

7 The chamber music

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On 12 September 1851, Robert and Clara Schumann's eleventh wedding anniversary, Robert Schumann began work on a 'Duo for Pianoforte and Violin'.¹ This work, the Sonata in A minor for Pianoforte and Violin, Op. 105, was the first of an exceptional group of three chamber works to be written in a two-month period of intense creativity, the others being the Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 110 and the Sonata in D minor for Violin and Pianoforte, Op. 121. All three compositions embody the culmination of the composer's ever innovative approach to large-scale musical form, his response to the sonata structures that were the legacy of Haydn, Mozart and particularly Beethoven, and that Schumann, citing the example of Schubert, had always believed must continually be created anew if the cherished forms were to remain viable.²

In his reviews of contemporary music in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Schumann had returned often to the principle of the organic unfolding of a large-scale musical work. His ideal was Beethoven's treatment of symphonic form, 'where in rapid succession the ideas appear [ever] changing and yet are linked through an inner, spiritual bond'.³ The inner, spiritual bond among ideas is intrinsic to Schumann's earliest published compositions, the cycles of character pieces written for solo piano in the 1830s, in which 'motto' themes, fragile, intuitive melodic links, and carefully crafted tonal designs combine in each work to form a whole that is far greater than the sum of its parts.

In the 1830s Schumann also explored large-scale form in works that seem on the surface to be sonata-based, but that in reality break new ground. His experiments with 'parallel' forms⁴ reveal that the traditional, hierarchical designs built on tonal conflict and resolution that governed the elaborate sonata forms of the Viennese Classical composers were of limited use to Schumann, whose musical language relished and even required tonal schemes that were artificially created and sometimes even symbolic. When he made use of Classical tonal principles, he tended to employ them as gesture and rhetoric – pointedly acknowledging the tradition – or as subterfuge.

In January 1841, four months after his marriage, Schumann began to compose a symphony: No. 1 in B flat major, Op. 38. This undertaking was enthusiastically received by Clara Schumann: 'The Symphony will soon

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be finished; although I haven't heard any of it yet, I am endlessly happy that Robert has finally entered the field where, with his great imagination he belongs; I think that he will also work himself to the point where he will no longer compose anything besides instrumental music.⁵ Clara refers to the fact that all of Schumann's published compositions had been for piano solo or – in 1840, the year of their marriage – for voice and piano. However, in the preceding decade Schumann had written, or planned, music for other combinations of instruments.⁶ One of his projects involved string quartets.⁷

In Schumann's quest for new solutions to large-scale form, it is clear that 1841, the so-called Symphony Year, was a breakthrough. He produced two important and influential symphonic works: the B flat major ('Spring') Symphony, Op. 38, and the D minor Symphony, Op. 120. The former acknowledges the symphonic tradition while at the same time pointing in a new direction. The latter is a radical experiment in cyclic form that incorporates the unifying tendencies in Schumann's music up to that point and heralds the total unification of his late works.⁸ Elsewhere I have posited that the structural achievements of the aforementioned three chamber works of autumn 1851 inspired Schumann to return to the D minor symphony, which he had set aside after its unsuccessful première in December 1841.⁹ In the present essay I propose to examine aspects of the relationship between structure and musical language in Schumann's chamber music in selected works from the 'chamber-music' year of 1842, and the autumn of 1851.

1842

Schumann's three string quartets, Op. 41, were conceived at a gratifying time in the composer's career: his first published symphony (Op. 38) had been well received and he was acquiring a reputation in the musical world as a composer of instrumental music. On 14 February 1842 he wrote in his *Haushaltbuch*, the household accounts book in which he also kept an abbreviated diary, that he was continually thinking about quartets.¹⁰ On 20 March, after returning to Leipzig from a month on tour in northern Germany, where his B flat major Symphony had been performed in Bremen and Hamburg, Schumann renewed his sporadic study of counterpoint to compensate for his 'miserable life'¹¹ without Clara (who had continued on to Scandinavia to fulfil concert obligations). He began to study the string quartets of Mozart on 1 April. On 28 April, two days after Clara's homecoming, Schumann turned his attention to the quartets of Beethoven, and then, on 6 May, to the quartets of Haydn. On 2 June he began quartet 'experiments' (*Quartettversuche*), and on 4 June began to sketch his first quartet.¹²

Schumann's string quartets are grounded in the noble tradition of the genre.¹³ In some respects they are less adventuresome than either of the two symphonies of 1841. But Schumann's quartets testify to the composer's careful study of quartet texture, even though in 1842 he still composed at the piano. When the three quartets are considered as a cycle, they also illustrate a unique conception of musical form in the largest dimension.

Opus 41, Nos. 1 and 2

Schumann's entry in his *Haushaltbuch* for 4 June 1842 reads: 'Quartet in A minor begun; movement in F Major and A minor'.¹⁴ This statement demonstrates that Schumann had planned the dual tonal nature of Op. 41, No. 1 from the very beginning. The first movement, in an unorthodox F major after a slow introduction in A minor, sets the stage for the entire quartet, over the course of which the tonal duality is maintained and never really resolved. In a sense Schumann is playing with Classical formal stereotypes. With the exception of the finale, each of the movements makes use of more-or-less 'traditional' tonal/formal schemes, even though these function only marginally in a Classical manner. A case in point is the first movement.

The sonata-form exposition of the first movement (*Allegro*) of Op. 41, No. 1 features the standard Classical keys: tonic (F major) and dominant (C major). However, Schumann's musical ideas and the way in which he presents them seem deliberately at odds with the Classical premise of tonal conflict, to all intents and purposes eliminating it. The principal area (bars 34–75) establishes the tonic, as is customary, but it does so with a lyrical, perfectly rounded 'song form' set forth as a series of regular four-bar phrases with a beginning in the tonic, a modulatory middle, and an ending in the tonic. It comes to an abrupt halt (bar 75). The rest of the exposition is built – *à la* Haydn – on permutation, variation and logical extension (see bars 99ff.) of the main thematic idea. The passages of contrapuntal texture and the modulatory sequences give the impression of a lengthy transition even though the phrase structure remains predominantly regular. The second tonal area (C major) is not reached until the very end of the exposition (first ending, bars 9ff.). Thematically it features yet another variant of the main theme. Schumann in effect negates the Classical tonal hierarchy by greatly subordinating the second (contrasting) tonal area: he denies it its own theme, preferring to emphasize the unifying aspects of a single thematic idea; he postpones its arrival until the last possible minute, again emphasizing unification. Thematic differentiation is not crucial in Classical sonata style (Haydn is famous for his 'monothematic' expositions); tonal polarity, on the other hand, is its driving force. In a prototypical

Classical sonata-form exposition, the second – conflicting – key is arrived at by means of a transitional passage from the first key, is established tonally (and often defined thematically and/or stylistically), can then be departed from temporarily, but is always returned to and confirmed toward the end of the exposition.

