SCHUMANN’S VIOLIN CONCERTO: A NEGLECTED TREASURE?

BY

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To Zizzi Maria, who is the reason I became a violinist, and in memory of my beloved father,

Giuseppe Neglia
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Chapter I: INTRODUCTION

Robert Schumann is frequently credited with the honor of being named one of the greatest composers of the Romantic era. With his credentials as a widely known and respected music critic and composer of such masterpieces as *Carnaval* and *Kreisleriana*, his *Piano Quintet in E-Flat*, “*The Great*” *C Major Symphony*, and his vast collections of lieder including the heartfelt *Dichterliebe* and *Liederkreis*, as well as the *Piano* and *Cello Concerti*, he is most certainly deserving of this claim. Nearly everything Schumann wrote in these musical genres has been widely celebrated by musicians for decades. Why then, have many music historians and violinists alike never heard of Schumann’s hauntingly beautiful *Violin Concerto*? Therein lies an incredibly cryptic story, interlaced with tall tales and strands of the truth. Whatever the case may be, the stigma that surrounds Schumann’s *Violin Concerto* has, so far, been responsible for its regrettably unrecognized presence in the violin concerto repertoire.

While the history of the violin concerto genre spans hundreds of years, it was with the ingenuity and highly expanded form, which Beethoven brought in 1806 with his *Violin Concerto* that prompted later Romantic-born composers to experiment with the overall formal structure of the genre. Schumann was one such composer who loosely adopted Beethoven’s model in his own *Violin Concerto*. Schumann’s chosen form of the concerto was even more influenced by his musical style, which was revolutionary for its time. Unfortunately for Schumann, his beloved *Violin Concerto* was written during the most difficult years towards the end of his life while he was struggling immensely with mental illness. Because of this, the misunderstood aspects of the *Violin Concerto* were quickly and unjustly accredited to his state of mind.
Schumann wrote the *Violin Concerto* in roughly ten days as his diary notes indicate.¹ He managed to fully orchestrate the concerto within three days. Schumann expressed his feelings about the concerto saying that it was, “…a reflection of a certain seriousness with an underlying mood of happiness.”² The autograph of the *Violin Concerto* was originally entitled, “Concerto for Violin with Orchestral Accompaniment.” Schumann intended to premiere the *Violin Concerto* at one of the Düsseldorf concert series, where he served as the conductor. Sadly, his wish was never fulfilled. A few weeks after completing the concerto, Schumann withdrew from conducting the Düsseldorf concerts due to an overwhelming schedule. His busy touring schedule left him with no time for new endeavors. In 1854, the following year, Schumann was so inundated with prior responsibilities and engagements that the performance of the concerto was pushed back yet again. Most unfortunately, soon after, the increasing severity of Schumann’s illness destroyed all the hopes and expectations of ever premiering the concerto during his lifetime.

Schumann’s *Violin Concerto* was dedicated to one of his close friends, who was also one of the most prominent violinists of the time, Joseph Joachim. During Schumann’s lifetime, Joachim delayed performing the work publicly. Initially, it was thought that Joachim was simply too busy with other projects, being such a successful and widely sought out violinist. However, after Schumann’s death, Joachim confided in Clara, Robert’s other half, that he believed the concerto was the inferior product of an

² George Schünemann, introduction to *Robert Schumann Violin Concerto in D Minor for Violin & Orchestra*, (Mainz: Schott’s Söhne, 1937), iii-iv.
unstable mind. Joachim revealed his true sentiments regarding Schumann’s Violin
Concerto in his autobiography, writing the following in a letter, “The concerto possesses
a certain exhaustion, which attempts to wring out the last resources of spiritual energy.”
Clara Schumann allegedly agreed with this statement and thought it best that the piece
not enter the public spotlight in order to retain Schumann’s reputation as a composer and
music critic. Because of his grave doubts in Schumann’s concerto, Joachim absolutely
refused to premiere or perform the concerto during his lifetime. As a protective measure
of maintaining Robert’s successful reputation, Joachim, with permission from Clara,
seized the original manuscript for the concerto and securely locked it away in secret
within the Prussian State Library in Berlin with the proviso that no one would be allowed
to know about or perform the work until one hundred years after Schumann’s death in
1956.

