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Once More “Between Absolute and Program Music”: Schumann’s Second Symphony*

ANTHONY NEWCOMB

For recent critics, Schumann’s Second Symphony has been a refractory text. While the nineteenth century judged it to be one of his highest achievements, the twentieth is generally puzzled by it and tends to reject it as defective. Clearly it is not the text, but our way of understanding the text, that has changed. This suggests that our problems with the piece may be rooted in current analytical tools for absolute music. Other ways of approach may permit us to make a better argument for the symphony, and to restore it to its former place in the canon.

* This essay is an expanded version of a talk given at the national convention of the American Musicological Society, meeting in Ann Arbor in November 1982. I was stimulated to it initially by the intersection of my own love for the Schumann symphony with Ludwig Finscher’s article, “Zwischen absoluter und Programmusik” (Finscher 1979 in the List of Works Cited at the end of this essay).

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Music for Schumann was an expressive enterprise and a form of communication, reflecting in some way the experience of its creator. Not that his music sets out to describe external objects or to chronicle particular events; rather it embodies the emotions or interior attitudes attendant upon experienced objects or events. This is an aspect of Schumann’s artistic position that has been documented by Lippman (1964), Plantinga (1967), Brown (1968), Sams (1969), and others. I need not argue it here.

For my present purposes it is important to emphasize that these embodied emotions or attitudes—what Schumann called *Seelenzustände* (Plantinga 1967, 120)—need not be just static mood pictures.¹ Schumann discovered

¹See Meyer 1967, 43: “The referential mode focuses attention not primarily upon the evolving, changing aspect of music, but upon the more or less constant, enduring moods and connotations delineated by tempo, timbre, dynamics,

early in his compositional career how to arrange small, individually static but interrelated character pieces in a series, in order to imply an evolving story. But this is not the only way to present a narrative series of *Seelenzustände*. One may also do so in a larger form—to use a literary example, not as a series of lyrics like Müller's *Die schöne Müllerin*, but as a novel like *Wilhelm Meister* or Schumann's beloved *Flegeljahre*. The idea was scarcely foreign to the early nineteenth century. In his articles for Schilling's *Enzyklopädie der gesammten musikalischen Wissenschaften* of 1838, Gottfried Wilhelm Fink compared the *grosse Symphonie* to the "dramatically constructed *Gefühlsnovelle*." A. B. Marx, in his Beethoven book of 1859, calls the symphony "a reflection of life [*Lebensbild*] unfolding in a series of psychologically natural steps."² Schumann himself wrote in a letter of 6 November 1829 (Schumann 1898, 82–83), "When I play through Schubert, it is as though I were reading a novel of Jean Paul composed into music. . . . In general there is no music besides Schubert's that is so *psychologically* remarkable in the *course of its ideas* [*Ideengang*] and their connection and in the *apparently* logical leaps" (emphasis Schumann's).³

The conception of music as composed novel, as a psychologically true course of ideas, was and is an important avenue to the understanding of much nineteenth-century music: Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, for example, was so understood by at least some listeners from the outset. Thus we may find at the basis of some symphonies an evolving pattern of mental states, much as the Russian formalists and the structuralists find one of several plot archetypes

accentuation, and the other attributes of music that themselves tend to be relatively stable for considerable periods of time." The thesis in the present essay is that the "kinetic-syntactic" and "referential" modes of interpretation (to use Meyer's terms) are not separate, as Meyer claims—the second dealing exclusively with "more or less constant, enduring moods and connotations delineated by tempo, timbre, dynamics, accentuation." The kinetic-syntactic may be referential as well, and may involve all the elements that Meyer lists in order to depict constantly shifting "moods and connotations."

²Fink and Marx are quoted in Dahlhaus 1978, 18–19.

³Schumann is speaking of the Grand Rondeau in A major for piano, four hands, D. 951.

as the basis of novels and tales. Such simple psychological-dramatic evolutions furnish certain expectations as to a succession of very general moods. The composer may then play off these expectations against the series of events in the standard musical forms, against the succession of such forms in a larger work, and against the motives and syntax of his own specific design in order to create meaning. In music such as this, not only musical syntax and conventional musical-formal types are the background to interpretation and to proper understanding. So also is a recognition of the plot archetype.

The plot archetype may be indicated by reference to a specific work of world literature (*Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Faust*), or it may be left unexplicit, in which case it must be a relatively standard fable that is not over-particularized and is easily recognized. The general question of how such archetypes are established, communicated, and identified is a subject for a separate study. My concern here is to point out that the archetype is communicated and elaborated by, among other things, the musical form of the individual work—"form" meaning everything from the manner of building themes and periods out of motives, cadences, and standard harmonic successions, to the manner of building multi-movement works out of a succession of individual movement types.

Whatever the specific means for identifying the plot archetypes, Schumann's audience seems to have been well acquainted with them, for contemporary reviews agree overwhelmingly in lining up Schumann's new symphony of 1846 with Beethoven's Fifth (and sometimes with his Ninth as well, which was heard as belonging to the same plot archetype). The particular evolving pattern of mental states in all three of these works defines what Walter Wiora (1963, 388) identifies as a "principal type of small and large instrumental music in the nineteenth century: . . . the expression, reinforced by sound symbols, of a psychological evolution, such as suffering followed by healing or redemption." Early critics heard Schumann's Second as belonging to this general, even this specific type. This was not just an incidental but an essential part of its meaning.

Excerpts and paraphrases from at least some of these early reviews can give an idea both of

how the work was then understood and of the high regard in which it was held.⁴ The most extensive reviews were of the newly published orchestral score, which appeared in late 1847 (Hofmann 1979, 137). The first of these, by Alfred Dörrfel (see Appendix A, no. 6) praises the symphony as the high point of Schumann's output. Dörrfel approaches the work through the themes, describing their succession in some detail, and identifying them by character as well as by musical content. The woodwind phrase of mm. 15ff., for example, represents *Wehmut*; the first theme of the initial Allegro represents *gefesselte Kraft*, and so on. He explicitly compares the finale with that of Beethoven's Fifth (and of Mozart's G-Minor)—not for its form, but for its emotional tone. The answering review by E[duard] Krüger⁵ (see Appendix A, no. 7), in the *Leipziger Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* of 31 May and 7 June, likewise praises the symphony as the high point of Schumann's output and gives a particularly rich thematic description of the "bold" and "insistently effective" finale, which Krüger praises for its "sharply drawn outlines." (These views of the finale are significant here because it is the finale, and, to a lesser extent, the first movement that will become the centers of dissatisfaction in the present century.) Like most early critics (including Dörrfel), Krüger praises the richness of thematic combinations in the first and last movements especially, and he comments that despite the many thematic ideas, the unity of the piece is not threatened—though he does not specify *why* it is not.