Schumann had his own idea of tonal structure. He did not generally employ keys for their functional properties, but used them conceptually for their referential value, almost as chess pieces in an intricate game. The ‘game’ of the Op. 41 quartets is the interplay of A minor, F major and A major, and their ultimate union. Schumann carries it out over the course of all three quartets. There are very few thematic links in the cycle. In keeping with the intellectual rigour of the ‘noble’ genre, the cyclic links are on the highest and yet the most fundamental plane, the tonal underpinnings.

The middle movements of Op. 41, No. 1 symbolize the tonal dichotomy of this quartet. The *Scherzo* is in A minor; the *Adagio* in F major. The equivocation with regard to the tonic key of the quartet then becomes the subject matter of the *Presto* finale, which begins in A minor. The exposition begins traditionally enough. The tonic key, A minor, seems to be set forth clearly: a four-bar phrase (antecedent) in the tonic, a four-bar phrase (consequent) on the dominant. The next two four-bar phrases are in the tonic, but the harmonic palette is enriched with Neapolitan chords and the chord rhythm is syncopated, causing the tonic chords to fall on weak beats. Schumann deliberately avoids a strong cadence in the main key, thus suggesting that perhaps it is not the main key at all. He upsets the symmetry with a sudden drop to the dominant of C major on the first beat of bar 17, initiating a six-bar phrase (bars 17–22) that arrives – via a powerful, rhetorically ‘functional’ cadence – in C major in bar 23. The arrival in C major is a parody of the Classical style. The cadence is handled as if it were the concluding cadence in the main (tonic) key. The thematic material that enters here sounds typically transitional and the listener expects a transition to the second tonal area. But in reality the ‘contrasting’ key has already been reached. The key of C, the relative major (the traditional contrast key when the tonic is minor), will be appropriately and Classically reinforced in bars 63ff., the closing area of the exposition, but not until a reminder of the ‘real’ tonal argument – A minor vs. F major – has been introduced. After several bars of alternating tonic and dominant chords in C major over a tonic pedal (bars 23–7, a pause on C major, as it were), A minor (bars 28–30) and F major (bars 31–4) are tonicized and harmonies associated with them juxtaposed (bars 35–8) before a sequence of modulations based on a variant of the main theme leads to the vigorous return of C major in bar 63.

In this exposition the presumed tonic (A minor) is exchanged, so to speak, for the new key (C major) just when it should have been unequivocally

established. The new key, arrived at harmonically with such great force and drama, is not accorded any comparable thematic interest until the closing area of the exposition, where the 'transitional' figure in quavers that marked its entrance in bar 23 is combined with a variant of the main theme (bars 63ff.). The role of C major in this quartet seems to be as a foil. In the first movement C major had been deliberately diminished in its role as contrast. In the exposition of the finale it attempts to usurp the role of 'main' key. But the unusual way in which the musical material is later recapitulated suggests that it has really served as a stand-in for F major.

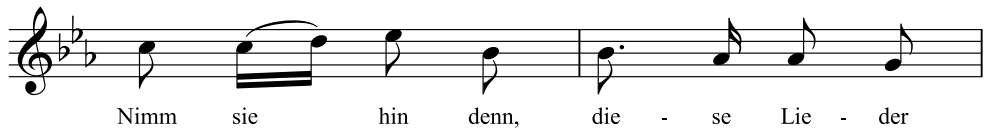
Toward the end of a development section in which the aforementioned quaver figure is featured in combination with a variant of the main theme, Schumann again prepares a rhetorical arrival in C (bars 140–8). But this time a measure of uncertainty is introduced since it appears that C will be inflected in its minor mode. However, the resolution is indeed to a C major triad (bar 148), initiating a mysterious, suddenly *piano* passage, rich in altered chords (bars 148–52) that functions as the dominant of F major. At this point the entire second tonal area of the exposition (bars 23–76), which had seen the ascendancy of C major, is recapitulated in F major (bars 152–205). By the time the strong closing area is reached (bars 192ff.) there can be no doubt that F major, a key that appeared only briefly in the exposition, is the key that is recapitulated, and that the C major of the exposition had merely been its surrogate.

Although one may have been puzzled at the tonal treatment of the finale's exposition, when one reaches this juncture in the recapitulation one can only wonder what the tonic key of the movement is. The normal function of a recapitulation is to resolve the tonal conflict of the exposition by presenting in the tonic the material that earlier had been heard in the contrasting key. But in this finale the F major recapitulation, resolving nothing, continues to contribute to the tonal dichotomy of the quartet as a whole. Schumann complicates the matter still further with another grand rhetorical build-up, this time on the dominant of A minor (bars 206–13), and proceeds to recapitulate the principal area of the exposition in its A minor tonic. This is a literal repeat, complete with the equivocal turn toward C, but without the cadence in C. Instead, an eight-bar passage (bars 234ff.) leads conclusively back to A minor. Schumann, however, is not finished. In a coda that begins with a seemingly extraneous Haydnesque/Beethovenian folk-like, hurdy-gurdy tune (actually it is generated from the opening intervals of the quaver figure), he brings the quartet to a 'Classical' close in the affirmative major mode of what we now might be willing to conclude is the tonic: A. But is it?

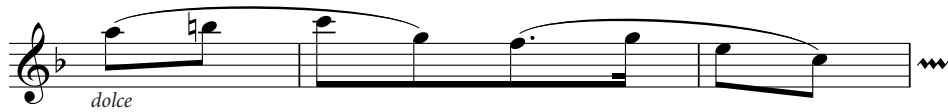
Opus 41, No. 1 commences a quartet cycle that was conceived as a cycle and ideally should be performed as one. The linkage of Op. 41, No. 1 and Op. 41, No. 2 is especially strong. Schumann's *Haushaltbuch* reveals that

the composer began to sketch Op. 41, No. 2 (on 11 June 1842) immediately upon completing the sketch of Op. 41, No. 1 (on 10 June). He wrote out the fair copies in score of both quartets before beginning to sketch Op. 41, No. 3. The autograph of the fair copy of No. 2 (*D-Dühi*, 78.5025) shows that Schumann even considered a direct link between the first two quartets: the last four bars (bars 30–3) of the *Introduzione* to the first movement of No. 1 – a powerful build-up on the dominant of F major that prepares for the *Allegro* in F major – reappear as an introduction to the first movement of No. 2, but were later deleted.¹⁵ (Schumann's sketch of the first movement of Op. 41, No. 2 (*D-B*, Mus. ms. autogr. Schumann 19) does not contain this introduction.)