However, as previously insinuated, this is not where the story ends. Several years
later, a most inconceivable event took place, which permanently altered the fate of
Schumann’s Violin Concerto. Joachim’s two great-nieces, sisters Adila and Jelly
d’Arányi, were both concert violinists and lived in London between the two world
wars. Jelly had a strong interest in the occult, and often participated in spiritualist
séances where she communicated with spirits by moving an upturned glass in the center
of a circle, displaying the letters of the alphabet. (Eerily coincidentally, Schumann
himself was known to engage in similar activities, particularly around the time the Violin
Concerto was written.) Jelly maintained that during one séance, an unknown spirit came

to her in her trance and pleaded with her to find and perform an unpublished work of his
written for the violin.\textsuperscript{5} When Jelly asked the spirit who he was and who composed the
unpublished work, the tumbler on the table spelled “Robert Schumann.” In a separate
séance\textsuperscript{6} following the first “calling” of Schumann from the spirit world, Jelly claimed that
the spirit of her great-uncle, Joachim, directed her to find the Schumann concerto
manuscript in the Prussian State Library in Berlin. Shortly thereafter, Schumann’s \textit{Violin
Concerto} was located exactly where the spirit had allegedly guided Jelly to find it.
Consequently, the concerto was performed nineteen years before the expiration of the one
hundred-year proviso. Jelly claimed she had had no previous knowledge of the concerto.
While this story is incredibly difficult to believe, it is still quite intriguing, and these
series of events ultimately led to the world premiere of the concerto in 1937.

The \textit{Violin Concerto}’s grand introduction to the world was given in Germany
under the supervision of the Nazi government. The Nazis insisted that the first
performance be given in Berlin by a German violinist because of Schumann’s German
heritage. Therefore, the honor of premiering Schumann's \textit{Violin Concerto} went to
German violinist, Georg Kulenkampff. The following year, Jelly d'Arányi performed the
British premiere on February 16, 1938 with the BBC Symphony in London. American
violinist, Yehudi Menuhin, who called the concerto the "historically missing link"\textsuperscript{6} between the Beethoven and the Brahms concerti, gave the United States premiere that
same year and is largely credited with championing the piece. Since 1938, the long-
suppressed concerto has begun to appear on concert programs with small frequency. Yet,

\textsuperscript{6} Robert Magidoff and Yehudi Menuhin, \textit{Yehudi Menuhin. The Story of the Man and the
it has not, to this day, found universal acceptance in the violin repertoire purportedly because of the perception that Schumann's creative powers were on the decline during the last years of his career and at the time of the concerto’s conception.

I believe strongly that overall, Schumann’s style is so complex, multi-faceted, and unique that Joachim and countless others misunderstood who Schumann was at his core, and what artistic message he was trying to portray. The primary objective of this paper is to dismantle the established negative viewpoint of the *Violin Concerto*, to show that Schumann, contrary to popular belief, was at the height of his creative powers while composing the *Violin Concerto*. Since it was locked away for such a long period of time, the great composers who came after Schumann were not influenced at all by his *Violin Concerto*.

My first initiative is to provide a detailed summary of Schumann’s musical style within several mediums in which he composed, particularly piano character pieces and his instrumental concerti. This will familiarize us with Schumann’s unconventional musical genius and help us understand the path to the creation of the *Violin Concerto*.

My second initiative will be to explain Schumann’s fascination with musical cryptograms and the “Clara” motive, as well as his fascination of poetry, non-chronological storytelling, and programmatic music. This will doubtless help to shed light on the unorthodox compositional style of his oppressed *Violin Concerto*. This will give us a strong foundation to understand why Schumann’s compositions in the past, and in present times in the case of the *Violin Concerto*, are criticized by those who are not aware of their hidden meanings and literary influences.
My third and final initiative is to show that Schumann’s *Violin Concerto* is an equal to other successful violin concerti highly ranked within the violin concerto repertoire; namely, the concerti of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Brahms. These three highly acclaimed concerti were specifically chosen in order to juxtapose their most prevalent characteristics: the form, harmonic language, and motivic transformation. I will also compare the violinistic techniques found in Schumann’s *Violin Concerto* with Paganini’s *Violin Caprices* in order to show that Schumann’s *Violin Concerto* is not lacking in virtuosic elements, which is, in many ways, the hallmark of any great instrumental concerto.

By comparing these works with Schumann’s *Violin Concerto* concretely in an analytical manner, it is my sincere belief that one will be prompted to take a fresh, educated, focused look at the composition and deem it worthy of membership to the standard violin concerto repertoire rather than simply discarding it as one of Schumann’s weaker works due to his bouts of mental illness during its conception.

Although the Classical era was rife with concerti with developing technical and musical demands (of which Mozart is a member with his violin concerti), the next major step in the development of the concerto came with Beethoven’s *Violin Concerto* Op. 61, written in 1806. With Beethoven’s concerto came large formal expansion, increased length, and heightened difficulty. In this concerto, the orchestra introduces all contrasting thematic material for nearly one hundred measures before the soloist’s entrance. The orchestra’s and the soloist’s role are highly dependent on each other for development of thematic material. The harmonic language in Beethoven’s Concerto is very complex.