The reactions of both Moscheles and the young von Bülow are preserved to a performance of December 1848, the third in Leipzig. Von Bülow (1895, I, 139, letter of 19 January 1849) echoes the views of most early critics in finding the piece difficult to understand, espe-

cially at first hearing, but "most interesting." Moscheles's reaction was set down after his second hearing of the piece, at which point he felt "more and more that [Schumann] follows boldly in Beethoven's footsteps."⁶ Meanwhile Clara Schumann had had the opportunity to hear the piece again after the somewhat troubled first performances of November 1846, as part of the Schumann days in Zwickau in July 1847.⁷ She now found it the "boldest and most passionate of his works"—together with *Das Paradies und die Peri* her favorite of them (Litzmann 1920, II, 135). (The ranking of this latter work at the summit of Schumann's output was likewise nearly unanimous in the nineteenth century.) Again in a letter to Brahms of 21 December 1859 (Brahms 1927, 291) she called op. 61 "the most masterful of Robert's orchestral works." The anonymous author of a long summary of Schumann's career in *Die Grenzboten* of late 1850 (see Appendix A, no. 11) calls op. 61 "one of the best instrumental works that we possess." He is most hesitant about the first movement, because of its relative lack of melodiousness and its uniformity of mood (these are typical comments in the early reviews); the fourth movement he finds the richest "as regards its content," because it concentrates in itself all the "thoughts" of the previous movements. He, too, interprets the "deeper meaning" of the symphony, tracing in the series of movements *die That eines Auferstandenen*

⁶Moscheles 1873, 352. The quotation is from a letter of 2 January 1849, reacting to the recent performance in Leipzig; on p. 330 Moscheles mentions having attended the second performance of 16 November 1846 as well. For other instances of the comment concerning Beethoven, see Appendix A, nos. 3, 6, 7, 8, 9.

For a use of the word "form" almost opposite to our current use, see this passage from a letter by Moscheles from 1851: "In the 'Waldscenen,' too, which I have lately played, I thought the form too sketchy. I well understand that [Schumann], like a good poet, wishes to give an outline, and leave to the fancy of his hearers the filling in of the whole picture; but I prefer a more definite form and elaboration to that particular dreaminess, that irresolution and groping about. In his symphonies he is great" (Moscheles 1873, 364).

⁷For a description of the first performance, with its complete program, see Dörrfel 1884, 114–15. Schumann's new symphony was the second half of a program whose first half was too long, and which Mendlessohn had further extended by giving in to pressure for an encore of Rossini's Overture to *William Tell*. The Schumanns were unhappy about both programming and encore.

⁴Appendix A gives a chronological list of those reviews from between 1846 and 1855 that I have been able to see. It is doubtless far from being a complete list of the early reviews of op. 61. For example, Boetticher (1941, 360–65, 387) cites some reviews that I have not seen.

⁵For biographical details on Krüger see Boetticher 1941, 228ff., 276, 380ff. and Uwe Martin, "Ein unbekanntes Schumann-Autograph aus dem nachlass Eduard Krügers," *Die Musikforschung* 12 (1959), 411–15. Dörrfel is in the standard sources.

(p. 525). The young Brahms, in a letter to Clara Schumann of 14 December 1855 (Brahms 1927, 160), reaffirms Clara's judgement of the symphony. Reporting on a Leipzig performance of two days earlier under Julius Rietz, he asserts that "the symphony is my favorite of the five" (obviously including in that figure the Overture, Scherzo, and Finale, op. 52).

The high esteem accorded the symphony, the tendency to view it as a succession of ideas primarily embodied in a succession of movement types and thematic characters, and the agreement about identifying the particular succession of ideas with those of Beethoven's Fifth (and perhaps his Ninth)—all these characteristics of the early reviews are epitomized in an article of 2 April 1850 by Ernst Gottschald (see Appendix A, no. 10).⁸ Although Gottschald's article may not constitute ideal criticism for the 1980s, its predominant elements are ones that we need to cultivate again if we are properly to appreciate Schumann's Second and many of the works around it. Gottschald first asks what is the *Grundidee* of the entire work. His answer: struggle leading to victory. He then proceeds to review the *Ideengang des Werkes*, in which process he makes clear that he views the progress of this succession of ideas as a kind of *Bildungsroman* in music. (See, for example, his discussion of the third movement, whose meaning, he asserts, can only be understood against the background of the struggle that preceded it.) Particularly appropriate here are his characterizations of the evolution undergone by the theme of the last movement after the full stop at m. 280. The theme is, he says, *leise flehend* when it first appears (Krüger called it *halb klagend* at this point); it then steps more and more strongly forward, calling to itself *viele Fremdlinge*, until it finally occupies the whole *Chor*, thus unifying and completing the *Idee* of the whole work. Like the critic of *Die Grenzboten*, Gottschald finds the last movement, with the third, the richest in "ideas," "*weil er wie dieser die beiden ersten Sätze zur principiellen Voraussetzung hat und beide die Idee in ihrem vollen Dasein spiegeln*" (p. 142).

⁸Gottschald is also the author of *Beethovens Symphonien nach ihrem idealen Gehalt* (Dresden, 1854).

Even such a down-to-earth and technically oriented commentator as Theodor Uhlig asserts (in a review of the Third Symphony, see Appendix A, no. 12) that "already in his Second Symphony Schumann showed the same guiding artistic intentions as Beethoven in general and as the Beethoven of the C-Minor Symphony in particular." He adds that "particular ideas lie at the root of [Schumann's] recent large instrumental works (from the Second Symphony onward, in our opinion)."

The above snatches give only the sketchiest history of the critical reception of Schumann's op. 61 and of the rather rapid formation of a series of standard opinions about it—its difficulty, the uniformity of mood (struggle) of its first movement, its richness in thematic combinations and evolutions, its open emulation of Beethoven, its new balance between "objectivity" and "individuality," its attainment of a new high point in the output of its composer. But it should be clear from the above sampling that, for these early critics, Schumann's Second had a "content" of what they called "thoughts" or "ideas," and that such content was carried and communicated not only by such architectural matters as balances of opposed and recurring thematic sections and tonal areas, but also—even particularly—by succession and evolution of thematic character.⁹

Here the crucial matter is not only the succession of thematic sections and movements as a formal diagram would present them, but also the manner in which one theme is generated by and interacts with another, which manner is laden with metaphorical meaning. In this matter of quasi-dramatic thematic evolution and interaction—a primary aspect of the "reinforcement by sound symbols" to which Wiora refers in the sentence quoted above—Schumann was astonishingly subtle and innovative. Properly to assess Schumann's Second, then, we do well to pay as careful attention to the sources of a given theme and to the successive transformations of thematic character as we habitually do

⁹In fact, thematic character, evolution, and interaction outweigh architectural and tonal balance as carriers of formal shape, and hence of ideal meaning, in much music of the later nineteenth century. Schumann's Second, with its limited reliance on tonal effects and restricted tonal spectrum, represents an early instance of this tendency.