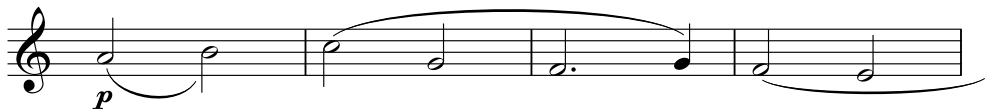
If Op. 41, No. 2 is viewed in the context of the tonal quandary posed by No. 1, the inconclusiveness with regard to the tonic key of No. 1 would seem to be resolved in favour of the unequivocal F major of No. 2. The role played by C major in both quartets is central and an important part of the linkage. In Classical tonal practice, C major is the traditional contrast key of both A minor (where it is the relative major) and F major (where it is the dominant). How simple and appropriate for Schumann to employ the traditional in this most intellectually rigorous of the Classical genres. And how typical of the composer to invest C major with the power to mislead and detour the tonal argument in the finale of Op. 41, No. 1, only to use it in its most straightforward role – as contrasting key – in both the first movement and the finale of No. 2. The key of C major also links the *scherzo* movements of the two quartets by appropriating the exact centre of each: the *Intermezzo* of the *scherzo* of No. 1 and the *Trio* of the *scherzo* of No. 2. Perhaps most intriguing of all is Schumann's symbolic use of C major in No. 2. In two earlier compositions he had employed C major in a symbolic role as a form of declaration and dedication to Clara (*C* = Clara): the *Davidsbündlertänze*, Op. 6 and the C major *Fantasie*, Op. 17.¹⁶ (He would later 'dedicate' another C major work to her, the C major Symphony, Op. 61.)¹⁷ At the end of the first movement of the *Fantasie* (bars 295ff.) Schumann includes an unmistakable reference to the Lied 'Nimm sie hin, denn, diese Lieder' ('Take them, then, these songs') from Beethoven's Lieder cycle *An die ferne Geliebte* (*To the distant beloved*). (See Examples 7.1 and 7.2.) He again makes use of this reference in the finale of Op. 41, No. 2, where it forms the second subject, in C major (bars 36ff.; Ex. 7.3a). In Schumann's sketch the melodic line of the theme was originally even closer to that of the Beethoven Lied (Ex. 7.3b). Several years later, in the C major Symphony, Op. 61, a work that has structural ties to Op. 17 and that makes thematic reference to Clara,¹⁸ the theme emerges toward the end of the finale (bars 394ff.; Ex. 7.4) and embodies the tonal and emotional goal of the entire symphony.¹⁹

Example 7.1 Beethoven, *An die ferne Geliebte*, Op. 98, No. 6, bars 9–10Example 7.2 Schumann, *Fantasie* in C major, Op. 17, 1st movement, bars 296–7

Example 7.3a Schumann, Quartet in F major, Op. 41, No. 2, 4th movement, bars 36–8

Example 7.3b Schumann, Op. 41, No. 2, 4th movement, bars 36–8, sketch (*D-B*, Mus. ms. autogr. Schumann 19, fol. 16v.)

Example 7.4 Schumann, Symphony in C major, Op. 61, 4th movement, bars 394–7



In 1836, the time of composition of the *Fantasie*, Clara Wieck was indeed Schumann's 'distant beloved'. Her father, Friedrich Wieck, was actively discouraging their relationship. In a letter to Clara of 19 March 1838 Schumann describes the *Fantasie* as 'a deep lament for you'.²⁰ During the time of gestation of the Op. 41 quartets, Clara Schumann's lengthy concert tour separated the couple for the first time since their wedding. Later in the year, on Clara's twenty-third birthday, 13 September 1842, Schumann's gift to her was the manuscript of the three quartets ('Take them, then, these songs').²¹ In December 1845 Schumann sketched his C major Symphony while in the final stages of recovery from a severe mental depression suffered in 1844.²² This symphony, which was one of Clara Schumann's favourite works,²³

Example 7.5 Schumann, Quartet in A major, Op. 41, No. 3, 1st movement, bars 1–2

Andante espressivo ♩ = 60

might be considered an offering to her, the beloved made distant by the tribulations of mental illness.

Opus 41, No. 3

The key of A major, appearing for the first time at the end of Op. 41, No. 1, totally absent from Op. 41, No. 2, returns as the tonic key of Op. 41, No. 3. The bright major key does not make an entrance in the theatrical sense at the beginning of the first movement, but rather emerges, or is coaxed, out of an inconclusive recitative-like introduction, *Andante espressivo*, which begins on a minor 7th chord on the supertonic that leads to a deceptive cadence on F sharp minor (the relative minor) (Ex. 7.5). After an additional five bars of similarly deceptive progressions, the exposition, *Allegro molto moderato*, begins with the same chord progression as the introduction, but this time cadencing in the tonic (bar 11). Space does not permit a discussion of this finely wrought movement in the detail it deserves.²⁴ I shall confine my remarks to the role of this movement and the finale in the overall form of the quartet cycle.

The principal tonal area of the first movement of Op. 41, No. 3 is so short (two four-bar phrases, bars 8–15) that it barely establishes the tonic. The continuation and expansion of the theme in bars 16ff. leads one to expect that Schumann will return to the tonic by means of a perfectly rounded design similar to the ‘song form’ of the principal tonal area of the first movement of No. 1. This turns out almost to be the case, except that the ‘rounding out’ with a return to the two opening phrases of the principal theme occurs not in the A major tonic, but in the dominant-of-the-dominant, B major (bars 28–35). In this way – deliberately exploiting the contradiction between the periodicity of the thematic content and the ‘wrong’ key – Schumann

prepares the entrance of the contrasting key, the traditional dominant, E major. The arrival of E major, however, is postponed by a Haydnesque surprise, for Schumann also seizes upon this moment to project the tonal plan of the entire cycle. After the cadence in B major in bar 35, he interjects, *forte*, a strong cadence in C major (bars 36–7) and follows this with a statement of the first phrase of the main theme in C major (bars 38–41). This startling interruption gives way to a short modulatory passage to the second tonal area, E major.