Around this time, with the improvements in the violin’s bow construction, which resulted in producing a more sonorous tone and gaining more control with its new structure, Beethoven took these things into consideration and implemented them into his concerto. His use of highly detailed phrases and slurred bowings, clearly noted dynamics, and portrayal of both heroic and sentimental moods highlight his knowledge and understanding of the instrument’s abilities.

With the highly expanded form Beethoven brought to the violin concerto genre, many composers who followed used his concerto as a cornerstone for their Romantic ideas. One such example is Mendelssohn’s *Violin Concerto* Op. 64, written in 1845. With his concerto, Mendelssohn remained quite true to the pre-established sonata form, but made slight, yet revolutionary revisions. For example, his concerto was the first in which the violin entered immediately with no formal thematic introduction provided by the orchestra. After the first and second subjects and development are presented,
Mendelssohn inserted the cadenza right before the recapitulation instead of after the recapitulation, as was common practice in the Classical era. This is also the first occurrence of a fully written out cadenza as opposed to an improvised cadenza by the soloist, which was standard for the time. In addition, all three movements are linked together with bridge passages instead of standing alone as separate units. The violin became quite flexible in dealing with demands, sometimes serving as mere accompaniment for the orchestra, and other times, soaring above with fingered octaves, ricocheted arpeggios, fingered thirds, and rapid runs. With Mendelssohn’s ingenious writing came many alterations to the violin concerto genre and its formal structure.

The Brahms *Violin Concerto* Op. 77, among the most paramount violin concerti in history, was written in 1878 and was dedicated to Joseph Joachim, just as Schumann’s *Violin Concerto* and countless others were during this period. In the Brahms *Violin Concerto*, there is an obvious amalgamation of the Classical concerto form and Brahms’s personal musical language as a composer.

The concerto was, in many ways, considered to be “against the violin” rather than lending itself to being idiomatic for the performer due to its immense virtuosity, but also because of its sophisticated harmonic language, which requires mature artistic vision from the performer. Renowned Brahms scholar, Dr. Michael Musgrave, is quoted as writing in his book, “*The Music of Brahms,*” the following regarding Brahms’s complex musical language within the realm of his *Violin Concerto*: “Brahms builds in a highly individual way on the inherited foundation. As a work for violin, it is much more demanding in its figurations, and the musical line appears more full, more capricious and expansive as a result, but the most powerful difference is in language. Brahms conceived
the work in a more symphonic manner."7 Despite its intricate musical nature and extremely challenging writing for the violin, the Brahms Violin Concerto remains one of the most loved and played among other violin concerti of this century.

Written in the latter part of 1853, Schumann’s Violin Concerto WoO 23 was written in D Minor, a key that held deeply melancholic and strifeful connotations of Strum und Drang since the days of Mozart. The emphasis on both the orchestra and the soloist as supporting the transformation of the thematic material was a novel idea for this time in the violin concerto genre, as it emulates a Classically-themed violin concerto and was considered old-fashioned.

The concerto’s structure follows a traditional three-movement Fast-Slow-Fast form on the surface. However, in later chapters, I will explain that Schumann’s Violin Concerto must be viewed as a one-movement concerto. There are two main reasons to make this claim. The first one is related to the fact that the concerto is tailored around a single musical theme, therefore, it is cyclical. The second reason is that the first, the second, and the third movements with their proportions, key areas, and harmonic structure and pace correspond to the proportions, key areas, and harmonic pace of a regular sonata form respectively.

Schumann’s Violin Concerto delineates itself as an unusual gem because the violin concerti being composed at this time were laden with virtuosic effects for virtuosity’s sake with the rise of Paganini, Wieniawski, Vieuxtemps, and other bravura artists who rose to prominence in the mid-1800s. The style of Schumann’s concerto is

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highly intellectual and intensely passionate, while still restrained in the carefully tailored rules of Classical counterpoint.

Despite its brilliant artistry, Schumann’s *Violin Concerto* remains largely unplayed by those of the violin world to this day. However, although the concerto has repressed origins and has been largely neglected even after its meek introduction to the violin repertoire, it is beginning to become more programmed in the concert halls, particularly with German violinists.
Chapter III: UNDERSTANDING SCHUMANN’S MUSICAL STYLE

The violin repertoire is full of diverse concerti and sonatas, but when one deals with Schumann’s concerti and sonatas, it is extremely important to be aware of his four main stylistic traits. First of all, Schumann’s compositions are episodic and often contain a non-chronological structure, regardless of which medium or genre his compositions might belong. He inherited this trait from the German Romantic literary ideals. Secondly, Schumann despised music which in its core served as crowd-pleasing entertainment rather than high art, and although on the surface he embraced the Romantic ideals, his musical language was based on that of past composers, more specifically J.S. Bach and Ludwig van Beethoven. Thirdly, one must always remember that Schumann’s melodies are naturally saturated with song-like qualities. He was one of the greatest songwriters, and therefore, his compositions are, in many ways, songs without words and with distinct narratives. Finally, understanding Schumann’s obsession with the “Clara” motives and the hidden messages that these themes personified is perhaps the most important of the four to be aware of in the quest of unraveling his compositional enigma.

