I am affected by everything that goes on in the world – politics, literature, people – I think it over in my own way, and then I long to express my feelings in music. That is why my compositions are sometimes difficult to understand, because they are connected with distant interest; and sometime unorthodox, because anything that happens impresses me and compels me to express it in music."* These are the words of a true romantic, and in writing them, Schumann was merely expressing a romantic article of faith.

Schumann's *Carnaval*, for example, is nearly universally loved, but it also has to be heard on a secondary level, with a knowledge of the vast extra-musical symbolism it contains. This has nothing to do with program music. It merely explains what was going on in the composer's mind. Carnaval cannot be fully understood without realizing that it is a picture gallery in which are painted the two sides of Schumann's own nature (Florestan and Eusebius), in which appear Clara, Chopin, Wieck, Paganini, Mendelssohn, and others; that the entire work is based on four notes (ASCH – in German, S = E-flat and H = B natural) – Asch being a city in which a lady friend of the composer lived and, and also a city whose name contained four letters that occur in the composer's last name; and that the finale (the *"March of the Davidsbund against the Philistines"*) is a musical illustration of Schumann's determination to lead his band of righteous musicians into the enemy camp of Meyerbeer, Herz, and Hünten and demolish them. There are other symbols in Carnaval, but this is the general idea. Many of Schumann's works were conceived this way.

He himself often did not know what his music meant. Some of it was written in what amounted to a trance. First he wrote it. Then he looked it over, giving the work a title. That was his standard practice, and nearly all of his pieces were named after they were written. Schumann's rich, complicated harmony did indeed have a strong polyphonic texture, a fact not generally appreciated, and his careful indications of secondary and inner voices often pass largely unnoticed. The *Traumerei* from his Kinderscenen being a classic example: far from being uncomplicated, as a casual listening might suggest, it is actually a strict piece of four-part writing, so rich in its polyphony that it *"could easily be given to a string quarter, or wind ensemble, or even to the four singing voices"* wrote Alban Berg decades later.

Like Chopin, Schumann started as a composer of piano music, and his first twenty-three works are for solo piano. In this series are the three sonatas and the three-movement Fantasy in C major, which can loosely be called a sonata. The rest are, for the most part, small pieces bundles together under a name. Sometimes, as in the Symphonic Etudes or Carnaval, a unifying structural idea runs through the work, but more often there is no pretense at unity. Unlike the glittering music of Liszt, Thalberg and Henselt, the bravura element of Schumann's piano music is dictated by the content. Schumann had nothing but scorn for virtuosity as an end in itself. The Fantasy, Schumann's greatest and largest work for solo piano, is with Chopin's B-flat minor Sonata and Liszt's B minor Sonata, one of the trinity of pieces upon which all romantic piano music rests.

Schumann's piano works – his most successful idiom – are exuberant, poetic, introspective, grand, and intimate in turn. Schumann's particular musical charm is hard to describe, even with its pronounced idiosyncrasies – those syncopations, those altered seventh chords, that thick texture. It is a soaring kind of music, imbued with the romantic ideal, out to do for music what Jean Paul did for literature: *"So life fades and withers behind us, and of our sacred and vanished past, only one thing remains immortal – music"*, wrote Jean Paul. Schumann had the same feeling. Music was the mysterious art, the art that picked up after poetry and, indeed, life itself had ceased. Schumann therefore approached mysticism, a vision always before him. This was not merely sentimental to Schumann. It was what made him go.

From piano music, Schumann turned to song, and the sixteen songs of *Dichterliebe* rank with Schubert's *Winterreise* in the hierarchy of song cycles. Schumann took up where Schubert left off, broadening the concept of the art song.

In all, he composed over 250 songs throughout his career, including a series of ravishing vocal duets. When Schumann started to explore a new form of writing, he dropped everything else. Thus, after piano and song, came symphony, and the year was 1841. Clara's dearest wish came true. And then came his A-minor piano concerto, among his most popular works. Next came other symphonies and chamber music, including his three string quartets, the piano quartet, and the radiant piano quintet.

There is no disputing that Schumann was a weak orchestrator; he thought pianistically rather than in terms of the orchestra. It is also conceded that he was unhappy working within the strictures of classic sonata form. Yet – like Chopin – he was full of ideas within the confines of these forms. This was carried to its ultimate in the one-movement fourth symphony, in D minor, in which four movements are packaged into one, and in which a kind of thematic transformation is used that foreshadows the Liszt B minor sonata. Interestingly, Schumann's greatest piano work – the Fantasy – would be dedicated to Liszt, and Liszt's monumental B minor sonata would in turn be dedicated to Schumann. What keeps the Schumann symphonies alive is their special glow, and the high quality of musical ideas, which make them – despite certain shortcomings – among the most inspired creations of the nineteenth century.

Schumann achieved success in all musical forms except one, opera, and his large quantity of choral music is largely ignored. A surprisingly large amount of Schumann's music is no longer played.

As the arch-romantic, the most personal and least objective of the great composers, his message ran counter to the aesthetic that dominated the Western world after 1918. To many of the intellectuals in the period from 1920-40, Schumann was a rather embarrassing relic of the early romantic period: he was considered sentimental and self-indulgent. But the whole point of his music was missed – that perfect weld of form and content in his shorter works, that overwhelming daring and originality, that basic purity even in moments of extravagance. Purity is not a word normally used in association with Schumann, but everything about him was pure – his life, his love, his dedication, his integrity, his mind, his music.

Robert Schumann: The Piano Works

Program Notes

Robert Schumann: The Piano Music – Program Notes

When Friedrich Wieck, Schumann's piano teacher, became aware that Schumann was becoming much more than a sugardaddy to his 11-year-old daughter Clara (and at the time the finest female pianist alive), he decided he wasn't going to have his daughter's career wrecked by marriage to Schumann, and he took steps to derail the attachment, ultimately unsuccessfully. However, his lamentable part in the affair had its redeeming features. In 1836, Wieck managed to make Schumann believe for a while that he would never see Clara again. Schumann's despair is embodied in the *Fantasy*, one of the most profoundly beautiful of all works in the piano literature. In the process, Wieck also initiated Schumann's infatuation for Ernestine von Fricken, out of which came the *Carnaval*, among other works.