It is most interesting to observe that the interjection of C major does not appear in Schumann's sketch. The passage from bars 36 to 45 is more than twice as long in the sketch and contains no hint of C major, but instead modulates through F sharp minor before arriving at E major.²⁵ I believe that the 'break-in' of C major in a movement where the tonic key emerges only gradually is Schumann's wonderfully subtle way of linking Op. 41, No. 3 to the two previous quartets in the cycle. The key of C major played an important role in the tonal drama of Nos. 1 and 2. By injecting it into a movement that begins ambivalently, Schumann recalls the role of C major in the tonally equivocal finale of No. 1, and in so doing harks back to the A minor–F major dichotomy of the first two parts of the cycle, suggesting that perhaps it was not a dichotomy at all. Significantly, the key that is interjected at bars 36ff. of the first movement of No. 3 is neither F major nor A minor, but C major, the key that F major and A minor share as their respective 'contrasting' key, and hence the key that unites them. No further reference to the tonal narrative of the first two quartets is needed in this first movement of No. 3. The ambivalent principal theme is not even really recapitulated. In an elision of the end of the development section and the beginning of the recapitulation (bars 146–53) the principal theme returns, but is not permitted to cadence in the A major tonic. Poised over its dominant 7th chord, it is made to serve as the lead-in to the secondary theme, which then takes over the task of affirming the tonic key.

After a variation movement, *Assai agitato*, in F sharp minor (the relative minor of A major) and a slow movement, *Adagio molto*, in the subdominant, D major, the rondo finale of Op. No. 3, *Allegro molto vivace*, completes the task of tonally unifying the three quartets by systematically incorporating their tonalities: A major (No. 3) and the F major–A minor–C major complex (Nos. 1 and 2). This movement, uncompromisingly sectional and stuffed with repetitive phrases and unrelenting rhythms, seems tedious and too long. But when viewed in the context of its tonal function in the cycle, it is clear that its structure is an integral part of the overall plan.

Essentially, the finale is a parallel construction (see Figure 7.1). In Schumann's unique 'parallel' forms of the 1830s, the second half of the structure paralleled and reinterpreted the first half.²⁶ Here the function of

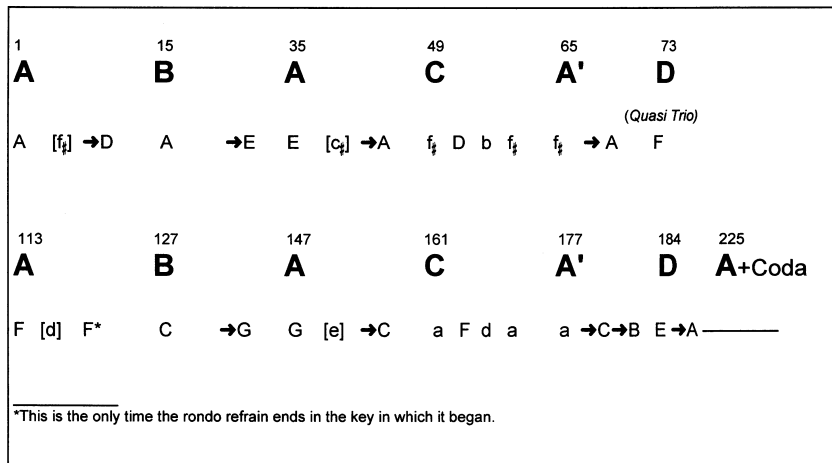


Figure 7.1 Op. 41/3, finale (major keys in capital letters; minor in lower-case).

the second half is less to reinterpret the first part of the finale than to ‘review’ and conclude the tonal narrative of the quartet cycle. The first half of the rondo, a refrain and two contrasting episodes, presents the A major tonic of Op. 41, No. 3 and its related keys (E major, F sharp minor, D major). A section titled *Quasi Trio* appears midway through the movement. Its key is F major, the first reference in No. 3 to the tonal complex of the two previous quartets since the interjection of C major in the exposition of the first movement. After the *Quasi Trio* the second half of the rondo parallels the first half and is constructed so that the keys emphasized are those of the tonal complex of Nos. 1 and 2: F major, C major, A minor. Finally, a harmonic change near the end of the long parallel (see bars 181–4) leads to a return of the ‘quasi trio’ beginning in the dominant, E major, and ending in the tonic, thus breaking the parallel and returning to the A major sphere of No. 3.²⁷

Schumann’s achievement in the Op. 41 quartets, the systematic unification of three otherwise self-contained works by means of a carefully worked out tonal narrative, is impressive and may be unprecedented. Tonal narratives and ‘tonal programmes’ – narratives carried a step further, such as the symbolic and emotional use of C major as the tonic of all of the movements of the C major Symphony, Op. 61 – as structural underpinnings in large-scale forms are important means to achieving Schumann’s aesthetic goal of total unification of the musical material. In the composer’s works of the early 1840s the attainment of this goal often seems hampered by his musical language, characterized during this period by a tendency toward rigid phrase structure, fast harmonic rhythm, and harmonic compartmentalization at the phrase level, all traits that carried

over from composition by improvisation at the piano. In 1845 Schumann began to compose away from the piano: 'Not until the year 1845, when I began to conceive and work out everything in my head, did an entirely different manner of composition begin to develop.'²⁸ The works of the late 1840s and early 1850s bear out the composer's observation. The unifying elements that had always been present in Schumann's music – the subtle and not-so-subtle melodic and rhythmic links within and between movements, the contrapuntal combination of themes and motives, the referential use of key – are assimilated into a fluid and powerful ongoing style in which the cyclicism so crucial to the works of every period of the composer's career is intensified. Every detail of the music is absorbed into a synthesis in which everything relates to everything else.

The Op. 41 quartets were Schumann's first and last compositions in the string quartet genre. All of his other large-scale chamber works are for various combinations of strings and piano. The autumn of 1842 saw the composition of two masterpieces: the celebrated Quintet for Piano and Strings in E flat major, Op. 44 (written for and officially dedicated to Clara Schumann: a very 'public' and brilliant work that nonetheless manages to incorporate a private message – the bass theme of Schumann's *Impromptus sur une Romance de Clara Wieck*, Op. 5 appears as the theme of Trio I of the *Scherzo* (bars 45 ff.) and is again embedded in the main theme of the finale (see bars 2–3)), and the equally brilliant but also more intimate Quartet for Piano and Strings in E flat major, Op. 47. In December 1842 Schumann composed a trio in A minor for piano and strings, but as a piano trio this work is so unorthodox in structure that he apparently felt it could not represent the genre. He did not publish it until 1850, and then as *Phantasiestücke*, Op. 88. Schumann would return to the genre of the piano trio in 1847 (Trio in D minor, Op. 63; Trio in F major, Op. 80) and in the autumn of 1851 (Trio in G minor, Op. 110).