The turbulent years from 1833 to 1839 were the span in which Schumann wrote almost exclusively for the piano, producing within this period many of his best-known compositions for which he is still lauded today.8 During much of this season of Schumann’s life, he was ardently fighting for Clara Wieck’s love, as well as against her disapproving father’s refusal to their marriage. As a coping mechanism to deal with these

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tempestuous times, Schumann turned to the piano, where he felt most at home, and began to write character pieces as a creative emotional outlet.

Many of Schumann’s works from this time are considered to be autobiographical by scholars. Dr. John Daverio, a respected Schumann scholar, maintained that people and circumstances involved in Schumann’s life are reflected as aesthetic musical ideas within his music, particularly during this period. This point is absolutely crucial to understanding Schumann’s particular musical style, which is often characterized as abruptly shifting from one musical idea or character to the next without much, if any, preparation.

In order to gain an understanding of Schumann’s compositional output through the lens of his career as a composer, it is important to start from the beginning of his journey. The first twenty-three consecutive opuses of Schumann belong to the solo piano pieces, all of which contain distinct portrayals of different characters, whether real or fictional. German Romantic literature, more specifically that of Jean Paul Richter, was the main inspiration behind the large piano cycles of Robert Schumann and the formulation of his early style.

Schumann was fascinated with literature during his entire life. In fact, he made strong efforts in his youth to become an author and poet. During his years in law school as a young man, Schumann was already utterly infatuated with Jean Paul's writings and knew them all well. Schumann once wrote in a letter that two people from the past, J. S. Bach and Jean Paul, inspired him greatly in all aspects of art and

9 Ibid.
Schumann took pride that Jean Paul was so influential in his compositions, and claimed that he learned more about counterpoint from Jean Paul than from his music teachers. 11

Jean Paul’s writings can be described as whimsical, metaphorical, funny, imaginative, and abrupt in the changes of plot and mood. These are exactly the traits we see in Schumann's character pieces, and this is certainly not coincidental. To bring his hero to life through the music, Schumann composed works based directly on ideas from Jean Paul's writings and encouraged all of his friends and potential critics to be intimately familiar with the great poet before listening to, studying, or critiquing his compositions.

The first cycle of character pieces of Schumann’s Op. 2, *Papillons*, are inspired by Jean Paul's *Flegeljahre's* last chapter, “The Ball.”12 In *Papillons*, Schumann depicts the ball where Vult and Walt, twin brothers, are both in love with Wina, a beautiful young girl. Each movement of *Papillons* depicts a certain episode of the ball, which, in turn, drives the narrative of the storyline. *Papillons* was terribly misunderstood by the music critics at the time due to their unfamiliarity with Jean Paul’s *Flegeljahre*. Schumann was very disappointed in its reception.

As early as with *Papillons* Op. 2, Schumann had fully formed his musical style, which in one word, can be described as episodic. This episodic presentation of a musical form can be clearly seen throughout Schumann’s entire compositional

11 Ibid.
output, even in his later compositions like the *Violin Concerto* and the *Cello Concerto*. *Papillons*, just like the majority of Schumann’s compositions, must be viewed as a cinematic art form directed by a leading director of our time.

When one walks into the theater where a new movie of Quentin Tarantino is premiering, one should already have some expectations of the disjointed episodic narrative, which the director has been so strongly associated with since 1994’s *Pulp Fiction*. Robert Schumann would have loved Tarantino’s storytelling technique because of its episodic and non-chronological style, and because of its stark juxtapositions of scenes of happiness and love interlaced with hideous violence and evil. Most importantly, Schumann would have identified with Tarantino’s ability to unite seemingly unrelated episodes together to create an undividable form.

Schumann’s incredible imagination led to the creation of other imaginary characters and musical critics: Florestan, Eusebius, Meta Abegg, and Master Raro. These fictional characters of Schumann’s combined with other real figures such as J. S. Bach, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Jean Paul, were all used as literary devices by Schumann to “declare war” against “the Philistine army,” a fictional army created by Schumann which represented lower, unsophisticated styles of music.