to the vagaries of tonal happening. And we do well to think of the thematic units partly as characters in a narrative, transformed by the requirements of various different contexts, while remaining recognizably related to their previous selves. They interact with each other, with the plot archetypes, with their own past guises, and with conventions of musical grammar and formal schemes analogously to the way the characters in a novel interact with each other and with the moral and legal conventions that shape the situations. Finally, even such a piece as Schumann's Second—which ambitiously aspires from its first notes to continue the tradition of the Viennese *große Sinfonie*—should not be heard as engaging in a solely formal dialogue with that tradition. It is not only a modification of a formal tradition, but also the interaction of that tradition with new expressive methods and goals.¹⁰

We have seen that Schumann's Second was from the beginning interpreted by critics and commentators according to the plot archetype of Beethoven's Fifth: i.e., suffering leading to healing or redemption. As it happens, the same archetype can be connected with the personal circumstances surrounding the genesis of the work, for the same evolution of mental states appears in Schumann's brief and moving entries in his *Haushaltbuch*, as he sketched the symphony in less than three weeks. The entries lead from *symphonistische Gedanken* (12 and 13 December 1845), to *Symphoniaca* (14 and 15 December 1845), to *Symphonie* (16 December), to *erster Satz fast fertig* (17 December); they then move with increasing speed across the middle movements to arrive at *Mus[ikalische] Aufregung im letzten Satz d[er] Symphonie* (25 December), and finally at *Musik[alisches] Glück—beinahe fertig mit d[em] letzten Satz* (26 December).¹¹

¹⁰A point also made in Finscher 1979.

¹¹*Tagebücher* 3, ed. Nauhaus (1982), 408–10. (It seems unlikely that the symbol of rebirth intrinsic to Christmas would have been lost on Schumann.) In a letter to Mendelssohn of 27 December 1845 Clara tells a similar story: "Mein Mann ist Kürzlich sehr fleissig gewesen und hat mich zu Weihnachten hoch erfreut und überrascht mit den Skizzen zu einer neuen Symphonie; er ist lauter Musik jetzt, so dass eigentlich gar nichts mit ihm anzufangen ist—ich habe ihn doch gem so!" (Litzmann 1920, II, 133).

Schumann's often-quoted letter to D. G. Otten of April 1849 offers another specific and personal exemplification of the same plot archetype, as he talks of his struggle through to mental and physical health during his actual work on the symphony.¹² Thus, although the plot archetype of a particular work may have no connection with the life of the composer, that of op. 61 had an autobiographical dimension. The struggle in the symphony from suffering to healing and redemption seems also to have been Schumann's own.

The end-accented plot archetype of op. 61 throws considerable weight on its last movement (just as it had in Beethoven's Fifth), and it is in Schumann's Finale that the traditional form is most deeply deflected by the *Ideengang* (to use Schumann's and Gottschald's term) and by a thematic evolution that draws together the threads of the entire symphony that has gone before—that calls to it *viele Fremdlinge*, to use Gottschald's metaphor. Perhaps for just this reason, the last movement has been the most troublesome for the twentieth century. Although the particular goal of this essay is to argue a new view of the shape of this last movement, a formal diagram alone of recurrent key areas and thematic materials cannot make the argument. The tendency to reason thus is what has led our century's critics to misunderstand and, to varying degrees, reject what was long held to be one of Schumann's best pieces. The thesis of the present essay is that a shift in critical methods led to the shift in critical evaluation. A summary of influential critical judgements over the past 130 years—either oft-quoted ones or ones by major musicians—will help us to understand the nature of the shift and when it took place.

Brahms's judgement of 1855 we have already

¹²A letter of 23 November 1846 to Fischhof in Vienna (Schumann, 1886, 232) seems to refer to the same dark mood surrounding the genesis of the op. 61, as well as to Schumann's continuing worry that the piece was too difficult of access for the public: "Eine neue Symphonie bring' ich mit [the Schumanns were preparing a trip to Vienna], meine Frau ein neues Trio; jene tritt etwas geharnischt auf, dieses ist schon milder." A letter of 3 March 1847 to Taubert in Berlin (Boetticher 1941, 164) says of op. 61, "Sie ist im ganzen ein finsternes Stück,—erst im letzten Teil tun ein paar freundliche Strahlen hervorbrechen." See also the letter of 26 November 1849 to Louis Ehlert (Schumann 1886, 273).

heard. Joachim, in letters to Clara Schumann of 9 January 1855 and December 1858, gave the Second the same primacy of position (Joachim 1911). Wasielewski (1858/1880³, 207) calls op. 61 “one of the most brilliant testimonies to [Schumann’s] genius” and “without doubt his most significant accomplishment in this area” (i.e., in the genre).¹³ Johann Christian Lobe (1852/1860², 266) felt that although the First Symphony was light and Mendelssohn-like, it was still “genuine Schumann,” while in the Second he had “lost the right road” (an opinion that Kretzschmar will bring forth again at the end of the century). What is important here is that, in preferring the First to the Second, Lobe explicitly places himself against established critical opinion: “its effect, in spite of all the journalistic hue and cry, is weaker than the first.”

Ambros (1860, 64) calls op. 61 “one of [Schumann’s] most significant works” and “classic in the best sense” (by which he means “destined to endure”). He praises it especially (p. 92) for its contrapuntal richness and for its *die Motive babylonisch auftürmende Finale*. Franz Brendel (1851/1875⁵, 485), says that, although he had previously found the piece and especially the finale difficult (see Appendix A, no. 5), his own reservations have been cleared up with time, and that the piece “is now more and more recognized as one of Schumann’s greatest achievements, as a rounded masterpiece, in which all sections stand on the same heights.”¹⁴ August Reissmann’s Schumann monograph of 1865 devotes eleven pages to op. 61, praising it especially for its contrapuntal combinations and for the manifold ways in which themes and sections are related to one another. The motto, he says, “*der ideellen Inhalt der Geschichte* [Schumann’s] *Herzens, die er uns erzählt, zusammengefasst enthält.*” Although his study includes more analytic detail than usual for the nineteenth century, and although “*wir wollen kein Programm schreiben,*” he goes on to offer a

summary one, leading us through a progression of moods from a “wavering between passionate excitement” and “*süss wehmutige Schwärmeri*” in the first two movements to “*jubelnder, welt stürmender Glückseligkeit*” in the finale (150–51). Tchaikowsky, whose reverence for Schumann is well known (Brown 1978, 68, 71, 75) found the Second Symphony, together with the Third, to be the high point of Schumann’s output (Tchaikowsky 1974, 156). Spitta (1883, 412–14) saw Schumann’s symphonies as the most important written since Beethoven, and the Second as the closest to Beethoven in “its bold decisiveness of form and overpowering wealth of expression.” Heinrich Reimann’s monograph of 1887 (106–8) likewise sees op. 61 as the high point of Schumann’s symphonic output, “from the technical point of view his most complete masterwork.” He, too, stresses both the main motive as a protagonist emerging from the struggle of each movement, and the inner connection of the themes to one another.

In the *Führer* of Kretzschmar (1887, 165ff.) an influential voice was raised against the symphony. Kretzschmar’s method in these oft-reprinted “guides through the concert hall” was to go through the pieces, identifying their sections and offering opinions about the quality of their themes. The themes of movements one and four he found lacking in freshness and naturalness. Schumann had, he said, been deserted by his *naiv-romantisch, volkstümliche Züge*.