Fantasy **-** Schumann originally intended this work as his contribution toward the cost of erecting a memorial to Beethoven in Bonn. He proposed setting aside his royalties and gave the work a flamboyant title: *'Ruins. Trophies. Palms.: Grand Sonata for Piano by Florestan and Eusebius'*. But the scheme was shelved and the work was finally published that year with its present title *("..Sonatas or fantasies (what's in a name?)…"* he wrote in 1839), a dedication to Liszt, and a motto which had nothing to do with Beethoven. Beethoven does have his influence, however, for a three-movement sonata with a rhapsodic first movement, a march as the second movement and a slow finale would have been inconceivable without him. Furthermore there are echoes of the Adagio from the 'Emperor' Concerto in the finale, of the finale of the Fifth Symphony in the March, and overt references to the song-cycle *An De Ferne Deliebte* in the first movement. Here we come to the crux of the matter, for the song in question ('Take them, beloved, these songs I sang to you') is obviously directed to Clara, as is the motto, a quotation from Schlegel:

Durch all Töne tönet	*Through all the sounds*
Im bunten Erdentraum	*In Earth's bright dream*
Ein leiser Ton gezogen	*Sounds one soft note*
Für den der heimlich lauschet	*For him who listens secretly*

The work relates to the despair of the summer of 1836, when Schumann believed Clara to be lost forever. He later told her that the ***Fantasy*** – easily his greatest work for piano – was a 'deep lament' for her, and it is arguably the most passionate music he ever composed. This 'soft tone' is perhaps the series of ideas subtly developed throughout, unifying the work.

The first movement is an extraordinary mixture of wild desperation and introspection so refined that the music on occasion dissolves into silence. The organization of such extremes of emotion put a severe strain on the composer, but Schumann marshals his obsessive first theme (which is constantly breaking through in its original key) into a sort of sonata scheme, with first section, recapitulation and a large middle section in the minor key. This unconventional structure makes perfectly satisfying aural sense and well illustrates a paradox found in the music of many Romantic composers: that apparent spontaneity is in fact often the result of calculated thought. This is more evident when one discovers that the elemental opening theme is actually a transformation of the Beethoven song, gradually becoming more like the original until in the coda it is a real quotation.

After the wayward effect of the opening movement, the March comes as a stabilizing influence. It is bold and triumphant in character, and clear in outline. Its dotted rhythms also recall the march-like second movement (*Vivace alla marcia*) in Beethoven's Sonata Op. 101, whose first movement is considered to be Beethoven at his most *Schumannesque*. It has the same sort of function as a minuet after a poignant slow movement in a classical symphony. Its Trio is typically Schumannesque, the theme embedded within rich harmony and capricious rhythm. The animated coda brings the movement to a stunning and brilliant conclusion.

In the slow finale Schumann enters a spiritual world in which conflicts are over, and in which he has resigned himself to separation from Clara and has come to accept her as a tranquil memory. The boldness and, at the same time, the tenderness of the harmony and a feeling for sound so acute one can almost touch it reveal, however, that he still experiences their love to the depths of his being.

Astonishingly, and despite the dedication, Liszt never played this masterpiece in public. Perhaps the music was too personal. From his concert receipts from other programs, however, Liszt later provided the money needed to complete the Beethoven memorial which Schumann, during his last years in a mental asylum, near Bonn, would occasionally visit.

Arabeske **-** Schumann wrote his Arabeske (in C major) in 1839. In the summer of 1838 he had left Leipzig for Vienna, his relationship with Clara seeming to have reached a point of no return, as her father vehemently opposed anything that might interfere with his daughter's career as a pianist and strongly disapproved of Schumann as a possible son-in-law. Geographically, yet not at all emotionally, detached from Clara, he was able to communicate with her only through letters and in his own music, and during this period he found himself beset by depression and professional disappointment. This has been proposed as an explanation for this work, which alternates passages of wistful longing with more robust, declamatory episodes. Schumann wrote in the year of the creation of the Arabeske, *"Never refer to me again as Jean Paul (Richter) II or Beethoven II … I am willing to be ten times less than these others, and only something to myself."* The term Arabeske is used here as a poetic metaphor, not only to describe florid decoration, but also, in Schlegel's terms, to suggest a fluid, organic system of fragments that transcends artificial classical forms. Schumann employs a modified version of the rondo form (ABACA) with the gently lyrical main section A, two intense episodes B (Florestan) and C, and a beautifully pensive epilogue (Eusebius). The piece moves lithely between contrasting moods, and concludes with a gentle recapitulation of the opening materials. The poignant postlude that follows comes as an exquisite surprise.

Carnaval **-** Schumann relates in 1840 that ***Carnaval*** was finished *'exactly at carnival time in 1835… hence the title.'* At the time he was in love with Clara, Wieck's daughter, and infatuated with Ernestine (also a pupil of Wieck), daughter of Baron von Fricken. Schumann was excited to discover that Ernestine was born in the town of Asch. Each letter of the place-name represented a musical note and these were moreover the same and only ones in his own name that could be express musically (A, As = A-flat, S = Es = E-flat, C, and H = B natural). In fact, the subtitle of the work is "miniature scenes based on four notes" These five notes were written out as three separate themes under the name *Sphinxes* following *Réplique*. There is no known reason for these themes to appear at this point, and on the evidence of Clara's own performance they were not meant to be played. The work is dedicated to Karol Lipinski who was generally accepted as being Paganini's only rival as a violin virtuoso.

Carnaval opens with great fanfare in the *Préambule*, which introduces several of the themes that permeate the work, and which is one of the few movements that do not refer to any of the ASCH themes. The first 24 bars were taken from sketches for a set of variations on Schubert's *Sehnsuchswaltzer*. *Pierrot* and *Arlequin* introduce 2 of the 4 characters of the *Commedia dell'Arte* (the others being Pantalon and Colombine) with astonishingly accurate miniature caricatures: every traditional gesture and movement is faithfully portrayed, down to Pierrot, the clown and figure of pathos, taking a few dignified strides and falling over his