This comprised league of Schumann’s chosen individuals who defended “*high music*” became known as *Davidsbündler*, or, *the League of David*. As the young righteous David was to defeat the evil giant, Goliath, *Davidsbündler* was set to defeat the empty, crowd-pleasing music and the lack of taste of the Philistine army. Consequently, by 1837, Schumann composed another set of eighteen character pieces for the piano using
these fictional personalities called Davidsbündlertänze, which means, “Dances of the League of David.”

In 1834, Schumann had already created the periodical, Neue Zeitschrift für Musik (New Journal for Music), in order to express his thoughts about the newly composed music of his time. He criticized mediocrity, the gallant style, and the applause-seeking music of the new composers and promoted the music of J. S. Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart. Schumann was the first to notice the genius of Frederic Chopin and was instrumental in introducing Johannes Brahms to the world, two composers who were highly underrated during their early years.

Robert Schumann is regarded as one of the greatest songwriters. An equal to Franz Schubert, the king of German Lieder, Schumann composed over three hundred songs. In his art songs, Schumann shined as brightly as Schubert because he found the medium in which instrumental music, hidden meanings, character pieces, storytelling, non-virtuosic chamber music setting, and poetry all coincide. According to many theorists, this is the genre in which Schumann felt most at home. In many peoples’ minds, Schumann is still known above all as one of the greatest songwriters.

Lastly, Schumann was always fascinated with constructing compositions with hidden meanings. This is a trait that he inherited directly from E.T.A. Hoffmann’s writings. Hoffmann used fictional characters of his to create his literary work, which inspired Schumann to come up with his own fictional characters. Hofmann deals with the inner continuity of a work of art and argues that continuity does not have to be chronological. In fact, he urged writers to compose the ending of their novels first. In this
way, Hofmann wrote, one can insert the true meanings of the work and hide them to be discovered in the process of reading. This is precisely what Schumann achieved in his earliest solo piano masterpieces, most notably *Davidsbündlertänze*, *Kreisleriana*, and the *Great Fantasie in C*. As this paper will explain, Schumann was at the height of incorporating hidden messages through borrowed thematic materials in his last works, most notably the *Violin Concerto*. 
Chapter IV: SCHUMANN’S OBSESSION WITH THE “CLARA” MOTIVE

During the span of 1840 to 1841, Schumann, with Clara’s advice, embarked on a new journey of musical self-development. Before 1840, Schumann had already established his radical musical style with his piano works, such as *Papillons*, *Carnaval*, and *Kreisleriana* as well as with his dozen song collections. In 1841, Schumann was busy composing his first orchestral works including the *Symphony in B-Flat* Op. 38 and the *Overture, Scherzo and Finale in E*, Op. 52. In 1842, he would start his work on his first chamber compositions: the three *String Quartets* Op. 41 and the *Piano Quintet in E-Flat* Op. 44.

In the same year, Schumann wrote the first movement of the *Piano Concerto*, Op. 54. This was his first attempt at the instrumental concerto genre. Although Schumann loosely used the sonata form for the first movement, it is, in many ways, unlike any sonata form of this period. It is full of drastic and abrupt changes, a style of music in which Schumann had become quite accustomed to composing. It was titled “*A Fantasie for Piano and Orchestra*” and was premiered by Clara Schumann with great success. Clara later urged Robert to complete the piece into a full three-movement piano concerto. By 1845, Schumann composed two more movements and completed the concerto.

The *Piano Concerto* is one of the most celebrated works of Schumann. Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Edvard Grieg, and Sergei Rachmaninoff were highly influenced by its form. The last concerto which Schumann wrote, the *Violin Concerto*, is incredibly similar to his first concerto, the *Piano Concerto*. It is ironic, however, that as much
influence that his *Piano Concerto* had on later generations of composers, the *Violin Concerto* had almost none and was not recognized or performed until 1937.

It is very important to understand that originally, Schumann thought of the instrumental concerto as a *Fantasie* rather than as an opportunity to produce a musical virtuosic showcase of the soloist’s abilities. Schumann detested flashy works full of empty, technical fireworks with no emotional substance and criticized these works and their composers heavily in his journal. Therefore, it is only natural that he would stray away from the conventional concerto form of his time. The *Piano Concerto*, originally being a one-movement work, indicated how Schumann was desperately trying to implement his already mature compositional style into the conventional form.