During the ensuing twenty years good and bad opinions overlapped. Although Mahler made no specific pronouncement about the Second Symphony, he loved and admired the Schumann symphonies (Bauer-Lechner 1980, 123), and paid them what he considered the tribute of touching up their orchestration. Riemann (1901, 294) said that the Second exceeded the other three in “breadth of conception and in depth of working-out.” A book of 1903—called, perhaps significantly, *Symphonies and their Meaning* (Goepf 1903)—is full of admiration for Schumann’s Second, and for the last movement in particular, about whose thematic evolution and interrelationships Goepf is more detailed and sensitive than any other commentator. (He devotes thirty-nine pages to the symphony as a whole.)

But by this time opinion had begun to shift

¹³Wasielewski’s comments on op. 61 in the first two edns. of his book (1858 and 1869) are brief, though he obviously respects the piece highly. In the third edn. of the book (1880), he adds considerable detailed commentary on this piece (and on many others).

¹⁴This statement first appears in the third (1860) edn. of Brendel’s book.

decisively, as regarded both Schumann's symphonies as a group and the Second in particular. Bernard Shaw (in a review dated 28 February 1890) and Felix Weingartner (1904, 31) disclaimed interest in Schumann's symphonies altogether. Abert, writing in the same year as Goepf (1903, 103) seems to have had Kretzschmar open before him. Like Kretzschmar, he sees in the Second the clear intention to imitate the "*hochpathetischen* Beethoven symphony," but finds that the realization falls far short of the intention, particularly because of formal problems in the first and last movements. Carl Reinecke (1903, 420–21) seems to recognize this trend when he begins his comments on op. 61 as follows: "To wish to denigrate this symphony in relation to Schumann's others seems a fruitless way to begin." He goes on to point out that it is very different from the others, and to acknowledge as sources of annoyance to some the rhythmic obsessiveness of the first movement, and the plethora of thematic ideas in the last.

W. H. Hadow (1911, 221) finally takes the typical twentieth-century approach to these movements: he tries to parse them in terms of the formal procedures of circa 1800. He is inevitably puzzled, and puzzlement leads to dissatisfaction. He condemns both the first and last movements of the Second (together with those of the D-Minor Symphony) for "vagueness of outline," thus precisely reversing Krüger's and Spitta's judgements.¹⁵

From here forward, commentators tend either to condemn the Second (and especially its last movement) or to ignore the work altogether. August Halm, in his recently published collected criticism (Halm 1978), does not mention the piece at all. In *Essays in Musical Analysis*, vol. 2 (originally published in collected form in 1936), Tovey analyzes all but the second of Schumann's symphonies. Only Walter Dahms (1916, 364–67) warmly admires the piece: "Herein let the objection to Schumann's lack of constructive power once and for all be laid to rest." Significantly, he takes a very nineteenth-century approach to the piece, not trying to clas-

sify the finale according to any formal scheme; his description of it is couched in purely poetic terms. Busoni (letter, 1915), Karl Nef (1921), Olin Downes (1935), Werner Korte (1937), Abraham (1938), and Schaufller (1945) all find the piece weak—or worse. Of these, Abraham's important survey of nineteenth-century music, often republished, was the most influential.

Of the post-war critics, Mosco Carner's view of the symphonies, published in a Schumann symposium of 1952 (Carner 1952), has surpassed even Abraham's in influence, to judge from the number of times its ideas have been quoted or paraphrased. Carner finds the symphony deeply flawed, and in his detailed analysis it becomes clear how much of the blame falls on the perceived formal incoherence of the last movement, which Carner sees as a sonata with an exposition of 118 measures, a "telescoped" development and recapitulation of roughly 160 measures, and a coda of 310 measures.¹⁶ A number of critics and commentators pick up both Carner's analysis and his judgement. Kloiber (1964) and Brian Schlotel (1972) are typical examples. Neither Abraham (in *The New Grove*) nor Carner (1980) have since revised their opinions. Armin Gebhardt, in the only full-scale study of Schumann's symphonies (1968), is even harsher on the Second and its last movement, although he tries a different formal interpretation than Carner's. He interprets the movement as an extremely sectional, patchy pair of interlocking rondos, with fourteen sections rolling past as functionally undifferentiated as the cars of a freight train. This view makes the movement even worse to him than it had seemed to Carner, and he goes so far as to

¹⁶I do not know whether this view of the movement is already present in Carner's dissertation (M. Cohen, *Studien zur Sonataform bei Robert Schumann*, Ph.D. diss. University of Vienna, 1928). But it seems reasonable that he might have arrived at it coming from a study of the last movement of the piano quintet, where a passage in even half-notes does indeed introduce a long coda (mm. 224–427) containing transformations and combinations of the main themes of movements one and four. In the quintet, however, the sonata-rondo form has run its normal course (ABACABA) by m. 224, with strongly articulated returns of both secondary and principal themes preceding to a firm close, all in the tonic. We are thus at the proper point in the procedure for a section both to present itself and to function as a coda (however long or short it may turn out to be). The same is not true at m. 280 in the finale of the Symphony.

¹⁵The D-Minor Symphony responds to—I should say almost requires—the same kind of analytical approach that I shall apply to the C-Major.

recommend cutting nearly half in performance. The most intelligent recent interpretation of the movement, by Carl Dahlhaus (1972), is one to which I shall want to return. Even Dahlhaus, however, is puzzled by how to interpret the movement as a whole, and must finally judge it to be formally incoherent (1972, 111–12).

As regards form, the mistake comes in wanting to claim that the finale is in any *single* form. It starts as one thing and becomes another, and this formal transformation is part of its meaning.¹⁷ In order to approach more closely the full meaning of the movement, one must appeal to four additional sources of meaning, two of which have already been introduced here. One is the position of the movement in a plot archetype, in a standard series of mental states. A second is the stress on thematic metamorphosis throughout the symphony, which leads us to hear the intrinsic meaning of each theme as colored by what it has been. A third is the implication of character born by form and genre: whatever form and genre is implied by the movement at any given moment carries implications of character, as does any change in implied form or genre. A fourth is any allusion that thematic or formal procedure may make to other pieces, or even to words. A summary of some elements in the first three movements of the symphony will enable us to appeal to these sources in interpreting the finale.