own feet. There are also six appearances of a group of 5 descending notes, originating in Clara's own *Caprice*, Op. 2 No. 2, which were important to the Fantasy and the Sonatas. *Valse noble* conveys spiritual longing. *Eusebius* and *Florestan* are self-portraits of Schumann – the dreamily reflective side (with fascinating rhythmic subtlety) and the vigorous man of action (including a reference to the opening of his *Papillons, Op. 2*), respectively, leading directly into the *Coquette*,the flirtations dancer who shows her impatience (at Schumann's own nature?) with a sudden, vigorous stamp of the foot. *Papillons* seems a tribute to his second published work. Although the ASCH note combination appears in various guises throughout the work, in *ASCH-SCHA (Lettres dansantes)* it is featured singingly. *Chiarina* is a portrait of Clara, and *Chopin* is Schumann's defense, as a critic, of the Polish composer-genius, given that Rellstab (the foremost music critic in Germany at the time) considered Chopin's music to be "nonsense". *Estrella* is a portrait of Ernestine von Fricken, also the subject of the ASCH note sequence. Schumann described *Reconnaissance* as a 'lovers meeting', with a cleverly harmonized middle section in the form of a canon, representing their dialogue. *Pantalon* (traditionally a caricature of the Venetian merchant) and later the elderly father of *Colombine* (in other words: *Arlequin* and *Colombine* were lovers). It was a concert given by *Paganini* in Frankfurt that finally persuaded Schumann to embark on a musical career, hence the tribute, intertwined with the *Valse allemande*. *Aveu* was described by Schumann as 'a confession of love', based on the second of the *Sphinx* themes. He described *Promenade* as 'a stroll through the ballroom arm-in-arm with one's partner. The *Pause* reintroduces the vigorous transition sequence from the Préambule to marshal his now-familiar characters together and usher in the final *March of the League of David (Davids-band) Against the Philistines*. The Davids-band was an association dreamt up by Jean Paul Richter, taking the name of the biblical King who possessed a deep intellect and was a ferocious fighter, two dueling personal traits that Schumann admired. "Master Raro" is a go-between, combining the last two letters of Clara's name with the first two of Robert's. The aim of the association was to fight outmoded pedantry and the cruelty of society. In 19th century Germany, a Philistine was the man who had settled down and complacently accepted the status quo. Much of the *Préambule* reappears in the *March*. The introduction of the *Grossvater Tanz*, (theme from the 18th century) in bar 50 (also appearing in the *Papillons,* Op. 2) represented the established order of things. Perhaps the conflict in real terms was Robert against Wieck (who violently opposed Schumann's relationship with his daughter), with Clara as the prize.

Upon hearing Clara play *Carnaval,* Liszt declared it among the greatest piano works, writing *"The more one penetrates Schumann's ideas, the more power and vitality one finds within them. The more one studies them, the more one is astonished by the richness and fertility."*

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Like the Fantasy Op. 17 and the Carnaval Op. 9, the *Kreisleriana*, *Toccata* and *Symphonic Etudes* are at once highly autobiographical works, and incorporate elements or inspirations derived from others with whom Schumann crossed paths, including Clara Wieck, her father, Ernestine von Fricken and her father, and E.T.A Hoffman. In particular, if Schumann hadn't been tormented by Friedrich Wieck's stubborn and neurotic attitude, perhaps the mental illness to which he eventually succumbed him might have lain dormant for much longer than it did. On the other hand, Schumann's essentially introspective nature might, without Wieck, never have been roused into such intense activity. And had he not harbored early ambitions of greatness as a concert pianist, the Toccata might never have come to fruition.

Kreisleriana – The ***Kreisleriana***, Op. 16, dating from 1838 and one of Schumann's most famous works, must be understood in a literary context as well as an autobiographical one. The title directs the listener's imagination to the famous, eccentric, amazing, droll and inwardly tormented Kapellmeister Kreisler, a character from the tales of E. T. A. Hoffman. Typically for Schumann, the sequence of eight pieces comprising the cycle, which he thought of as "fantasias", constantly alternates movements of a lively and agitated character with others that are quiet and serene. And within nearly every one there are also surprising, rapid shifts of mood, inevitably prompting thoughts of Schumann's two imaginary characters, Florestan and Eusebius. The emotional message of this work is indescribable, as are the imagination behind its conception (the fourth piece, for example, has recitative-like features), the marvelous polyphonic textures and, indeed, the enormous sophistication of the musical structure.

It was clear to Schumann when he created it in 1838 that Kreisleriana represented a new step in his compositional development. As he wrote to Clara: "My music now seems even to me to be so wonderfully intricate in spite of all the simplicity, so eloquent and from the heart. And that's the way it affects everyone for whom I play it." In another letter to her he even alluded to the work's autobiographical basis: "Do play my Kreisleriana sometime! There is a positively wild love contained in some of the movements, and your life and mine are found there, and some of your glances."

Indeed, Schumann considered the work to be one of his masterpieces. Among its many unsettling aspects are an incredible variety and intensity of expression, including pain and sorrow: "Utterly new worlds are being disclosed to me", Schumann writes in his diary, where he also mentions that he composed Kreisleriana in four days. There are many details worth noting. In the first piece a feverish impetus prevails at the outset, giving way to a flowing, almost rippling calm middle section in the relative major key before a reprise. The second piece is constructed as a distant analogy with the classical minuet and trio (here, two trios), although the music is searching and personal, far removed from the minuet's courtly graces. Numbers four and six are among the strangest pieces Schumann wrote, deeply introspective and almost suggesting opera in their use of a quasi-recitative opening and a more sustained lyrical sequel. This lyricism is abruptly shattered by the violent passion of the seventh fantasia, a freely conceived fugato episode which settles down to lyrical tenderness in the surprising, unorthodox ending. This is followed by the mysterious eighth, an endless, ghostly ride, obsessively permeated by an unchanging rhythmic motif, with a sequence of shifting chords and expressive moods ranging from controlled humor to soaring lyricism to the desperation that breaks out at "*mit aller Kraft*" (*"with full force"*). At the end, the music descends in a pianissimo to the depths of the low register, before disappearing altogether.

Toccata – Robert Schumann would surely have gone on to become an outstanding piano virtuoso had he not, early in his career, injured his hand in a bungled attempt to develop a method of finger training. One is tempted to say that the concert hall's loss was music's gain. As a young man, in any event, he was a brilliant pianist, and by the age of 20 was already appearing with great success in the salons of Heidelberg, where he had ostensibly gone to further his law studies. In 1830 in Frankfurt he heard Paganini and was so taken with the great violinist that he began to take an especially lively interest in developing the technical aspects of piano playing. Among his early works the ***Toccata***, in particular, pays homage to the ideal of virtuosity. After revising the work several times and transposing it, first into D major and then into C major, he finally entrusted it to publication in 1834. The Toccata was to remain an isolated example among his other works. In it can be seen reflected the purely technical preoccupations of a young musician proud to proclaim in writing: "that it doubtless represented one of the most difficult pieces that have ever been written for the piano."

Symphonic Etudes – Ernestine von Fricken was the adopted daughter of a rich baron and came to take lessons from Friedrich Wieck in 1834. Wieck was delighted to be able to make use of her to draw Schumann away from Clara. For her part, Ernestine was clearly prepared to do anything for Schumann, by this time a composer with a growing reputation and the brilliant editor for a new magazine, the *Neue Zeitschrift fur Musik*. An engagement was announced. Baron von Fricken, himself an amateur composer, came to inspect his future son-in-law and took advantage of the occasion to show him a theme and variations for flute. Schumann found himself illustrating his criticisms by simplifying the theme and writing variations himself. These were destined to become the ***Symphonic Etudes***.