1851

Schumann's late style manifests a breadth and continuity not present earlier. Its characteristics include a tendency toward tonal synthesis,²⁹ dense textures, increased rhythmic flexibility and a marked slowing of the harmonic rhythm coupled with a leaning toward rapidly moving, almost rhapsodic melodic lines. Nine years almost to the day after Schumann presented the Op. 41 quartets to his wife on her birthday, the composer, after a hiatus of four years, turned again to large-scale chamber music to explore a new genre. The 'duo' for pianoforte and violin (*Sonata in A minor for Pianoforte*

and Violin, Op. 105³⁰), begun on 12 September 1851, returns to the A minor–F major focus of Op. 41, Nos. 1 and 2. But whereas the Schumann of 1842 examined and ultimately – in Op. 41, No. 3 – resolved the dichotomy between the two keys, the Schumann of 1851 pursues their synthesis from the very beginning. He employs an extremely sophisticated thematic integration together with a familiar structural procedure: de-emphasis of the secondary area of the exposition of a sonata-form movement both tonally and thematically.

In the A minor Sonata, Op. 105, the playing down of the secondary area in both the first movement and the finale highlights the tonal plan of the work as a whole. In the first movement the secondary tonal area of the exposition is the ‘traditional’ relative major, C. However, Schumann uses many techniques to avoid establishing this key. The exposition is monothematic and features a remarkable continuous expansion of the principal theme; therefore no new theme is present to aid in delineating the new key. The key of C major is arrived at almost by stealth (see bars 35ff.) and a cadence in the key is avoided until near the end of the exposition (bar 59, where the C major chord falls on a weak beat). Furthermore, C major is infused with hints of its subdominant, F major. This has wide-ranging structural ramifications, because the tonal plan of the entire sonata hinges on A minor and F major as two faces of what is essentially one *gesamt* tonality.³¹

It is instructive to see how so many of the melodic, harmonic and expressive details of Op. 105 delineate and confirm the synthesis of A minor and F major, for example: the crescendo to an accented *f*¹ appoggiatura over an A minor triad and tonic pedal in bar 1 of the first movement (Ex. 7.6a) and, more tellingly, the return of the passage in augmentation in the recapitulation, where the A minor triad is followed by an F major triad (bars 113–15; Ex. 7.6b); the hints at F major in bars 11–13 of the first movement; the build-up on a dominant pedal of F major in the retransition of the first movement (bars 104ff.) culminating in the superposition of the dominant of A minor over the dominant pedal of F (bars 108–9) and a juxtaposition of A minor and F major triads (bars 110–11) that is then repeated at the beginning of the recapitulation (bars 113–15); and the abrupt deceptive cadence to an F major triad at the beginning of the coda of the first movement (bar 177).

In the finale Schumann does not even bother to go through the motions of presenting the secondary area of the exposition in the relative major. The new key *is* F major (bars 31ff.). But in the exposition of the finale F major is not stressed and is not presented as a conflicting key. Significantly, it is almost immediately juxtaposed with A minor (bars 36–41) and, in fact, the end of the exposition reverts to the tonic, A minor, propelling the music, *perpetuum-mobile*-like, back to the beginning of the exposition or forward into the development section. By the time the development section of the

Example 7.6a Schumann, Sonata in A minor for Pianoforte and Violin, Op. 105, 1st movement, bars 1–2

Mit leidenschaftlichem Ausdruck. ♩ = 68.

Example 7.6b Schumann, Sonata in A minor for Pianoforte and Violin, Op. 105, 1st movement, bars 113–16

finale is reached, the ‘dual-tonal’ unity of the sonata is assured. Therefore, the seemingly new, lyric theme that enters in bar 76 after a dramatic build-up is an emotional and highly charged event, all the more so for appearing in the bright key of E major, the dominant (Ex. 7.7). It is the only event in the entire sonata that is so unambiguously prepared. And this preparation, coming after the tonal synthesis and rhythmic homogeneity of the exposition, leads the ear to accept E major and the lyric theme as the true ‘second subject’, a welcome element of contrast. The new theme, however, is quickly amalgamated into the sonata by being interlaced with previously heard motifs. And

Example 7.7 Schumann, Sonata in A minor for Pianoforte and Violin, Op. 105, 3rd movement, bars 76–82

its relationship to the rest of the sonata is revealed when the principal theme of the first movement appears in the coda of the finale – significantly, over F and A pedals (bars 168ff.). Here the rhythm of the first-movement theme has been altered to evoke the rhythm of the E major theme of the finale (Ex. 7.8). Furthermore, it becomes apparent that the two themes are related intervallically. Thus the E major theme, a seemingly extraneous element in an otherwise totally and carefully unified design, is shown by means of a cyclic recall to be intimately connected with the main thematic idea of the sonata (and, by extension, with its tonal identity).

The A minor Sonata, Op. 105, closely knit in the extreme, is a particularly good example of the undermining of the sonata principle of tonal conflict and resolution in favour of a thematic and tonal unification that can absorb even the most disparate elements. The first movements of the Piano Trio, Op. 110, and the Violin and Piano Sonata, Op. 121, while not as relentlessly

Example 7.8 Schumann, Sonata in A minor for Pianoforte and Violin, Op. 105, 3rd movement, bars 168–71

monothematic as the outer movements of Op. 105, also illustrate the prevalence in Schumann's late sonata-based forms of a continuous blending of the thematic elements: a 'secondary theme' is so permeated with elements of the principal theme that the result is one large, fully integrated and continuously expanding thematic complex. In both works this thematic integration is reinforced by de-emphasizing the tonal contrast of the secondary area: strong cadences in the new key are avoided until the last possible moment, and the new key – the relative major in both works – is laced with allusions to its subdominant (in both works the subdominant of the relative major plays an important role in later movements). It may be appropriate to conclude this essay with a discussion of the almost Mahlerian interplay of melodic, rhythmic and harmonic details that, together with a carefully constructed tonal plan, epitomize Schumann's late approach to large-scale composition. The Sonata in D minor for Violin and Pianoforte, Op. 121, will serve as illustration.