The opening measures of the first movement present the thematic protagonist of the rest of the symphony, here in embryo (or perhaps one should say in chrysalis, borrowing Schumann's favorite image of natural

metamorphosis, the butterfly). This thematic embryo, like so much of Schumann's music, shows a division of character into two contrasting parts, which one might label Florestan and Eusebius, or (after the protagonists of Schumann's beloved *Flegeljahre*) Wult and Walt. (Both Krüger and Gottschald noted this division of character in the opening motto: see Appendix A, nos. 7 and 10.) And, again like much of Schumann's music, it gains associative meaning through allusion to, even veiled quotation of, other music. This thematic embryo is marked **A¹-B¹** in ex. 1. Its two simultaneous parts are the diatonic, vigorous, Florestan-like **A¹** and the chromatic, crawling, Eusebian **B¹**. The thematic allusion—made by interval contour, scale degree, structural position, instrumentation, and rhythm—is to Haydn's last symphony, often performed in the early nineteenth century. This allusion proclaims as effectively as a poetic preamble one quite specific program: Schumann's courageous and ambitious decision to measure for the first time his particular methods and abilities against the overwhelmingly, even terrifyingly prestigious tradition of the Viennese Classical symphony—a tradition that for Schumann meant Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert's Great C-Major Symphony. Part of the struggle that most early commentators noted in op. 61 is Schumann's struggle to make this tradition his own, and the intent to emulate the tradition colors even his thematic material in many places, just as it had Schubert's in his C-Major Symphony.¹⁸

Abraham (1938/1964, 65) says that the thematic unity of Schumann's Second, given by "a mere motto theme, quoted at the end of the Scherzo and in the coda of the finale," is "the equivalent of a uniform consisting of a simple armlet." This is clever but quite wrong. The thematic unity of this symphony is thorough and deeply worked out, as many nineteenth-century commentators observed. And the opening thematic idea, while it does recur in close to its original form at the two points mentioned, also transforms itself in the introduction into additional motivic material, from which the symphony then

¹⁷For further development and other instances of this idea of formal transformation, see Newcomb, "Those Images that Yet Fresh Images Beget," *Journal of Musicology* 2 (1983), 227–45. Cf. also Eric Blackall's summary of Jean Paul's similar ideal of character and plot: "[Jean Paul] downplays the importance of motivation as tending to produce a rather mechanical effect, and, secondly, he places therefore more emphasis on open characters, those who can act this way or that. Fixed characters he thinks are not good in a novel because their actions are far too easily predictable. . . . This throws light on . . . the contrast we often feel in his novels between inner development and external action, a contrast which is close to ironic" (Eric A. Blackall, *The Novels of the German Romantics* [Ithaca, N. Y., 1983], p. 97).

Might Schumann have drawn some ideas about musical form from the form of Jean Paul's novels?

¹⁸That this intent was a conscious one on Schumann's part is reflected in his comment to the Dutch composer-conductor Johannes Verhulst, when, on the occasion of a visit to Leipzig in December 1845, Verhulst asked Schumann whether his (just sketched) symphony was successful. Schumann replied, "Ja,—ich denke, so 'ne rechte Jupiter" (F. Gustav Jansen, *Die Davidsbündler* [Leipzig, 1883], p. 250, n. 214^a). This classical tradition probably determined the anti-lyrical, insistently motivic character of the first theme of Schumann's first Allegro, as it did of Schubert's. Concerning the model for Schubert's theme, see Joshua Rifkin, "A Note on Schubert's Great C Major Symphony," this journal 6 (1982), 13–16. On the idea that interaction with a previous piece is a kind of program, see Ludwig Finscher, "The Struggle with Tradition: Johannes Brahms," *The Symphony*, ed. Ursula v. Rauchsaupt, trans. Eugene Hartzell (London, 1973), p. 167.

A¹
I, 1-2

B¹

A²
I, 15-16

A³
I, 25-26

A⁴
I, 50-52

A⁵
I, 126-28

A⁶
I, 138-42

B²
I, 73-74
Theme II

B³
I, 92-94
Closing Theme

B⁴
I, 327-30

I, 341-43

I, 345-46

II (Scherzo), 1-2

B⁵
II (Scherzo), 390-end

A⁷, B⁶
III, 1-6
(cf. B⁵) x x *fp* *fp*
(cf. A⁶) y y

Example 1: Thematic evolutions in movements I-III.

grows. It thus functions both as motto and as motivic embryo.

Some of the stages of this thematic evolution are sketched out in ex. 1. For example, the material that is heard directly after the first motto-proclaiming sentence—the first material announcing itself as in some sense contrasting—is in fact a development of the rhythm and interval contour of the motto **A**¹: the dotted rhythm and the move up and back down a fifth.¹⁹ This new version of the motto (see **A**²), whose boldness of character is considerably compromised by the addition of a chromatic tone borrowed from the melodic style of **B** and by placing the goal of the upward leap on a weak beat, becomes the generating element of the most important thematic units of the piece. After reminding us of its source by touching back to motive **A**¹ in original form, Schumann gives us another slight evolution of the same shape, a more athletic, diatonic version with sharply dotted rhythms (**A**³), which will lead directly to the first theme of the Allegro (**A**⁴). And again, at the end of this theme (m. 66) he touches back to motive **A**², as if to remind us of the source of his first theme. The point here is not the thick network of thematic interconnections as a source of structural unity, but the crucial changes of character that take place in the course of the thematic evolution. The meaning of a thematic unit is not only its present character, but is also strongly colored by the residue of meaning that remains from its previous states, which are not forgotten. For example, the introverted and complex, less active impression given by motive **A**² is derived largely from its contrast with **A**¹, from which it came. Likewise, we feel particularly strongly the nervous instability and lack of direction in the irregular metrical build and harmonic rhythms of the first thematic period of the allegro because they have been developed from the square phraseology and stately harmonic rhythms of the opening motto.²⁰ Both changes suggest the atmosphere of internal uneasi-

ness and struggle that most commentators have found in the body of this first movement.

The character of the particular version of the motto in **A**² is then taken yet further in the development of the first movement (see **A**⁵ and **A**⁶). This last example—the most dissonant and *sehnsuchtsvoll* of the versions—might well not be connected by us with the motto **A**¹, save that it is presented to us by the composer as a metamorphosis of the motto in the careful series of steps summarized in ex. 1.²¹ This last, most extreme version is then recalled as the background for the grief-laden theme of the third movement (**A**⁷–**B**⁶). In case we might miss the similarity of shape in the first measure of the slow movement, Schumann forcefully reminds us of **A**⁶ through an almost literal quotation of it in mm. 5 and 6 of the slow movement.

Other thematic strands come together as well to form the meaning of the much-admired theme of the slow movement, strands that run back to motive **B**¹ of the embryo. **B**¹–**B**³ juxtapose the chromatic **B** motive with both the nervously active second theme and the more expansive closing theme of the first movement in order to suggest the connections between the three. There follows a further transformation of this second theme–closing theme unit in the coda of the movement, a transformation from which the scherzo theme is immediately drawn (**B**⁴). Thus the inactive, somewhat melancholy character and the crawling chromaticism of motive **B**¹ literally lie behind the vigorous athleticism of the scherzo theme, and help to give it the unstable, contradictory character remarked in many early reviews.²² This antic scherzo is in fact not quite what it pretends to be. Most important for this quick summary, the chromatic habit of motive **B** (cf. m. 2, bass) gives rise, first in the coda of the first movement, then in the succeeding scherzo, to the flattened third degree at the peak of the brief upward thrust of the motive, and, by extension, to the important diminished seventh harmony underneath it. These return at the very end of the coda of the scherzo (mm. 390–end, cf. the *x*'s in **B**⁵), and are the most immediate source for the brief rise to E_b than to A_b, each followed by a sudden fall, in the theme of the slow movement.