This work is almost an article of faith. It is a protest, much in the same vain as the Carnaval, against the degradation by fashionable virtuosos (these being among the 'Philistines') of variations and studies, forms good enough for Beethoven and the young genius, Chopin. Schumann was well aware of his aims. When studying with Wieck, he had to learn, as a necessary part of his training as a pianist, numerous sets of such things. He hated them; and later, when reviewing in his magazine, slated them in terms little short of libelous. The Symphonic Etudes were therefore written with great care: they took him the best part of two years to complete. And towards the end of his life he revised them, providing a new title "Etudes in the form of Variations", which indicated explicitly his combination of the two forms.

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It is possible without exaggeration to describe Robert Schumann's early piano music as original, novel, poetic and, to a large extent, autobiographical. Many of these pieces have a personal character and owe their creation to personal experience. Many take as their subject Schumann's relationship with Clara Wieck, his passionate love for her, and actually turn this love into a theme, using it to give musical expression to experiences, longings, anxieties, hopes and expectations, visions, dreams and fantasy images. Schumann himself confirmed this in a letter of 5 September 1839 to his former teacher Heinrich Dorn: "Certainly my music contains some the struggles Clara has cost me, and certainly it can be understood by you as such. She was practically my sole motivation for writing the *Concerto* (w/o Orchestra; i.e. the Sonata #3) the *Sonata #2*, the *Davidsbündlertänze*, the *Kreisleriana* and the *Novellettes*." The five works mentioned by Schumann were largely composed in the years 1836-38, a time of extraordinary emotional distress. All these works, as well as the *Fantasy* Op. 17 of 1836, were written for Clara: she is their addressee, even though each was dedicated to someone else.

Davidsbündlertänze – Schumann's piano works are so eloquent and expressive that they can be heard and enjoyed entirely as abstract music. Nevertheless, the listener derives far more from them by knowing their literary, psychological and autobiographical implications. This applies in particular to the ***Davidsbündlertänze***, Op. 6 (of 1837), a work operating on many levels which must also be understood first as a manifesto of the Davidsbund (Band of David), that imaginary spiritual brotherhood of like-minded artists and other individuals that Schumann invented to combat the shallowness of contemporary cultural and musical life. (The group included not only the two imaginary autobiographical figures Florestan and Eusebius, but also Mozart, Chopin, Berlioz and many others).

Above also else, however, the Davidsbündlertänze was conceived as a kind of self-portrait. With this work, for the first time, Schumann seems to have lent musical expression to the Romantic notion of the split personality. That the Dances were dedicated on the title-page of the autograph to Walther von Goethe (the great poet's grandson) by "Florestan and Eusebius" (i.e. Schumann himself) is less relevant here than the fact that Schumann precisely indicated his two fictitious authors' roles in the composition: Florestan's pieces are signed "Fl." In the first edition, while those by Eusebius bear the initial "E." at the end, while joint contributions are denoted "Fl. and E."

The Florestan pieces (nos. 3, 4, 5, 10 and 12) are fundamentally different in character from the Eusebius pieces (nos. 2, 5, 7, 11 and 14). Whereas the latter tend to be song-like and expressive in nature, moderate in tempo and generally no louder than piano, not only are the Florestan pieces mostly accorded faster tempi but also call for a wider range of dynamic gradations and are more interesting rhythmically. In a later revision of the 18 pieces Schumann excised the designations ("Fl." and "E.") as well as his explanatory remarks to No. 9 ("Hereupon Florestan stopped and his lips trembled sorrowfully.") and No. 18 ("Quite redundantly Eusebius added the following: but great happiness shone in his eyes the while.") Apparently he was no longer inclined to indicate the cryptic meaning, and thus the autobiographical dimension, of his music. To his Clara he had already confided in 1848 that the Dances contained "many wedding thoughts" and that "the story is an entire *Polterabend"* [i.e. a German wedding-eve party, during which old crockery is smashed for good luck]

Sonata No. 1 in F-sharp minor – All three of Schumann's piano sonatas were begun in 1833, but were completed in various years from 1835-38. Thus, their creation is superimposed upon that of the *Fantasy* and Schumann's principal piano cycles during his first active phase. This means that he felt a need to confront the sonata "problem" during the same period in which he was exploring possibilities offered by alternative formal concepts. The sonata was a problem because "… it seems that the form has outlived its life-cycle. This is, of course, in the natural order of things: we ought not to repeat the same statements for centuries, but rather to think about the new as well. So let's write sonatas or fantasies (what's in a name?), but let's not forget about music…" wrote Schumann in 1839. This statement, however, didn't mean Schumann believed one should escape from the difficult task of measuring oneself against history. The Classical, problematic, "worn-out" sonata form required re-thinking and expansion; it needed to be bent to new expressive meanings. Such is the case with the ***Sonata No. 1 in F-share minor***, Op. 11.

The relationship between the *Introduction* and the *Allegro vivace* is not the only unusual aspect of the first movement. The *Allegro vivace* is dominated by its first theme, of which Schumann speaks in his diary: he defines it as a "fandango idea" and says that it came to him in a sudden inspiration on 30 May 1832 (It is preceded by a motive in the bass register, derived from Clara's juvenile "*Scène fantastique*", Op. 5). Despite Schumann's definition, the theme is not a "fandango idea", property speaking: it gives the impression, rather, of a restless, feverish dance, characterized by nervous tension but not categorizable according to any codified dance type; and it becomes calmer in some sections. The second theme is a lyrical subject. Its function seems to be to create a brief respite amid the incessant forward push of the predominant rhythm. The structure of the movement is a rethinking of the Classical sonata form. The second movement, denoted "*Aria*", is intensely lyrical and is written in a simple three-part form; its opening melody is related to the *Introduction* of the first movement. The formal plan of the "*Scherzo e Intermezzo*" is more complicated: an impetuous *Scherzo* with a restless Trio in the middle seems to be headed towards a normal conclusion when, suddenly, an *Intermezzo* breaks in at a slower tempo, accompanied by the indication "jokingly, but pompous" (*alla burla, ma pomposo*). The recitative-like cadenza, which serves as a bridge back to the final repetition of the Scherzo, seems to allude to the cello and double-bass recitative in the fourth movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

The extended *Finale* is written in a sweeping virtuoso style and in sonata-rondo form,

without a development section. The long, extraordinarily rich exposition is followed by an altered repetition and a coda. In a compelling inventive outburst, Schumann bends the formal plan to permit a free flow of ideas and situations of great imagination variety.