In the D minor Sonata, Op. 121, Schumann employs a 'motto' based on the musical letters in the name of the dedicatee, his long-time friend, the violinist Ferdinand David (*DAF* [= v] *D*).³² The motto appears in block chords at the beginning of the introduction, *Ziemlich langsam* (Ex. 7.9a),³³ and is featured as the 'head motif' of the principal theme (bars 21ff.) of the first movement. It is important to observe that this theme is characterized by the motto's rhythmic pattern as much as by its melodic intervals, if not more so. Example 7.9b gives a few of the melodic variants of the motto that emerge during the course of the first movement. Some of the less obvious appearances of the motto in later movements are also illustrated. (The cumulative impact of the sonata suggests motto linkages that may seem tenuous when isolated in a music example.)

Example 7.9a Schumann, Sonata in D minor for Violin and Pianoforte, Op. 121, 1st movement, bars 1–5

Ziemlich langsam. ♩ = 46

Kurz und energisch

f *f* *dim.*

f *f* *dim.*

Ped.* Ped. * Ped.* Ped. *

The technique of melodic variation on a characteristic rhythmic pattern is one that Schumann favoured throughout his life. (He employs it with breathtaking effect in the first movement of the Piano Quintet, Op. 44.) In Op. 121 the technique is brought to bear not only on the motto, but on virtually every thematic element in the sonata. The syncopated rhythmic pattern in the fourth bar of the principal theme (bar 24; see the first line in Ex. 7.9b), for example, is of particular importance as a unifying link between the movement's principal theme and second subject (bars 57ff.; Ex. 7.10), where both the violin and piano lines are permeated by syncopated patterns. In the closing area of the exposition and over the course of the development section Schumann gives increasing prominence to syncopation, applying it to the motto of the principal theme and using it to interrelate and to shed new perspective on all of the thematic components of the movement. In bars 84–96, for example, the motto proceeds from its 'straight' rhythm via the syncopated fourth bar of the principal theme to a new, syncopated form (bars 88ff.). Another syncopated form (bars 93ff.) then offers a backward glance to the block chords of the introduction. In a passage near the beginning of the development section, aspects of the second subject meld seamlessly with the syncopated rhythm of the fourth bar of the principal theme (bars 107ff.), which in turn leads into a forceful presentation of the rhythmically 'straight' form of the motto in the bass line (bars 115ff.).

The ongoing connection of the thematic elements in this movement is truly extraordinary and nearly Brahmsian in the respect that it is impossible to separate 'melodic' from 'accompanimental'. Everything heard at any one

Example 7.9b Schumann, Op. 121, “motto” variants.

The musical score for Schumann's Op. 121, "motto" variants, is presented in ten staves. Each staff begins with a measure number and a dynamic marking. The staves are:

- I, 21: *p*
- I, 29: *sf*
- I, 88: *f*
- I, 93: *ff*, *ten.*
- I, 117
- I, 252: *p*, *cresc.*
- I, 287: *p*
- II, 36: *p*
- II, 46: *p*, 4
- II, 121: *p*
- IV, 58: *p*

Example 7.10 Schumann, Sonata in D Minor for Violin and Pianoforte, Op. 121, 1st movement, bars 57–66

The image displays a musical score for the first movement of Schumann's Sonata in D Minor for Violin and Pianoforte, Op. 121, specifically bars 57 through 66. The score is presented in two systems. The first system shows the violin part (top staff) and the piano part (bottom staff). The piano part features a syncopated accompaniment of semiquavers. The second system continues the music, with a 'Ped.' marking and an asterisk (*) below the piano part in the final bar (bar 66).

time has to be deemed thematic. Consider the opening bars of the exposition (Ex. 7.11). Here (bars 21ff.) the motto in the violin is heard over a syncopated figure featuring semiquavers in the piano that might normally be construed as accompanimental. Syncopation, however, as we have seen, will play a central role in thematically integrating the movement. And here it appears, almost incidentally, in the first bar of the exposition. The ‘accompaniment’ is transferred to the violin (bar 27), passed back and forth between piano and violin (bars 34ff.), incorporated into the cadential gesture of the principal tonal area (bars 40–3), accorded a leading role in the transition (bars 43ff.), and, with a new melodic shape, made to serve as a lead-in to the second subject (bars 53ff.), which it then pervades (see bars 57ff. in Ex. 7.10).

In Schumann’s late style, thematic ideas that may appear incidental and even inconsequential at first often take on increased prominence as a work progresses.³⁴ The cadential gesture at the end of the principal area of the

Example 7.11 Schumann, Sonata in D minor for Violin and Pianoforte, Op. 121, 1st movement, bars 21–5

Lebhaft. ♩ = 108

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking. The second system continues the piece with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking. The score includes a violin part and a piano part with figured bass notation below the bass line.

exposition (bars 41ff.), for example, seems merely to be a typical cadential formula (see Ex. 7.12a). The succession of four even notes, beginning on a weak beat and ending on a strong beat (marked with + in Ex. 7.12a.), however, will prove to be important in the cyclical unification of the sonata. In the development section of the first movement a powerful rhetorical build-up on the dominant of C minor prepares the entrance of a seemingly new theme in C minor (pianoforte, bars 155ff.; Ex. 7.12b). Not surprisingly, this theme is built on syncopation, but it is syncopation of the barline and the notes are of even value and deployed so as to suggest a series of successions of four even notes beginning on a weak beat and ending on a strong beat. At the beginning of the coda of the first movement the cadence from bar

Example 7.12a Schumann, Sonata in D minor for Violin and Pianoforte, Op. 121, 1st movement, bars 40–3

Example 7.12a shows the musical score for Schumann's Sonata in D minor, Op. 121, 1st movement, bars 40–43. The score is in D minor and 3/4 time. It features a violin part and a piano part. The piano part includes a forte (*f*) dynamic and a sforzando (*sf*) dynamic. The violin part has accents (^) and plus signs (+) above the notes.

Example 7.12b Schumann, Sonata in D minor for Violin and Pianoforte, Op. 121, 1st movement, bars 155–7

Example 7.12b shows the musical score for Schumann's Sonata in D minor, Op. 121, 1st movement, bars 155–157. The score is in D minor and 3/4 time. It features a violin part and a piano part. The piano part includes a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic and a plus sign (+) above the notes.

41 reappears expanded and in quasi-sequence, and seems to grow logically out of the chordal form of the motto (bars 261–7).