This, the local source of this new theme, is, as we have seen, not the only one. The above-mentioned

¹⁹The connection between **A**¹ and **A**² is made locally clearer by the beginning of the last phrase of the “motto” section (mm. 10–11), which, like motive **A**², moves up a second to its second note.

²⁰Although superficially square, even the first phrase of the “motto” section has subtle signs of the tension between its two motivic ideas. While the motto **A**¹ in the brasses, for example, is a straightforward four-measure phrase, the simultaneous **B**¹ in the strings, not nearly so clearly articulated, begins to repeat after only three measures.

The underlying metrical and rhythmic asymmetries in Schumann's superficially square phraseology merit a separate study. Such a study would help to revise the oft-heard charge of rhythmic-metrical monotony leveled at this piece and many others by Schumann. Schumann's metrical subtleties are much more accessible to the modern analytical methods of E. T. Cone, Andrew Imbrie, Thrasyboulos Georgiades, and Arnold Feil than they were to those of Hugo Riemann.

²¹The composer must demonstrate such connections for them to have the dramatic effect intended. Whether they are real in the piece depends on how they are made—the order in which the steps are made, and the way by which we are led from one thing to the next. It is a concern with these matters that differentiates my approach here from that of Rudolf Réti (1951) and Rika Maniates (1967), who are concerned only with the structurally unifying effect of thematic resemblance, and hence pay no attention to the way in which the composer calls attention to his thematic resemblances or the order in which he presents them.

²²E. g., Appendix A, nos. 1 and 3.

source in motives A⁵ and A⁶, though more distant in time, is musically even closer. Thus in the theme of the third movement, after a kind of preview in the development section of the first movement (A⁶), the two separate character strands of the thematic protagonist (A¹ and B¹) are brought back together in a new thematic formulation—now in a mood of melancholy pathos and suffering made clear both by the musical characteristics of the immediate ancestors of the theme, and by the falling diminished fourth, a figure from the *Figurenlehre* of the Baroque music in which Schumann had immersed himself for months before writing the C-Major Symphony.

The resulting theme, which utterly dominates the third movement, remains fundamentally unchanged in character and identity. Though the tone of the end may be more of melancholy resignation than of pathetic grief, the whole movement remains focused around this theme and around its evocation of what Mosco Carner (and Schumann before him) called “the dark days.” At the end of the movement—at the threshold of the last—we find the two character strands of our thematic protagonist once more brought together, but not in an atmosphere of triumph: rather, in an atmosphere of resignation and near stasis.

The last movement then begins with a rough shout of affirmation. If the plot archetype is that of Beethoven's Fifth—suffering finding its way to strength and health—Schumann's beginning here may seem an unsatisfactory way of making the crucial move. To bring the strands together so carefully at the end of the third movement only to break them, it seems, with the sharp reversal that greets us at the beginning of the last is much less subtle even than Beethoven's obvious transition from ghostly lack of vigor at the end of his third movement to triumph at the beginning of the finale. But Schumann's design turns out to be both subtler and, intellectually at least, more satisfying than Beethoven's. Schumann begins the last movement with an abrupt disjunction, juxtaposing passive resignation and active triumph. Yet he will then bring about their reconciliation, primarily through thematic evolution and interaction, across the course of the finale itself. He will achieve his goal not at the beginning of the movement, but only in its final section, the recapitulation. The traditional function of the recapitulation in a sonata movement—that of reconciliation of proposed oppositions—is thus fulfilled, but more in thematic than in tonal terms. To have missed this essential function of the final

section is what frustrates Dahlhaus's interpretation of the movement (1972).

The recapitulatory function in this movement is the crux of the question of overall shape. Here we can see most clearly the extent to which structure both affects and is affected by thematic evolution. For example, the new thematic guise (the result of thematic evolution) actually absorbs into itself, even within the course of a movement, a previous theme or group of themes. Structurally as well as dramatically it takes their place; it is the present embodiment of what they once were. In the course of the development section there is a process of thematic evolution as concentrated and drastic as anything that has happened since the thematic embryo at the beginning of the work was transformed into the material of the exposition to the first movement. The transformed material of the development of the finale then replaces in the recapitulation the original thematic material of the exposition. It goes on to preside, so to speak, over the reconciliation of the sources of thematic discord presented in the preceding three movements. The idea is a powerful one, and one which Bruckner and Mahler, for example, seem to have appreciated.

Let us return to the rough juxtaposition of mood at the end of the third movement and beginning of the fourth. Part of the meaning that this juxtaposition comes to have derives from the play against the conventional formal expectations aroused by the beginning of the fourth movement, and from an evolution of formal type in the course of the movement parallel to the thematic evolution. In a kind of formal metamorphosis, this finale starts as one thing and becomes another. The same is true of its character type. If, as Dahlhaus proposes (1972, 110), there are two opposed genres of last movement—on the one hand the cheerful, rather frothy *lieto fine* of many a Haydn symphony or even of Schubert's great C-Major; and on the other the serious, reflective, weighty, summarizing finale, of which Beethoven's Ninth is a good example—then Schumann's last movement certainly starts out to be the *lieto fine* type. And we are rightfully a bit disappointed. To return for a moment to the terms in which literary critics discuss standard plot types, we know where we are in a typical course of events—in this case at the point where suffering forces its way through to triumph—and we are disappointed with Schumann's rather bluff way of handling it. The beginning of this finale seems out of place in a piece that has led from one thing so carefully to another; it seems not so much to assimilate

and transform past experience as to turn away from it. The principal of narrative continuity that hitherto characterized the piece seems to have been replaced by a more Classical manner of juxtaposition and complementarity. Our first reaction is probably to wait and see what will become of this curious beginning.²³

What sort of musical form does it seem to imply? In answer, let us rapidly chart its course. After the shout of affirmation, which sounds functionally like an introductory flourish, we are plunged into a kind of thematic throwback: a first theme that, while it is metrically much more regular and freely flowing than the first theme of the first movement, nonetheless recalls the dotted rhythms and the circling of pitches around the third, fifth, and sixth scale degrees that had characterized that theme. This material is built into a rather long theme with its own internal contrast and return, and with a full cadence on the tonic (mm. 5–45). A brief transition leads with minimum articulation into a second theme whose motivic spinning-out is based on a Weber-like trivialization of the theme of movement three (mm. 63ff.). This second theme, which fails to cohere into a real tune, has nothing like the weight or structural solidity of the big first theme. There is no closing theme, and no firm cadence in the second key.²⁴ When the big first theme returns immediately in the tonic at m. 105, our suspicions seem confirmed: we are in the midst of a modest-sized sonata rondo, which is, moreover, the typical form for the *lieto fine* finale.