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Papillons **–** ***Papillons*** (Butterflies) is a suite of piano pieces written in 1831 that is meant to represent a masked ball and was inspired by a novel by Jean Paul (Richter). The fusion of literary ideas with musical ones – generally referred to as *program music* – may be said to have first taken shape in Papillons, Op. 2, a musical portrayal of events in Jean Paul's novel *Die Flegeljahre*. In a letter from Leipzig dated April 1832, he bids his brothers "read the last scene in Jean Paul's *Flegeljahre* as soon as possible, because the *Papillons* are intended as a musical representation of that masquerade." This inspiration is foreshadowed to some extent in his first written criticism, an 1831 essay on Chopin's variations on a theme from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, published in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*. Here Chopin's work is discussed by imaginary characters created by Schumann himself: Florestan (the embodiment of Schumann's passionate, voluble side) and Eusebius (his dreamy, introspective side) – the counterparts of Vult and Walt in *Flegeljahre.* A third, Meister Raro, is called upon for his opinion. Raro may represent either the composer himself, Clara Weick/Schumann, or the combination of the two (Cla**ra**+**Ro**bert).

The suite begins with a six-measure introduction before launching into a variety of dance-like movements. Each movement is unrelated to the preceding ones, except for the finale, in which the theme of the first movement returns. This movement starts by quoting the theme of the traditional *Grossvater Tanz* (Grandfather's Dance), which was always played at the end of a wedding or similar celebration. Schumann quoted some themes from *Papillons* in his later work, including Carnaval, Op. 9, but none of them appear in the section of Carnaval titled "Papillons". The main waltz theme from the first movement in *Papillons* was quoted in the section "Florestan", with an explicit acknowledgment written in the score, and again in the *Finale*: "Marche des *Davidsbündler* contre les Philistins", but without acknowledgment. The *Grandfather Dance* also appears in the final section, with the inscription "Thème du XVIIème siècle".

Humoreske **–** Despite its title, Schumann's ***Humoreske*** is not fundamentally a whimsical piece and wasn't intended to be 'funny'. Neither is it a slight work. Rather, it is one of Schumann's weightier and more lyrical works and its overall emotional effect is one of thoughtful melancholy. Perhaps it is this character, together with its extended and indefinite musical architecture, that prevents it from being a popular work. The title refers to humor in a broader sense where the word refers to a passing mood. Schumann himself said that the humors offered an "infinity of contrast" which infiltrated every aspect of the music. The abrupt shifts in mood and the use of musical figures that make one-time appearance makes the work sound chaotic, as if it were merely following one person's whim after another. The actual emotional trajectory, however, gives the work a deeper sense of coherence.

The *Humoreske* is normally divided into four larger sections which, in turn, are divided into contrasting subsections. The first section begins with a reflective and mildly melancholy theme that sets the tone for the whole piece. This theme is followed by two subsections which generate more ebullience before returning to the initial. The second section is a scherzo marked *hastig* (hastily). The first subject is followed by a more energetic one before returning to the first. This is followed by an Adagio which one again brings back the reflective temperament of the piece. The Adagio sets up the third section, marked *einfach und zart* (simple and tender). The opening theme again embodies the melancholy character of the beginning of the work, but is somewhat more intense, even agitated at times. The last subsection here is marked *innig* (inwardly) and it returns to the more resigned and relaxed mood underlying this work. The final section begins with the sort of energetic theme that one expects in a finale and is followed by a mildly pompous figure. The third subsection, *zum Beschluss* (towards the finale) but, far from carrying on the pomp of the preceding sections, it returns yet again to the melancholy mood that opened the work, but here in an extended manner. The brief ponderous coda that concludes the piece does nothing to dispel this dominant mood. It not only makes further mockery of the notion of a triumphalistic ending but it prevents the melancholy mood from having the last say in bringing closure to the work. As with the second and third sections, the final section fails to round off the sequence of musical ideas. Throughout its mood swings, the *Humoreske* builds a firm unity based on feeling in such a way that the listener is never given anything conclusive to hold onto.

Sonata No. 2 in G minor **–** The Sonata No. 2 in G minor was close to final conception by 1835, therefore essentially predating the Sonata No. 1 in F–sharp minor, but Schumann's beloved Clara, who had yet to suffer through the horrendous five years of her father's resistance to Schumann's role in her life, complained about the difficulties of the original finale, and another one finally took shape by 1838. The original finale was published as a separate work (the seldom-played *Presto Passionato)* as an appendix to Op. 22. The G minor is the shortest and expressively most intense of Schumann's piano sonatas, marked as it is by sharp contrast between the almost manic energy and *cri du coeur* of the first and third movements and the tender repose of the exquisite Andantino second movement. The sotto voce *finale*, though designated as a *Rondo*, seems almost to be endowed equally with sonata movement characteristics, with well defined development and reprise episodes and a splendid cadenza to set the stage for the zestful final pages. Many writers have poked fun at the celebrated direction Schumann gives at the start of the first movement (*So rasch wie möglich-Noch schneller*: As fast as possible-Even faster). This is guidance that Schumann repeats in different words in the Rondo (*Presto–Prestissimo*: Very fast–Extremely fast) and in the finale of the Sonata No. 3 in F minor (*Prestissimo possible-Più presto*: As fast as possible-Even faster). In all these cases, the indicated tempo is as much qualitative guidance as metronomic. What is essential, however, is the relentless brewing intensity of the pages, which has much more to do with the musical writing and its rhythmic, melodic and harmonic subtleties than with speed for its own sake.

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Robert Schumann's early piano music was original, novel, poetic and, to a large extent, autobiographical. Many of his works take as their subject Schumann's alter egos: Florestan and Eusebius, dual musical personalities that permeate works such as *Carnaval* and *Davidbündlertänze*. Others derive from his passionate love for Clara, and turn this love into a theme, using it to give musical expression to experiences, longings, anxieties, hopes and expectations, visions, dreams and fantasy images. Schumann himself confirmed this in a letter of 5 September 1839 to his former teacher Heinrich Dorn: "Certainly my music contains some the struggles Clara has cost me, and certainly it can be understood by you as such. She was practically my sole motivation for writing the *Concerto*" [i.e. the 'Concerto without Orchestra', referring to the Sonata No. 3 in F minor], among other earlier works.

Fantasiestücke **–** Schumann's ***Fantasiestücke*** (Fantasy Pieces) Op. 12 are eight titled pieces, written in 1837. Schumann titled the work inspired by the 1814 collection of novellas *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier* by his favorite author, E.T.A. Hoffmann, and dedicated it to Fräulein Anna Laidlaw, an accomplished and attractive 18-year old Scottish pianist with whom Schumann had carried on a brief flirtation. Schumann composed the pieces with the characters Florestan and Eusebius in mind, representing the duality of his personality. Eusebius depicts the dreamer in Schumann while Florestan represents his passionate side. These two characters

parlay with one another throughout the collection, and here Schumann once more gives a sublime illustration of the fusion of literary and musical ideas.