It is interesting to observe that out of the seven instrumental concerti which Schumann composed, four are one-movement compositions: The *Konzertstück for Four Horns and Orchestra* Op. 84, *The Introduction and Allegro Appassionato for Piano and Orchestra* Op. 92, the *Fantasie in C for Violin and Orchestra* Op. 131, and the *Introduction and Allegro for Piano and Orchestra* Op. 134. The *Piano Concerto*, the *Cello Concerto*, and the *Violin Concerto* are multi-movement compositions, but even so, there is one crucial thing to bear in mind. All three of these multi-movement concerti are cyclical works, and as a result, in many ways, they function as one-movement compositions. (To make this theory even stronger, I want to highlight the fact that the *Cello Concerto* has no interruptions between its three movements, and the *Piano* and *Violin Concerti* have no interruption between their second and third movements).
The *Violin Concerto*, one of the last works Schumann composed, is a testament of his unique genius in this genre where he was able to maintain his unconventional musical vision in a well-established instrumental genre due to two main musical traits: the obsessive use of the “Clara” motive written into his compositions, which, in turn, give a cyclic form to the concertos, and the use of episodic form derived from his character pieces and from the structures of his early piano sonatas. I will explore these two traits in detail during the next two subchapters.

**The “Clara” Motives in Schumann’s Earlier Compositions**

Throughout his life, Robert Schumann expressed his love for Clara through numerous letters, and more importantly, in his compositions with numerous hidden themes and motives, which represented her. The first way Schumann incorporated hidden meanings into his compositions was through the use of the musical cryptogram. Even before meeting Clara, Schumann was obsessed with the idea of incorporating hidden messages in his compositions. In his very first published composition, Schumann, through cryptogram, spelled out the surname of his imaginary friend, Meta A-B-E-G-G, with musical notes, which became the motive for the variations set title, *Abegg Variations* Op. 1, published in 1830 (See Example 1).

![Example 1. Robert Schumann, Abegg Variations Op. 1, mm. 1-2.](image-url)
In Schumann’s *Carnaval* Op. 9, which was composed between 1834 and 1835, Schumann represented himself with the *A-S-C-H* and *S-C-H-A* motive in a movement of *Carnaval* titled *A.S.C.H._S.C.H.A* (See Example 2). This abbreviation of Schumann’s name appears both backwards and forwards in this cryptogram. The theme served as the building block of all the movements of *Carnaval*, but it is not until the middle of the cycle that we are introduced to it in plain form.


Even during his compositional middle period, Schumann remained keenly interested in cryptogram motives. His *6 Fugues for Organ* Op. 60 were composed using the famous *B-A-C-H* motive, an homage to J. S. Bach. (The *B-A-C-H* theme as realized in pitches is B-Flat, A-Natural, C-Natural, and B-Natural).

The second way in which Schumann incorporated hidden meanings in his compositions was by borrowing themes and short motives from other composers. The first composition of Schumann, which was tied to Clara, was his *Impromptus* Op. 5 written in theme and variations form. The theme was borrowed from Clara’s *Romance Varioe* Op. 3, written in 1833.

16, and the *Fantasie in C* Op. 17, Schumann was particularly obsessed with a five-note descending motive which was found in many compositions of Clara Schumann, most notably her *Valses Romantiques* Op. 4 (See Example 3) and *Soirées Musicales* Op. 6 (See Example 6 below).

The first example from Clara’s *Valses Romantiques* Op. 4 shows Clara’s repetitious use of this descending theme. Similar examples can be found in Schumann’s *Davidsbündlertänze* and *Carnaval* (See Examples 4 and 5).


Example 4. Robert Schumann, *Davidsbündlertänze* Op. 6, No. 4, mm. 76-79.

In Example 6 below taken from Clara Schumann’s *Notturno* from *Soirées Musicales* Op. 6, we see the A-G-F-E-D descending motive found in the melodic line of the right hand.


This very motive can be found in the very beginning of two of Robert’s most successful works, *Kreisleriana* and the *Fantasie in C* (See Examples 7 and 8 below). In both cases, the theme is very clearly introduced at the beginning of the composition and it functions as the thematic building block for all movements. In *Kreisleriana*, the “Clara” motive is in the left hand, highlighted by the sforzandi. In the *Fantasie*, the descending “Clara” motive is in the melody, highlighted with octaves.


In the case of the *Fantasie in C*, Schumann also implements the theme of the last song from Beethoven’s song cycle, *An Die Ferne Geliebte* Op. 98 (*To the Distant Beloved*). The “Clara” motive and the melodic and harmonic bits and pieces from Beethoven’s song are woven together to make up the first movement of the *Fantasie in C*. It is only at the very end of the piece that Schumann gives the exact quote from the Beethoven song. How appropriate this was since Clara was away from Schumann! What a romantic and clever way to send a hidden message of love to her! The meaning is truly hidden in this composition because although bits and pieces of the Beethoven song are stirring something within our memories throughout the movement, it is only at the end.
that we are given the complete quote from the song and realize its original connotation, one of love and devotion to each one’s distant beloved (See Example 9).


