

SCORE REVIEWS

Robert Schumann, *Fantasy Pieces* op. 73 for Piano and Clarinet, version for violoncello, edited by Ernst Hertrich, fingering of piano part by Hans-Martin Theopold, fingering and bowing of violoncello part by Reiner Ginzel (Munich: Henle, 2006).

The distinct lack of critical engagement with Robert Schumann's *Fantasiestücke* op. 73 seems inversely proportional to their popularity in the concert hall, be it in the original version for clarinet and piano or, as here, in arrangement. The former is in many ways surprising, as these pieces, dating from 1849, display all the characteristic traits of Schumann's more discussed works; epigrammatic, lyrical and fragmentary they show – yet again – the composer's ability to write music that not only projects itself (however ephemeral that projection may be), but also offers an intimation of the space around the musical work. Listening to the first of the *Fantasiestücke* one gets a sense of music already in progress (much as in Schumann's 'Im wunderschönen Monat Mai' from *Dichterliebe*),¹ the listening position rendered that of eavesdropping on a musical statement in mid-flow. In this way Schumann was able to give a strangely physical demarcation to the spatial divide between musical phrase and listener; perhaps a typical play on music's unfolding in time by a composer fascinated with hidden meaning in music, as the (apparent) start in mid-phrase projects the work backwards before its audible manifestation.

In thus challenging our perception of the space around the heard work and mapping out a sense of music/listener positions, Schumann perhaps leaves us a small clue that explains the curious change in title that op. 73 underwent at a very late stage: it was only in preparing the manuscript for publication some months after completing the pieces that Schumann changed the work's title from *Soiréestücke* to *Fantasiestücke*, as if moving from referencing the social space in which these works may be heard (and indeed first were²) to the flight of imagination that may result from hearing such music and to which their ultimate title alludes. Writing of Schumann's *Papillons* – and clearly reliving their allusion to Jean Paul – Franz Brendel narrates a fictional but characteristic encounter with music heard at a distance within a social space:

Aroused by conversation and the spirits of wine, one listens to the music from a distance, perhaps from an adjacent room. Indulging in such impressions, I know almost nothing that could stimulate the fantasy and sentiments more passionately and vigorously, not with beautiful harmonies, but in a fantastic way.³

¹ See Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (London: Fontana, 1999): 41–8.

² The first public performance of the *Fantasiestücke* was given by Müller (clarinet) and Dentler (piano) on 14 January 1850 at an 'evening entertainment' of the Leipziger Tonkünstlerverein. Schumann had rehearsed the pieces a mere five days after their completion with Kotte (the solo clarinetist of the Königliche Kapelle in Dresden). See p. iv.

³ Franz Brendel, 'Robert Schumann with Reference to Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and the Development of Modern Music in General', trans. Jürgen Thym, in *Schumann and his World*, ed. R. Larry Todd (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994): 321.

Brendel's account offers us a paradigmatic parallel to hearing the *Fantasiestücke* and understanding their strangely fragmentary musical nature: it is music both for and of a social space, a music half-heard, emerging out of the din of the soirée, that alludes to the half-light of fantasy that such music may trigger.

The 'fantasy' of the title therefore bears little relation to its eighteenth-century namesake, except perhaps in its sense of formal freedom. Instead, we are here to understand fantasy – as in other of Schumann's works bearing that title – as a conflation of imagination, the imaginary and the fantastic; less to do with compositional than with literary-aesthetic precedents.⁴ In hearing the *Fantasiestücke* thus – be it programmatic or not – we at once close Schumann's compositional circle and perceive the characteristic in his style. In drawing the work's title and technique from literature, in this case in particular E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier*, Schumann captured something essential in Romantic art: its vivid referencing of events that remain forever unclear. The listener is left with the sense of an impression, variously illuminated but never clearly understood. As Franz Brendel wrote:

A particular, individual emotional state becomes the sole content of a piece of music; shorter compositions with different characters are strung together; a poetic idea provides the connecting thread; and coherence through technical means takes second place.⁵

And yet it was Schumann's gift that he could make the listener perceive 'coherence through technical means' as 'poetic idea' and, indeed, that in experiencing his music the two were perhaps inseparable. Each piece in itself appears aesthetically incomplete, and the *Fantasiestücke* are linked both by thematic allusion and an 'attacca' direction at the end of each piece. The result is a strong sense of a 'poetic idea' acting as 'connecting thread' as the 'technical means' slips out of focus amidst an overwhelming sense of evolving meaning and poetic unity.⁶

The *Fantasiestücke* for piano and clarinet were written on 11–13 February 1849, coming amongst a flood of diverse compositions in the first part of the year that followed Schumann's completion of his opera *Genoveva* and his incidental music to Byron's *Manfred*: the *Adagio and Allegro* for horn and piano op. 70 (14–17 February); the *Konzertstück* for four horns and orchestra op. 86 (sketched 18–20 February, orchestrated by 11 March), vocal music and the *Fünf Stücke im Volkston* op. 102 for cello and piano (13–15 April 1849).⁷

The influence of Jean Paul's writings on the compositional aesthetics of Schumann is well documented. Nevertheless, I would draw the reader's attention to Leon Botstein's excellent account in 'History, Rhetoric and the Self: Robert Schumann and Music Making in German-Speaking Europe, 1800–1860', in Todd, ed., *Schumann and his World*: 7–16.