Des Abends is a notable example of Schumann's predilection for rhythmic ambiguity, as unrelieved syncopation plays heavily against the time signature, (leading to a feeling of 3/8 in a movement marked 2/8). Schumann, after completing the work, then gave the piece its title, which introduces the character of Eusebius, who serves as a symbolic representation of Schumann's dreamy self. He intended the imagery to be a "gentle picture of dusk." ***Aufschwung***: Schumann conceived of this as a depiction of the character Florestan (from Beethoven's Fidelio) indulging in his desires. ***Warum?***: The title "Why?" was intended by Schumann to signify Eusebius's reflection on the excesses of Florestan in "*Aufschwung*". The piece proceeds with "gentle questioning" and ends with an "inconclusive answer." ***Grillen***: With its whimsical, quirky nature, this piece solely represents Florestan and his eccentricities. ***In der Nacht***: The two characters of Florestan and Eusebius (the interaction of which Schumann was attempting to represent within the *Fantasiestücke*, similar to the *Davidbündlertänze*) unite for the first time in this piece, which has both "passion together with nocturnal calm." Schumann is said to have perceived in "*In der Nacht*" the story of Hear and Leander, albeit not until after writing it. ***Fabel***: Like the previous piece, this also juxtaposes both the passionate and dreamy side of Schumann within the same work (as opposed to representing each separately, as in the first subset). In this piece, the whimsical nature of Florestan is set against the ethereal tranquility of Eusebius, resulting in a "placid narrative together with rich veins of humor." ***Traumes Wirren***: The title is implicative of the struggle between the dreams and the passions within Schumann. In this piece the dreamy quality of Schumann, represented by the character of Eusebius, becomes entangled by the passions of Florestan, who symbolizes Schumann's more emotional side. The piece is rhythmically intense and a rapid pulse permeates it. ***Ende vom Lied***: Schumann described this piece as a combination of wedding bells and funeral bells. In a letter to Clara, his wife, he wrote about this last piece: "At the time, I thought: well in the end it all resolves itself into a jolly wedding. But at the close, my painful anxiety about you returned."

Sonata No. 3 in F minor ('Concerto without Orchestra') – The ***Sonata No. 3 in F minor*** was originally conceived in 1836 as a five-movement sonata with two scherzos. He offered it to the Viennese publisher Tobias Haslinger, who agreed to publish it, but under the condition of being allowed to call it "Concerto without Orchestra". Schumann went along with this whim, but found it necessary to omit one – or perhaps both – of the scherzos. In its three-movement guise, the work was dedicated to Ignaz Moscheles, a prominent pianist and composer at the time, who immediately noticed the discrepancy between its conception and its title and wrote to Schumann: "The work has less of the prerequisites of a concerto and more of the characteristic qualities of a grand sonata, as with some of Beethoven's and Weber's. The overriding seriousness and passion are not at all what one expects to hear in a concert hall these days."

In a letter to Clara, Schumann referred to the F minor Sonata as "one long *cri du coeur* for you" – a formulation that corresponds exactly to the work's passionate character. The connection with his beloved is especially manifest in the third movement: four highly expressive and imaginative 'variants' (*Quasi variazioni*) on a funeral march-like *Andantino* theme by Clara, and another case, like the *Davidsbündlertänze*, where Clara's melody is quoted. Also typical is the fact that the first movement – Allegro brillante – begins with the principal motif of this *Andantino*: a descending five-note sequence in F minor. The same motif, in inverted form, establishes the opening them of the *Finale*. Like the opening movement and *Andantino*, the *Scherzo's* principal theme is also based on a descending scale in on register (here the treble), that is echoed shortly immediately afterwards either in another register. Schumann omitted both *Scherzos* from the early edition, but restored one of them, however, in the 1853 edition. The *Finale* is marked by the most intense passion: a restless *Prestissimo possible*, which takes Schumann's virtuoso writing perhaps to the greatest extreme of all his works while also exploring daring and even overlapping harmonic transitions that presage musical impressionism of Ravel and Debussy. The tempo guidance Schumann offers for the Finale (*Prestissimo possible-Più presto*: As fast as possible-Even faster) echoes that of the Sonata No. 2 in G minor's first movement (*So rasch wie möglich-Noch schneller*) and *Rondo* (*Presto–Prestissimo*). In all these cases, the indicated tempo is as much qualitative guidance as metronomic. What is essential, however, is the relentless brewing intensity of the pages, which has much more to do with the musical writing and its rhythmic, melodic and harmonic subtleties than with speed for its own sake.

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Kinderszenen (Scenes from Childhood) – During the unhappy months when Friedrich Wieck's objections kept his daughter Clara and Robert apart, music was the chief means of communication between them. As Schumann wrote to her at Easter 1838: *"It's very curious, but if I write much to you, I can't compose. The music goes all to you."* His *Kinderszenen* (Op. 15), like his *Kreisleriana* (Op. 16) which followed, was inspired by Clara, although they are very different in character. The *Kinderszenen* are tiny genre pieces suggested by a remark of Clara's that Schumann sometimes seemed to her like child. In this work, Schumann narrates his adult reminiscences of childhood. Schumann had originally written 30 movements for this work, but chose 13 for the final version.

The ***Kinderszenen*** are so well known that the skill with which they are composed and linked into a series is easily overlooked. Schumann declared that the titles came to him after the music, indicating that musical ideas and contrasts were most important. No. 1 (***Of foreign lands and peoples***) conjures up the imaginative landscape – it is the story-teller's 'Once upon a time…' and only with the final piece (***The poet speaks***) does the author of these imaginings step forward.
In between comes enchanting variety. Some, such as No.5 (***Happy enough***) briefly explore a single phrase and figuration. Others, like No.11 (***Frightening***) deal in succinct contrasts of mood and tempo. Some are playful without ever being arch, such as No.3 (***Blind man's bluff***) and No.9 (***Knight of the hobby-horse***) and about as many are reflective without ever being sentimental, like the most famous, ***Träumerei (Dreaming***).

As Harold C. Schonberg would write of Schumann in his *The Lives of the Great Composers*: "He (viz. Schumann) himself often did not know what his music meant. Some of it was written in what amounted to a trance. First he wrote it. Then he looked it over, giving the work a title. That was his standard practice, and nearly all of his pieces were named after they were written. Schumann's rich, complicated harmony did indeed have a strong polyphonic texture, a fact not generally appreciated, and his careful indications of secondary and inner voices often pass largely unnoticed. The *Träumerei* is a classic example: far from being uncomplicated, as a casual listening might suggest, it is actually a strict piece of four-part writing, so rich in its polyphony that it *"could easily be given to a string quarter, or wind ensemble, or even to the four singing voices"* wrote Alban Berg decades later."