At the start of the second movement (*Sehr lebhaft*) the four-note pattern becomes an integral part of the theme of the A periods (Ex. 7.13). Note how Schumann emphasizes the pitches with *forte* indications on each of the four notes.³⁵ (It is no coincidence that in this movement the four notes also happen to be a permutation of the motto.) Toward the end of the second movement the four-note pattern takes on even more prominence as it appears in a climactic role, expanded and with a new melodic line (bars 196–204; Ex. 7.14a). The *forte* dynamic indication, the strong ^ accents in the piano, and the detached staccato in the violin combine to highlight this

Example 7.13 Schumann, Sonata in D minor for Violin and Pianoforte, Op. 121, 2nd movement, bars 2–6

Example 7.14a Schumann, Sonata in D minor for Violin and Pianoforte, Op. 121, 2nd movement, bars 196–200

moment. This apparent climax, however, is only a prelude to the true climax of the movement: a striking new chorale-like theme³⁶ projected *fortissimo* in B major (the tonic major) on the same rhythmic pattern (Ex. 7.14b). This theme, set in triple metre and totally transformed in character, becomes the theme of the variation movement that follows (*Leise, einfach*). Lest we forget that it, too, derives ultimately from the motto (by way of the melodic and rhythmic connections set up in the second movement), Schumann provides a ‘remembrance’. Halfway through the third movement, in a bridge passage that precedes the final, Lied-like variation,³⁷ two *forte* interjections of the second movement’s main theme with its four-note-patterned permutation of the motto (see bars 74ff., 84ff. of the third movement) encircle the ‘new’, tender transformation of the theme played *pianissimo* on the bridge of the violin (bars 78ff.).

Example 7.14b Schumann, Sonata in D minor for Violin and Pianoforte, Op. 121, 2nd movement, bars 204–8

Example 7.15 Schumann, Sonata in D minor for Violin and Pianoforte, Op. 121, 4th movement, bars 100–2

A striking appearance of the four-note pattern – the penultimate one – occurs in the fourth movement at the end of a development section rich in complex modulations (bar 101; see Ex. 7.15). Here the first three notes of the pattern, confined to a single pitch and thus denied any melodic import, are screamed in triple octaves in the violin over an augmented 6th chord in the pianoforte before resolving, suddenly *piano*, to the tonic chord in second inversion that begins the recapitulation. All that remains is the rhythmic pattern, which, of course, had been the common denominator all along.

The above discussion of Op. 121 offers only a glimpse of the myriad of links that operate continually and on every level within and among the four movements of this complex work. Stylistically and aesthetically this sonata is in perfect harmony with itself. Schumann was a composer with great intuitive strengths. His *œuvre* confirms this. It is interesting to observe, however, that the sketches and drafts of his large-scale works show that “intuitive” connections were often consciously worked out. Many of his composing manuscripts, the draft manuscript of Op. 121 (*D-Dühi*, 74.118) included, reveal that immediate – almost simultaneous – revision was part of his drafting process. In Op. 121 the revisions are unusually extensive,³⁸ an indication that the sonata, which occupied Schumann for more than three weeks (c. 15 October–c. 4 November 1851),³⁹ required a great deal of thought to bring to completion.⁴⁰

* * *

This chapter has attempted not to present a survey of Schumann’s chamber music, but to examine in the context of a few selected chamber works the composer’s ever innovative approach to large-scale composition. Throughout his life and in all of his music Schumann avoided stereotypical formal designs. His structural innovations have only recently begun to be fully appreciated. Even – especially – when working in the so-called ‘Classical’ forms, Schumann considered each composition a unique entity with its own laws, manipulating the expectations fostered by the tradition to achieve his own quite different objectives. It is fascinating to observe how he ‘invents’ the parameters for each work and how works that are vastly different flourish in a milieu of intellectually imposed artifice on the one hand and pure intuition on the other.

Notes

1. Robert Schumann, *Tagebücher*, vol. III, *Haushaltbücher*, ed. Gerd Nauhaus (Leipzig, 1982), p. 571.
2. Robert Schumann, *Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker*, 5th edn, ed. Martin Kreisig (Leipzig, 1914), vol. I, pp. 430, 461, 463.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 424.
4. Linda Correll Roesner, ‘Schumann’s “parallel” forms’, *Nineteenth Century Music*, 14/3 (spring 1991), 265–78.
5. Robert and Clara Schumann, *The Marriage Diaries of Robert and Clara Schumann: From Their Wedding Day through the Russia Trip*, ed. Gerd Nauhaus, trans. Peter Ostwald (Boston, 1993), p. 53.
6. For example, the G minor Symphony (*Jugendsinfonie*, or *Zwickauer Sinfonie*) of 1832–3, the Piano Quartet in C minor, Op. V (1828–9), and other planned chamber works for piano and strings: see Hans Kohlhasse, *Die Kammermusik Robert Schumanns: Stilistische Untersuchungen* (Hamburg, 1979), vol. I, pp. 6–17, vol. II, pp. 1–24, and Wolfgang Boetticher, ‘Das frühe Klavierquartett c-moll von Robert Schumann’, *Die Musikforschung*, 31 (1978), 465–7. Reinhard Kapp has suggested that much of the piano music Schumann wrote in the 1830s is actually orchestral music in disguise: *Studien zum Spätwerk Robert Schumanns* (Tutzing, 1984), pp. 31, 39, 47, *passim*.