For a while, all continues according to this implied scenario. The opening flourish returns with a typical articulating function to signal the beginning of the development (mm. 118ff.). A subtle extension of the marcato tail of the flourish (see ex. 2) may not even catch our attention when it happens here for the first time. Motivic fragmentation, imitation, and modulatory sequencing begin, all of which are stylistically appropriate to the beginning of a sonata-rondo developmental mid-section.

As the section proceeds, however, Schumann gradu-

ally changes the tone of the piece—first by insisting on the extended tail of the flourish (mm. 141ff.) and gradually removing both the disjunct intervals and the marcato indications (mm. 156ff.), all this in order to produce a rhythmically smooth scalar sweep. In the ensuing measures, the scales are further smoothed out, extended (mm. 179ff., first rising, then falling as well), and then joined with the previous second theme both upright and inverted (and with a quote of motive A⁶ from the development of movement one and from movement three, mm. 228ff.), before finally using the scalar sweep to settle into a stable C-minor tonality and sink to a strong full cadence (m. 273).

This passage of some 150 measures embodies a crucial process, and the grand C-minor cadence at m. 273 brings us to a crucial point in our story. We have returned to the resigned melancholy (and the C minor) of the end of movement three—a return in the development section of the finale which makes a striking reference to the emotional and thematic design of Beethoven's Fifth. Unlike Beethoven, however, Schumann (or his thematic protagonist) will not handle this moment the same way the second time. After waiting in seeming indecision through three general pauses, he hears a new element that the previous section has revealed in what I call the introductory shout of affirmation. This new element better combines the characteristics of the A and B sides of our protagonist and allows a real transformation rather than a juxtaposition—a transformation of both mood and musical material. (It is a nice detail that, in yet another transformation of formal meaning, the seeming introduction turns out to be seminal, while the first and second themes are in the course of disappearing.) Tentatively—Dahlhaus remarks that the theme arrives here *wie aus der Ferne*, though I have heard no performance that finds for this moment the proper mood of hesitant, gentle wonder—we hear the rhythmically smooth, rising tail of the introductory flourish take a new thematic guise, one for which the scalar sweeps of the previous section are the preparation.

Note that this new thematic guise is not yet the Beethoven reference that it will become in what I shall call the final theme, at the moment of recapitulation some hundred bars later. Insensitivity to the importance of thematic evolution has led many commentators on this movement to say that a “new theme” arrives at m. 280, and to dismiss the rest of the movement—more than half of it—as a coda or epilog, which simply repeats this theme. As we now see, the final theme is in fact derived from the introductory idea of the movement in a carefully graded series across the entire development (mm. 118–394). Even after the full stop at m. 280 it passes through further intervallic, modal, and tonal changes on the way to the recapitulation (see ex. 3 for some of these changes), and in the process it makes clear connections between its own elements and elements of the scalar sweep of the beginning of the development (for

²³One of Abert's fundamental reasons for finding fault with the movement is its opening theme, which, “with its coarse, rustic character, falls entirely outside the conceptual world of the whole” (1903/1910², 96). This is the point. And in fact Schumann himself will reject it as the main theme in the course of the movement.

²⁴The second key area is only slightly more strongly articulated in the first movement of op. 61. Though a second and a closing theme appear, the second theme arrives first in E^b and the exposition spends only twenty measures in the dominant—a curious underarticulation of the second key area that recalls Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*. Although there is wide-ranging tonal variety in op. 61, to my ears no clear tonal polarity and dialectic is established either within the movements or between them. See the unconvincing attempt to explain away this peculiarity in Reissmann 1865, 145ff.



Example 2

example, mm. 288*ff.*), or elements of the previous first and second themes (cf., for example, the turn motive of the central section of the first theme, mm. 31*ff.*, with mm. 300*ff.* here). One of the most significant melodic changes here is the confident ascent to the high tonic degree, first occurring in mm. 330–35 (no. 4 in ex. 3). This ascent is a crucial expressive feature of the final theme—crucial because it breaks through the tendency of the principal thematic material of the movement (and of the first movement as well) to hit repeatedly against the upper fifth and sixth degrees without leading them through the leading tone to the high tonic. That the final theme does make this upward linear connection gives it a character of serene power and confidence.

Once this final transformation has established the last pre-condition for the final theme, we hear a passage that, in harmonic and motivic style, clearly says “retransition.” Even the full introductory flourish re-

turns in its conventional articulating function to announce a major formal division. This vigorous definition of the moment of recapitulation sets up the thematic replacement of which I have spoken: Schumann leads us to the point in the form where we should expect the bumptious, somewhat clumsy first theme of the exposition, then in its place he gives us the conjunct, rhythmically smooth, serenely confident final theme (no. 5 in ex. 3). Again the meaning is partly in the contrast between what had existed previously (and should recur here) and what we actually hear at this point. The unsatisfactory juxtaposition of the opening of the movement has evolved into this new thematic guise, which accommodates in one theme both the restrained, Eusebian side of our thematic protagonist and the assertive, confident, Florestan-like side.

This thematic replacement is paralleled by a formal and generic one. Formally, in the process of the

1. IV, 280*ff.*

2. IV, 292*ff.*

3. IV, 316*ff.*

4. IV, 324*ff.*

5. IV, 394*ff.* (Recapitulation)

Example 3: Evolutions of the theme in the development of movement IV, leading to the final theme at the recapitulation.

work in Schumann's earlier development.²⁷ Finally, through the metaphorical implications of the musical qualities of the theme itself, there comes an additional kind of meaning, which can scarcely be called extra-musical, since it is an intrinsic part of the musical happening itself. As examples of such metaphorical implications: the jerky, irregular melodic and harmonic rhythms, and the unconventional periodic build of the first theme of the first movement give it a certain straining and unstable character (*gefesselte Kraft*, in Dörffel's words; Appendix A, no. 6); likewise the metrical placement and harmonic-melodic shape of the important developmental motive A⁵, especially in contrast with the motive A¹ from which it evolved, gave it a pronouncedly different, yearning character. So, too, the final theme here gains a pronounced character, which I call serene confidence. Although his character comes partly from the context—by contrast with what it comes from and replaces—it also comes from the metaphorical implications of its musical elements: from its smooth rhythms, its solid periodic build, its regular harmonic rhythms and large symmetrical units, and especially from the easy stepwise rise to the high tonic degree that is its head motive, which seems to release and to resolve all the unsatisfied upward strivings of earlier themes.

Only in reflecting on the interconnecting network of thematic relationships in the symphony do we realize that the first time we had heard this kind of melodic motion was in trio II (after a fleeting preview in trio I, mm. 108–10). In conjunction with the first occurrence of this style of melodic and rhythmic movement (a style that will, more than anything else, define the character of the final theme), Schumann invokes yet another source of thematic meaning: this time the kind of code conjoining musical note and alphabet letter that Eric Sams (1969) has called the "tonal analogue" in Schumann. The tonal analogue here is with the letters BACH. It is in keeping with the symphonic genre that the reference be publicly accessible, as opposed to the esoteric references of, say, *Carnaval*.²⁸

Schumann has skillfully manipulated the thematic context of the scherzo so as simultaneously to make the reference an integral part of it, and to call attention to it as something separate. The obtrusive B^bs in the final phrase of each occurrence of the

²⁷Eric Blackall (see n. 17), chaps. 3 and 4, refers often to the explicit ideal of what he calls self-reflexiveness in the early nineteenth-century German novel, and its realization through allusions, both direct and veiled, to other works by the author himself and to famous works by other authors. Again, might Schumann be imitating his beloved Jean Paul?