Faschingsschwank aus Wien (Carnival of Vienna) – In the autumn of 1838 Schumann went to Vienna to enquire about the possibility of transferring the music journal he both founded and edited, the *Neue Zeitschrift fur Music*, from Leipzig to the Austrian capital, where he vainly hoped he might make a better living and so hasten his marriage to his beloved Clara. While there he was amused to learn that the politically suspect "*Marseillaise*" was a forbidden tune in the city – hence his mischievous determination to insert it surreptitiously, as if

under a mask, in a work of his own while there. This explains his choice of a masquerade-like title, ***Faschingsschwank aus Wien***, (Carnival, or Carnival 'Jest', of Vienna, for a work begun in 1839 which is really a "grand romantic sonata", as he described it to a friend, with the use of sonata-form reserve for the fifth and final movement, added in 1840 when Schumann was back in Leipzig.

The spirited opening *Allegro* is cast in rondo form, and it is in the fourth contrasting episode, where the key changes from B-flat to F-sharp major, that after a few sly references to the *Grossvatertanz* (which also made notable appearances in Schumann's *Carnaval* and *Papillons*), Schumann work in his snatch of the "*Marseillaise*". Indeed, the spirit of *Carnaval* – with its cast of characters: members of the creative-minded *Davids-band*, who ultimately triumph over and crush the pedant *Philistines* – permeates this movement, and it seems clear that several 'masked' members of the Davids-band lurk behind several of the episodes, such as Chopin and Mendelssohn in the two interludes in G minor. Nor is Beethoven far away in the second E-flat major episode, so akin to the *trio* from the *Menuetto* of his Sonata No. 18 in E-flat major, Op. 31, No. 3. The *Romanze* in G minor is a simple but eloquently plaintive little movement in ternary form, like a sigh for the absent Clara. The B-flat major *Scherzino* dances lightly and festively along with much reiteration of a single, lilting rhythmic pattern. The *Intermezzo* surges passionately with turbulent romantic ardor in the darkly mysterious key of E-flat minor. The Finale continues the turbulence of the *Intermezzo* to an alternately frenzied, then tranquil, but always extremely brisk and extroverted; it's character is akin to the *Finale* movements of the *Carnaval* and 2nd and 3rd *Sonatas*, with a Coda that takes the already intense spirit of the work to a feverish conclusion.

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Novelletes – The ***Novellettes***, Op. 21, were composed during a period of great struggle that Schumann experienced in February 1838. Friedrich Wieck's vehement opposition to the union of his daughter Clara with Robert continued to escalate with no signs of subsiding. Schumann himself once stated: *"This work is a series of longish tales of adventure… intimately connected and written with passionate joy -- cheerful and flighty…but somewhere I also hit rock bottom."* No. 1 (in F major) and No. 2 (in D major) are by far the best known of the set, with their finely chiseled character, sweep and passionate intensity. The *Novellettes* are essentially mosaics of short episodes, which are repeated, rather than developed.

Romances – The three ***Romances***, Op. 28, constitute Schumann's last major published piano work before his *Waldszenen* Op. 82 and his *Gesänge der Frühe* Op. 133, between which he would dedicate most of his energy to his symphonies, vocal music and concertos. As Op. 28, the Romances conclude a period of feverish intensity in composition for the piano, which accounted for all of his first 23 works. The three pieces each possess a unique character, the first being one of dark, brooding, and feverish intensity, the second of longing tenderness, and the third in a triumphal spirit, a more extended and developed work with staccato rhythms, swirling figurations, and a dream sequence, bringing this colorful set to conclusion.

Blumenstück (Flower Piece) – ***Blumenstück***, Op. 19, is a series of short, connected and thematically related episodes, of which the second forms a recurring refrain while undergoing changes in both key and mood. It is considered to reflect the amorous human activities with which flowers are associated, rather than as depictions of flowers themselves. Schumann wrote the piece while in Vienna in January 1839; its companion piece, the *Arabeske*, Op. 18, was written in December 1838. Schumann wrote that he composed the *Arabeske* and *Blumenstück* "hoping to elevate myself to the front rank of favorite composers of the women of Vienna." In his letter of 15 August 1839 to Ernst Becker, Schumann dismissed both works as simply delicate salon pieces fit only for ladies to play; however, they both contain great beauty and are full of intimate charm. The two pieces were published simultaneously in August 1839, although not as a set. Both works were dedicated to Majorin Friederike Serre auf Maxen, the wife of Major Anton Serre, who together lent Schumann great encouragement in his romance with Clara Wieck, despite being close friends of her father, Friedrich Wieck, who was implacably opposed to the marriage. *Blumenstück* features a falling four-note motif that Schumann had previously used to refer to Clara in *Carnaval*. Rather than use his manuscript book, Schumann sketched *Blumenstück* in his Brautbuch; it was offered, along with the song cycle *Myrthen*, Op. 25, of 1840, as a bridal gift. In a letter to Clara on 24 January 1839, Schumann wrote that he had recently completed a number of small piano pieces, with the titles: *Guirlande, Rondolette*, and "other small things, of which I have so many, and which I shall chain together prettily under the title *Kleine Blumenstücke*, much like one might name a series of pictures". The *Blumenstück* is in the form of a double theme and variations, and the *Arabeske* is in rondo form. It is unclear whether the first two titles refer to works that are now lost or whether they are the original titles of *Blumenstück* and the *Arabeske* respectively. It has also been suggested that both these works were originally intended to be included in the otherwise unidentified *Kleine Blumenstücke*.

Waldszenen (Forest Scenes) – Schumann's ***Waldszenen*** (Forest Scenes), Op. 82 (1848-49) consists of nine short pieces similar in style and spirit to the composer's *Kinderszenen* (Scenes from Childhood), Op. 15 (1838). The opening piece, ***Eintritt*** (Entrance), features unusual, asymmetrical phrasing, but in its gentle swaying motion seems almost an invitation for a stroll into the forest. The best-known and most striking piece of the set is ***Vogel als Prophet*** (The Prophet Bird); its cross-relations, incomplete melodies, and extreme delicacy of texture create a weirdly beautiful atmosphere. Following the *Waldszenen* the decline in the composer's mental and emotional capacities in ensuing years led him to redirect his energies largely toward the compilation and revision of earlier works rather than the production of new music. The set is dedicated to a young lady named Annette Preusser.