After Schumann’s tumultuous period between 1832 and 1839, during which he was struggling to gain Friedrich Wieck’s approval to marry Clara, Robert Schumann wrote exclusively for the piano. Once he married Clara, the songs cycles poured out of his heart one after the other. In the 1840s, Schumann managed to compose around twenty song collections, among which some of his most acclaimed songs cycles came to fruition, including *Liederkreis* Op. 39 and *Dichterliebe* Op. 48.

Schumann’s motivic fascination continued with the song cycle genre. One particularly vivid example can be found in the final song of *Liederkreis*, which is based on Clara’s five-note descending motive (See Example 10 below). It is very interesting to see the relationship between the pianist and the singer. In the example below, the pianist plays the first three notes of the descending pattern and the singer completes the last three notes with an overlap on the third (the pitch F-Sharp). With this gesture, Schumann is complicating and hiding the “Clara” motive.

The five-note descending motive can also be clearly found in another one of Schumann’s song cycles, *Dichterliebe*. In Example 11, the entirety of the musical material is derived and based on the obsessive repetition of the descending line, which represents Clara. Notice how Schumann highlights the theme by slurring the five-note pattern from the otherwise weak pick-up measure.

The obsession with this descending “Clara” motive is evident even in the first symphonic composition of Schumann, the *B-Flat Major Symphony* Op. 38, which was written the following year in 1841. At the very beginning of the first movement, right after the monophonic trumpet call, the entire orchestra shouts the descending line in fortissimo, which, in this case, appears in its original pitch collection: A-G-F-C-D (See Example 12).

It should not be surprising that in 1841, when Schumann attempted to write his first instrumental concerto, the *Piano Concerto* Op. 54, he used the “Clara” motive yet again. The “Clara” motive is extremely predominant throughout the first movement, and in fact, serves as the only thematic material for the duration of the entire first movement. At this point, Schumann’s genius found a way to combine the two ways he expressed Clara in his music. (The first way he achieved this was through the use of musical cryptograms, and the second way was through the use of the descending five-note pattern interspersed throughout his compositions.)

The “Clara” motive in the earlier piano compositions are quite easy to detect, because they are, for the most part, exact quotations. In later compositions, namely, the *Violin Concerto*, the “Clara” motives are mutated to a degree that one without prior knowledge of its original content would not be able to detect them.

At the beginning of the *Piano Concerto*, there is a sorrowful and heartfelt theme that the orchestra and piano introduce separately. This theme starts on the pitch, “C,” representing the first letter in Clara’s name. It finishes with repetitions of the pitch, “A,” which represents the two letter “A”s found in Clara’s name. Since the C-B-A pitch collection in this order is a descending pattern, it also simultaneously represents Clara’s five-note descending theme in a mutated form (See Example 13 below).

In order to erase all doubt from the listener’s ears that the descending three-note theme is a mutation of the five-note “Clara” motive, Schumann introduces the complete “Clara” motive immediately in measure 19 of the *Piano Concerto* (See Example 14 below). Notice how again, Schumann chooses the articulation of a slur to highlight the entire theme and to bring special attention to the line.

This theme becomes the only musical idea that Schumann uses to build the entire thematic content of all the movements in his *Piano Concerto*. As a result of these attributes, Schumann’s first instrumental concerto should still be considered as a self-contained one-movement composition, a model he would use for the *Cello* and *Violin Concerti*.

The “Clara” Motive in the *Violin Concerto*

Now that the meaning and the special presence of the “Clara” motive throughout many of Schumann’s works has been noted, explained and analyzed, let us examine how Schumann represented Clara in the *Violin Concerto*. The motive, which unites all three movements of the Violin Concerto, happens to be the second theme, which is introduced at measure 31 (See Example 15 below). It is interesting to notice the presence of the three-note descending theme, C, B-Flat, A, which only appears in the flute part, a higher
register, which was commonly used to personify a female presence in musical works, in this case, Clara.


In every example where Schumann depicts Clara in the pieces above, he uses musical parameters to show the listener that a very important theme or musical idea is taking place. If you refer to Example 12 from the *B-Flat Major Symphony* on page 26, Schumann uses the contrast of the monophonic brass introduction to the homophonic fortissimo entrance of the entire orchestra when the “Clara” motive is introduced. A similar effect is achieved at the very beginning of the *Piano Concerto*, where after the initial opening chords of the piano, the orchestral woodwinds introduce the sorrowful “Clara” motive. In the other examples mentioned above, the “Clara” motive is highlighted by default because it is introduced at the very beginning of the piece.

In the case of the *Violin Concerto*, Schumann highlights the entrance of the “Clara” motive by abruptly and unexpectedly changing numerous musical parameters at
measure 31 in the following ways (See Example 15 above): a dynamic shift from fortissimo to piano, a rhythmic shift from triplets to duple eighth notes, and a textural shift from canonic to homophonic (melody-accompaniment) texture. In addition to these stark changes, Schumann indicates for the music to be performed “dolce”, calling the attention of the performers to highlight the section with an affect change.