²⁸Finscher 1979, 112 also calls attention to this reference. Schumann's review (*NZfM* 12/30 [10 April 1840], 120) of a performance by Liszt of *Carnaval*, cited in Finson 1983, p. 2, shows both Schumann's awareness of the connection of such ciphers with Bach, and his worry about the private nature of a cipher such as ASCH.

schерzo (mm. 90–92, and so on) are picked up by the syncopated chromatic B^b of trio II, intruding into the smooth rhythms and diatonic melody of the beginning of the trio in order to set off the notes BACH (mm. 230ff.), which it introduces. The reference, veiled at first by being incorporated into a tune, becomes clearer in the mid-section of the little trio, where Schumann submits the head motive of his fugal theme to the strict operations of stretto and inversion (mm. 248ff.), and, in the midst of this, just before the recapitulation, has BACH emerge in long notes in the accompanying voices (mm. 256–62, announced by the *sfz* of the violas and passing thence to violin I). This reference to BACH and to strict contrapuntal style is, in Schumann's terms, clear.

Here one's interpretation might take an autobiographical turn, justified by the documents quoted and cited above. When we later come to realize that trio II is the harbinger of a thematic style that will lead to serene confidence, reconciliation, and triumph—as Schumann put it, to *musikalisches Glück*—in the finale, the conjunction of that thematic style here with Bach and with strict contrapuntal devices gives the reference an additional layer of meaning—an allusion to Schumann's own immersion in the fugal style of Bach during his disease and deep depression of early 1845. Here he seems to give a nod of gratitude to the role of craft, exemplified by Bach, as a source of strength and health through personal distancing.²⁹ If this interpretation can be accepted, it is an example not only of musical reference, but also of a statement of rather complex ideas through musical context.

The sources of meaning brought to this interpretation would scarcely seem distant or daring to our colleagues in literary or art criticism. Yet we tend still to stay away from them in contemporary music criticism. Ludwig Finscher recently deplored (1979, 108)

²⁹Both Brendel (Appendix A, no. 5) and Dörffel (Appendix A, no. 6) speak of the new "objectivity" of op. 61, or of its new balance between "objectivity and individuality." According to the anonymous author of the survey of 1850 in *Die Grenzboten* (Appendix A, no. 11) op. 61 "marks the great leap through" into Schumann's third period, in which intellectuality [*Reflexion*], seriousness, and force of will begin to replace the former preponderance of the intuitive and natural. Some critics liked this (Dörffel and *Die Grenzboten*); others regretted it (Brendel at first, Lobe, and Kretzschmar). But for all of them op. 61 occupied a crucial position in the on-going attempt to divide Schumann's output into stylistic periods. There also seems little doubt that the seriousness and *Reflexion* of this piece represents a highpoint in Schumann's output; that Schumann was, at least by 1849, worried about the difficulty of the piece; and that later large public pieces, such as the E^b Symphony and the Cello Concerto, represent a conscious attempt to adopt a more accessible style.

the habit, even in current musicological practice, of avoiding the interpretation of content by falling back on mere description of form, with a concomitant relegation of questions of content to the realm of the ineffable. Although the widespread timidity before the task of bringing into words the transmusical content of large, structurally demanding works is all too understandable after our experiences with common program-booklet hermeneutics and with the historically insufficiently grounded hermeneutics of Schering, this timidity can scarcely be allowed to define the considered behavior of a historian toward his object of study, all the less so when the merest

glance at the scores shows that formal and idiomatic peculiarities of the works cry out for an interpretation according to transmusical content.

The example of Schumann's Second Symphony suggests that the timidity of which Finscher speaks may not only prevent us from seeing some layers of meaning in the art work. It may in some instances keep us from penetrating beneath the surface at all.



APPENDIX A Early Reviews of Opus 61

1. *Signale für die musikalische Welt* 4/46 (November 1846), signed W. L. Review of the premiere of Thursday, 5 November.
2. *Ibid.* 4/48. Review of the second performance of Monday, 16 November.
3. *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* (hereafter *AMZ*) 48/47 (25 November 1846), col. 785–88. Review of the second performance of 16 November 1846.
4. *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (hereafter *NZfM*) 25/42 (18 November 1846), p. 170. Review of the second performance of 16 November 1846.
5. *NZfM* 25/45 (2 December 1846), pp. 180–82. Summary review of recent Gewandhaus concerts, signed Fr. Br[endel?].
6. *NZfM* 28/17 (26 February 1848), pp. 97–101. Review of the published score, signed Alfred Dörffel.
7. *AMZ* 50/22 (31 May 1848), cols. 353–57 and 50/23 (7 April 1848), cols. 369–73. Review of the published score, signed Emden, 12 Mai 1848, E. Krüger.
8. *NZfM* 30/9 (29 January 1849), pp. 51–52. Review of the Gewandhaus performance of 18 January 1849, under Schumann, signed A. D[örffel?].
9. *NZfM* 30/21 (23 April 1849), pp. 187–88. Review of the arrangement for piano, four-hands.
10. "Robert Schumann's zweite Symphonie. Zugleich mit Rücksicht auf andere, insbesondere Beethoven's Symphonien," *NZfM* 32/27 (2 April 1850), pp. 137–39; 32/28 (5 April 1850), pp. 141–42; 32/29 (9 April 1850), pp. 145–48; 32/31 (16 April 1850), pp. 157–59, signed E. Gottschald.
11. *Die Grenzboten* 9/3 (Week 39, 1850), pp. 489–97; 9/4 (Week 40, 1850), pp. 521–30. On op. 61, see esp. pp. 524–26.
12. *NZfM* 36/11 (12 March 1852), pp. 117–20; 36/12 (19 March 1852), pp. 129–33. Review of the score of Schumann's Third Symphony, with comments on the Second, signed T[heodor] U[hlig]; reprinted in abbreviated form in Theodor Uhlig, *Musikalische Schriften*, ed. Ludwig Frankenstein (Regensburg: Bosse, n.d.) pp. 236–46.
13. *Neue Wiener Musikzeitung* 3/49 (7 December 1854), signed H—I. Review of the concert of 3 December 1854 of the Gesellschaft für Musikfreunde.
14. *NZfM* 43/25 (14 December 1855). Review of a Gewandhaus concert of 6 December 1855, signed F4. Comments that the piece had not been heard in Leipzig "for years."

APPENDIX B
List of Works Cited

ANTHONY
NEWCOMB
Schumann's
Second
Symphony

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