⁴ See Arnfried Edler, 'Robert Schumann', in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Ludwig Finscher, 2nd edn (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2006), *Personenteil*, vol. 15: 306.

⁵ Brendel, 'Robert Schumann': 320.

⁶ Charles Rosen makes a similar point when he writes: 'in the sets of short piano pieces by Schumann – the *Papillons*, the *Davidsbündlertänze*, the *Humoresk* – there is, not a specific narrative program, but the suggestion of a program, an implied narrative that cannot be spelled out but that carries the music along and holds the work together.' Rosen, *The Romantic Generation*: 87.

⁷ Schumann had completed the score to *Manfred* on 23 November 1848 and had made final revisions of *Genoveva* in January 1849.

What is striking in Schumann's compositional output of that year is that one-third of the composer's total chamber music for one instrument and piano dates from these months, marking both the beginning of his engagement with that combination and a noticeable turn towards timbres unusual in his work so far (orchestral music excepted): horn, clarinet, oboe, cello, viola, motivated by the desire to 'let all instruments have their turn'.⁸ This stylistic move has been more broadly seen as a conscious turn away from a virtuoso, public style towards a more private one, borne out by much of Schumann's compositions of that year (p. iv).⁹ Certainly Schumann had good reason to turn to the private musical sphere. Despite having lived in Dresden for some five years, he had so far failed to find widespread recognition there, and any attempts at breaking through that deadlock were further hampered by the political turmoil that gripped the town from 3 May 1849, with fighting between rebels and the combined troops of Saxony and Prussia – and more specifically the attempt to draft the composer into the republican security brigade – forcing Schumann and his family to flee the town first to Maxen on 5 May and then on to Kreischa on 11 May.¹⁰ Clara Schumann voiced her puzzlement at the discrepancy between the political events of the time and her husband's musical style in her diary in May 1849 when she wrote that she 'found it strange that the terrors of the outside world should kindle his inner poetic sentiments in so contrary a fashion' (p. iv).¹¹ Critical opinion has been divided as to how to group the *Fantasiestücke* op. 73 stylistically, variously seeing them as either underlining this move towards a more private musical language or as countering it with a display of 'verve and intensity' (p. iv). The latter claim is surely difficult to endorse, however, given the overriding lyricism of numbers 1 and 2 and the strangely forced, desperate energy of number 3; if there is a sense of verve here it fails to convince.

The turnaround time from composition to publication was extraordinarily quick.¹² Having approached Schumann in the first instance, the publisher Carl Luckhardt accepted the *Fantasiestücke* immediately (declining the *Drei Freiheitsgesänge* for male choir WoO 4). Schumann sent Luckhardt a manuscript copy on 27 March 1849, receiving a set of proofs in May and returning them on 3 June. It was during this period that the title changed from *Soiréestücke* to *Fantasiestücke*, and it is most likely that the inclusion of the instruction 'ad libit.

⁸ Diary entry Robert Schumann of February 1849, quoted in Edler, 'Robert Schumann': 316. Edler considers these works to collectively constitute the development of 'a new kind of fantasy piece in piano chamber music' in which Schumann 'transferred the fantasy- or character-piece developed in the pianistic realm in the "Davidsbündler period" to chamber music' (Edler, 'Robert Schumann': 316).

⁹ Edler has argued that Schumann's works from this period mirror the contemporary interest in new sound combinations in orchestral music in music for smaller ensembles destined for 'the private and semi-public musical sphere'. Edler, 'Robert Schumann': 316.

¹⁰ Edler, 'Robert Schumann': 273. See also John Daverio, 'Robert Schumann', in Stanley Sadie ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 2001): vol. 22, 782.

¹¹ This discrepancy does not appear to have been felt as such by Schumann, writing to Franz Brendel on 17 June 1849, 'alas, to tell music of the pains and joys that move our time, that, I feel is my lot more than any other's'. Quoted in Ulrich Lenz, 'Robert Schumann: *Fantasiestücke* op. 73 für Klarinette und Klavier [1849]', available online at www.christinemitlehner.de/texte/schum_fantasiestuecke73_txt.htm (accessed 27 November 2006).

¹² The following outline of events is indebted to Ernst Hertrich's account in his preface to the edition under review.

Violine od. Violoncell' was due to the publisher rather than Schumann himself. Equally, however, it is clear that Schumann happily accepted the alternate versions and that these were played in his circle. This is not surprising, as he had turned to the combination of cello and piano just the previous month for his *Fünf Stücke im Volkston* (also published by Luckhardt in 1851).¹³

The sheer popularity of the *Fantasiestücke* begs the question whether another edition of these pieces is really necessary, but the quality of the edition under review more than counters such concerns. That the print quality and layout is excellent – sharp and clearly laid out – almost goes without saying. But it is Ernst Hertrich's exceptional editorial work, preface and comments that really make this edition worthwhile. All possible queries regarding differences in the source materials consulted are discussed here. My only quibble is why the piano part should have the clarinet version printed above the staves, rather than the cello part, especially as the piano part is also clearly labelled 'version for violoncello'. It seems to me that this could lead to unnecessary complications during rehearsal. Looking at the quality of information on offer, though, this may be being overly critical, and I have no hesitation in recommending this excellent edition.

Lars Franke

¹³ Schumann noted the 'splendid' playing of the violinist Ferdinand David and Clara Schumann at the home of Prince Reuss in Leipzig in 1852 in a recital that included Schumann's Sonata in A (op. 105) and the *Fantasiestücke*. See p. iv.