Gesänge der Frühe (Songs of Dawn) – The ***Gesänge der Frühe*** (Songs of Dawn) Op. 133 from October 1853 – only a few months before his mental derangement and his attempted suicide in February 1854, after which he entered an asylum at Endenich – contains a mystery. The original title was "To Diotima/Songs of Dawn/for pianoforte". But Schumann expunged the words "To Diotima" and dedicated the work to the writer Bettina von Arnim, who visited him and his wife in Düsseldorf on the 28th of that month. It is now plausibly assumed that the work's title refers to Friedrich Holderlin's novel *Hyperion*, which Schumann knew and loved, and in which Diotima – Socrates' wise instructress in the art of love from Plato's *Symposium* – is Hyperion's beloved. In a letter to his publisher Arnold, Schumann designated the *Gesänge der Frühe* as *"characteristic pieces, which describe the approach and progress of morning, but more as an expression of feeling than as a tone painting"*. The pieces form a cycle in being interlinked through various means. The solemn meditative simplicity of the first suggests a hymn. Its principal motif is paraphrased several times in the restless second piece. The third, with its gigue-like rhythms, evokes associations with hunting accompanied by a horn or trumpet fanfare. The extremely delicate fourth piece – an interplay of light and dark – is the only one of the cycle in a minor key, imbuing it with a gentle tension. The final piece returns to a hymn-like quality, with a rustling accompaniment joining after the opening *recitative*, carrying it along to a peak of gentle intensity, and finally to its mysteriously subdued conclusion, gradually fading out in a vision of peace and serenity. The hymn-like qualities and thematic similarities of the first and last; the restlessness of the second and fourth; and the energetic peak of the third all contribute to give

the entire work structural symmetry. Clara Schumann regarded the *Gesänge der Frühe* as *"highly original pieces, but difficult to grasp […] There is such a strange mood in them."*

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Notes: *Ian Kemp (Fantasy); Wikipedia (Arabeske); N.C. Boyling (Carnaval); Paolo Petazzi/Conatantin Floros (Kreisleriana); H Gil-Marchex (Toccata); I Kemp (Symphonic Etudes); Constantin Floros (Davidsbündlertänze); Paolo Petazzi (Sonata No. 1); Wikipedia (Papillons),* andrewmarr.homestead.com/Schumann (*Humoreske*); D Hall (*Sonata #2); Wikipedia, Ewen / Burkholder / Palisca (Fantasiestücke); Constantin Floros and Paolo Petazzi (Sonata No.3); Harold C. Schonberg – The Lives of the Great Composers/Schumann (Introduction); M Struck (DG410653-2; Kinderscenen); J Chissell (DG2536415; Faschingsschwank aus Wien); Peter Vantine (Novellettes); Wikipedia (Blumenstück); The Piano Society (Waldzenen); Constantin Floros and Paolo Petazzi (DG2894713702; Gesänge der Frühe); edited and with additional text by Alan Murray.*

Sunrise Music Series (2010/11)

Alan Murray, piano

Program	Date
Chopin (200th Anniversary) – *The Piano Music*	
the Etudes	Sep 19
the Preludes	Sep 26
the Polonaises	Oct 3
the Ballades	Oct 10
the Scherzos	Oct 17
the Sonatas	Oct 24
the Nocturnes (I), Mazurkas (I) and Impromptus	Oct31*
the Nocturnes (II), Mazurkas (II) and Waltzes	Nov 7*
Intro & Rondo, Fantasy, Berceuse, Barcarolle, Andante Spianato & Grande Polonaise	Nov 14
Schumann (200th Anniversary) – *The Major Works*	
Fantasy, Carnaval, Arabeske	Nov 21
Kreisleriana, Symphonic Etudes, Toccata	Nov 28
Sonata #1 in F-sharp minor, Davidsbündlertänze	Dec 5
Sonata #2 in G minor, Humoreske, Papillons (Butterflies)	Dec 12
Sonata #3 in F minor (Concerto without Orchestra), Fantasiestücke (Fantasy Pieces)	Dec 19
Faschingsschwank aus Wien (Carnival of Vienna), Kinderszenen (Scenes fr Childhood)	Jan 2
Gesänge der Frühe (Songs of Dawn), Blumenstück, fr.Novellette/Waldszenen/Romanze	Jan 9
Ravel – *The Piano Music*	
Gaspard de la Nuit, Jeux d'eau, Sonatine	Jan 16
Le Tombeau de Couperin, Valses Nobles et Sentimentales, Menuet	Jan 23
Miroirs, Sérénade Grotesque, Pavane, Menuet Antique, a la manière de Chabrier, ..	Jan 30
Debussy – *The Piano Music*	
Etudes, l'Isle joyeuse	Feb 6
Preludes (Books I & II)	Feb 20*
Images, Children's Corner, Arabesques, Danse, Masques	Feb 27
Pour le Piano, Estampes, Suite Bergamasque, Nocturne, Rêverie, Ballade, ..	Mar 6
Albéniz – Iberia, Navarra **Granados –** Goyescas, El Pelele	Mar 13*/20
Beethoven: The 32 Piano Sonatas & Diabelli Variations *(afternoons, March - May)***	
In 8 Programs: (1) Sonatas #1-4; (2) Sonatas #5-10 (incl "*Pathétique*"); (3) Sonatas #11-15 (incl "*Moonlight*" *Pastorale*"); (4) Sonatas #16-21 (incl "*Tempest*", "*Waldstein*"), (5) Sonatas #22-26 (incl "*Appassionata*","*Les Adieux*"); (6) Sonatas #27-29 (incl "*Hammerklavier*"); (7) Sonatas #30-32; (8) Diabelli Variations	
Rachmaninoff – Preludes, Etudes-Tableaux, Moments Musicaux, Sonatas	Apr 3*/10*/17*
Scriabin (Son. #2/5), **Mussorgsky** (Pictures at an Exhibition), **Balakirev** (Islamey)	Apr 24*
Stravinsky (Petrouchka), **Prokofiev** (Son. #7), **Berg** (Sonata), **Bartók** (Out of Doors)	May 1
Brahms – Handel Variations, Paganini Variations, Sonata #3 in F minor	May 8*
Schubert – The Middle and Late Period Sonatas, "Wanderer" Fantasy	May 15/22*
Franz Liszt – *Major Works*	
Sonata in B minor, Sonetti del Petrarca, Au bord d'une source, Vallée d'Obermann	Jun 5
Dante Sonata, Legends, Hungarian Rhapsody, Spanish Rhapsody, Mephisto Waltz	Jun 12
Transcendental Etudes, Opera Paraphrase, Liebestraum, Consolation	Jun 19*

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