7. Clara and Robert Schumann, *Briefwechsel: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. I, 1832–1838, ed. Eva Weissweiler (Basel and Frankfurt am Main, 1984), pp. 100, 108, 121, 127; Kohlhase, *Kammermusik*, vol. I, pp. 14–17, vol. III, pp. 16–18 (transcriptions of string quartet fragments in *D-B*, Mus. ms. autogr. Schumann 36, nos. 2, 11).
8. For details, see Linda Correll Roesner, ‘Schumann’, in *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony*, ed. D. Kern Holoman (New York, 1997), pp. 43–77.
9. Linda Correll Roesner, ‘Ästhetisches Ideal und sinfonische Gestalt: die d-Moll-Sinfonie um die Jahrhundertmitte’, in *Schumann Forschungen*, vol. III, *Schumann in Düsseldorf: Werke–Texte–Interpretationen*, ed. Bernhard R. Appel (Mainz, 1993), pp. 55–71. Excerpts from this article appear below, in English.
10. *Haushaltbuch*, p. 207.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 209.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 210–16.
13. See his 1842 review of a quartet by Julius Schapler, Schumann, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. II, pp. 71–2.
14. *Haushaltbuch*, p. 216. ‘Quartett in A Moll angefangen, Satz in F Dur und A moll.’ John Daverio detects the influence of Beethoven’s Op. 132 in this tonal pairing: *Robert Schumann: Herald of a ‘New Poetic Age’* (New York and Oxford, 1997), p. 252.
15. For a facsimile of this page of Schumann’s autograph, see Emanuel Winternitz, *Musical Autographs from Monteverdi to Hindemith* (New York, 1955; repr. New York, 1965), vol. II, Plate 114.
16. Roger Fiske, ‘A Schumann mystery’, *The Musical Times*, 105 (1964), 577–8; Peter Ostwald, *Schumann. The Inner Voices of a Musical Genius* (Boston, 1985), p. 131; Roesner, ‘Parallel’, pp. 273–6.
17. Linda Correll Roesner, ‘Tonal strategy and poetic content in Schumann’s C-Major Symphony, Op. 61’, in *Probleme der symphonischen Tradition im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Siegfried Kross and Marie Luise Maintz (Tutzing, 1990), pp. 303–5. Clara’s name as dedicatee appears on the title page of only two of Schumann’s works, the F sharp minor Piano Sonata, Op. 11, and the Piano Quintet, Op. 44; see Kurt Hofmann, *Die Erstdrucke der Werke von Robert Schumann* (Tutzing, 1979), pp. 26f., 102f.
18. See Roesner, ‘Schumann’, pp. 56–7.
19. Anthony Newcomb, ‘Once more “between absolute and program music”: Schumann’s Second Symphony’, *Nineteenth Century Music*, 7/3 (3 April 1984), 246–8; Roesner, ‘Tonal strategy’, pp. 301–5.
20. ‘... eine tiefe Klage um Dich’. Clara and Robert Schumann, *Briefwechsel*, vol. I, p. 126.
21. Clara and Robert Schumann, *Marriage Diaries*, p. 172. The wrapper of the autograph score (*D-Dühi*, 78.5025) contains Schumann’s inscription to Clara: ‘Meiner lieben Klara dargebracht am 13ten September 1842.’ (‘Offered to my dear Clara on 13 September 1842.’) Schumann dedicated the published quartets to ‘seinem Freunde Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy in inniger Verehrung’ (‘to his friend Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy in deep admiration’), see Hofmann, *Erstdrucke*, p. 417.
22. Ostwald, *Schumann. Inner Voices*, pp. 191–201.
23. Berthold Litzmann, *Clara Schumann: Ein Künstlerleben. Nach Tagebüchern und Briefen*, vol. II, *Ehejahre 1840–1856* (Leipzig, 1906), p. 135.
24. See Joel Lester’s penetrating analysis of the movement in ‘Robert Schumann and sonata forms’, *Nineteenth Century Music* 18/3 (spring 1995), pp. 190–5.
25. A diplomatic transcription of all of Schumann’s sketches for Op. 41 appears in my dissertation *Studies in Schumann Manuscripts* (New York University, 1973; published on request by University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, MI, 1974).
26. Roesner, ‘Parallel’, *passim*.
27. Anthony Newcomb discusses this movement as a complete reversal of the ‘paradigmatic plot’ of the classical rondo: ‘Schumann and late eighteenth-century narrative strategies’, *Nineteenth Century Music*, 11/2 (autumn 1987), 170–4.
28. Robert Schumann, *Tagebücher*, vol. II, 1836–1854, ed. Gerd Nauhaus (Leipzig, 1987), p. 402: ‘Erst vom Jr. 1845 an, von wo ich anfang alles im Kopf zu erfinden und auszuarbeiten, hat sich eine ganz andere Art zu componiren zu entwickeln begonnen.’ The composer’s observation apparently dates from 1846 and was written, together with other remarks on the compositional process, for possible inclusion in an autobiography or memoir. See Nauhaus’s preface to this volume of the *Tagebücher* (p. 13) and Plate 11 (between pp. 352 and 353).
29. Reinhard Kapp, *Studien zum Spätwerk Robert Schumanns* (Tutzing, 1984), pp. 168–78.
30. Even in its published form the A minor Sonata, Op. 105, is titled Sonata ‘for pianoforte and violin’, not ‘for violin and pianoforte’. See Hofmann, *Erstdrucke*, pp. 228f.

31. The concept of two paired keys functioning simultaneously as tonic is important for the music of the second half of the nineteenth century. Robert Bailey discusses this 'double-tonic complex' in an analytical essay accompanying the Norton Critical Score of the *Prelude and Transfiguration from Tristan and Isolde* (New York, 1985), pp. 116f. Reinhard Kapp perceives a similar 'Bitonalität' in Schumann's late works: Kapp, *Spätwerk*, pp. 175ff.
32. Kohlhasse, *Kammermusik*, vol. I, p. 58, vol. II, p. 186.
33. The introduction also incorporates a preview of the tonal compass of the sonata: the chord on the second beat of bar 5, sandwiched between two dominant triads, superposes a minor triad on B (B/D/F sharp) and a dominant 7th chord on G (G/B natural/D/F natural). The keys of the second and third movements of the sonata are, respectively, B minor and G major.
34. The Symphony in E flat major, Op. 97 ('Rhenish'), provides many compelling examples. See the chart in Roesner, 'Schumann', *Nineteenth-Century Symphony*, pp. 62–5.
35. The use of *fas* as an accent is typical of Schumann.
36. Scholars have attempted to identify this melody, but their conclusions vary. See Kohlhasse, *Kammermusik*, vol. I, p. 59, n. 49, for a summary.
37. This movement is remarkable for the subtlety of its psychological unfolding. The theme never varies, but the accompaniment does. Gradually the aspect of the music becomes less hymn-like and more Lied-like. The unsettling 'bridge' passage in E minor (*Etwas bewegter*, bars 72–105) leads to the last variation, which Schumann deliberately and nostalgically sets in the style of one of his Lieder of the early 1840s. The autobiographical implications cannot be ignored.
38. Kohlhasse discusses these revisions and provides diplomatic transcriptions of them: *Kammermusik*, vol. II, pp. 191–209; vol. III, pp. 91–107. Three pages of Schumann's draft are reproduced in vol. III, Plates VII–IX.
39. *Haushaltbuch*, pp. 574–6: 'Sehr fleißig' ('hard at work'), Schumann's entry for 15 October, probably refers to Op. 121 (it is his usual way of indicating that he was composing); the entry for 2 November, 'Die 2te Son[ate] ziemlich beendet' ('the 2nd sonata pretty well finished') suggests that it was not quite finished. In contrast to the amount of time Schumann required to finish Op. 121, the draft of the A minor Sonata, Op. 105, was completed in only five days, and the draft of the G minor Trio in nine days (*Haushaltbuch*, pp. 571–4).
40. In the time since the present essay was submitted for publication the sonatas for violin and piano have appeared in the new historical/critical edition of Schumann's complete works: Robert Schumann, *Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke*, Serie II, Werkgruppe 2 / Bd. 3, ed. Ute Bär (Mainz, 2001).