The first mutation of the “Clara” motive occurs at the opening of the first movement (See Example 16). As you can tell, the placement of this mutation is non-chronological since the plain version of the “Clara” motive occurs in measure 31, later in the piece.

If the opening theme is examined closely, one will find that the pitch collection of the piece is exactly the same pitch collection of the Piano Concerto, C-B-A. (The tonality is different since in this portion of the Violin Concerto, we are in F Major, and hence, there is the presence of the B-Flat.) As I mentioned above, the Violin Concerto, just like the Piano Concerto, is uni-thematic, and if we observe the very beginning of the Violin Concerto, we clearly see the same pitch collection, transposed and desynchronized (See Example 16).

Notice how both themes, presented in Example 15 and Example 16 above, share the octave leap. The D Minor theme in Example 16 begins with a descending octave, while the theme in F Major in Example 15 begins with an ascending octave. The three-note descending theme, representing Clara, in both cases, is towards the end of this octave leap. As disjointed as the first instance of this theme at the beginning of the *Violin Concerto* seems, it is still “pronouncing” Clara’s name within the music because the last pitch is “A.”

In the development of the first movement, Schumann composes an obbligato against the familiar F Major “Clara” motive, first with the clarinet, and next, with the solo violin (See Example 17) and the oboe, which can be considered as the second mutation of the “Clara” motive.

The third mutation of the “Clara” motive can be found in the second movement of the *Violin Concerto*. This mutation highlights the octave split, as the example below shows (See Example 18 below). In measures 11 and 12 of the second movement, Schumann introduces the fourth mutation of the “Clara” motive (See Example 19 below).


The fifth mutation occurs in the C Minor section of the second movement as Example 20 demonstrates.


The sixth mutation of the “Clara” motive occurs at the beginning of the last movement (See Example 21 below). In this case, Schumann is really highlighting the
importance of this theme by putting it at the beginning of this heroic Polonaise, and by stretching the range of the theme from one octave to two octaves.


The final and perhaps the most peculiar mutation of the “Clara” motive has an overwhelming presence in the Finale of the *Violin Concerto* (See Example 22). This particular musical idea is never shared with the soloist, and is only played by the woodwinds. Because of its distinct instrumentation, it really calls the attention of the ear to it. It is fascinating that this theme is the exact pitch collection of the complete “Clara” motive from the *Piano Concerto’s* beginning. (Refer to Example 14, found on page 29)


It is fascinating that this pitch collection happens to include all of the letters of Clara’s name if one was to go through the German alphabet systematically and assign
pitches to each letter. This is perhaps the most complicated representation of Clara in the 

*Violin Concerto*. 

This apparent evidence of the “Clara” motive being the focal point of the entire 

*Violin Concerto* proves that not only was Schumann’s compositional genius not 

deteriorating due to his mental illness, but it also shows his own incorporation of Clara’s 
themes at its very height. In 1835, Schumann wrote to the then sixteen-year-old Clara 

about his newly composed *Piano Sonata in F-Sharp Minor* Op. 11, writing the 

following: “… it is a cry from my heart to yours in which your theme appears in every 

possible form.”13 The same can be said about the *Violin Concerto*. 

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Chapter V: SCHUMANN’S EPISODIC SONATA FORM

Schumann’s first attempt at the sonata form was with his Piano Sonata in F-Sharp Minor Op. 11, titled “Grand Sonata for Piano.” Although the first three movements are full of Schumann’s new pianistic and formal thinking, the fourth movement stands as a landmark and an entirely fresh viewpoint of the expectations of a sonata’s final movement.

Common forms for a sonata Finale of the time were the Rondo, Theme and Variations, and the use of Sonata form. Schumann was a revolutionary during his time for closing a his sonata with a seemingly through-composed form. In actuality, the movement is a combination of eight character pieces occurring within a certain sequence. These sections and their respective keys are presented in the exact sequence listed below in Diagram 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Section A:</th>
<th>F-Sharp Minor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Section B:</td>
<td>A Minor and E-Flat Major,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Section A:</td>
<td>C-Sharp Minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Section B:</td>
<td>E-Flat Minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Section C:</td>
<td>F-Sharp Minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Section D:</td>
<td>A Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Section E:</td>
<td>A Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Section F:</td>
<td>A Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Section G:</td>
<td>F-Sharp Minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Section H:</td>
<td>F-Sharp Minor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Once the sequence is complete, Schumann repeats the same sequence, but with all of the sections in different key areas. The movement is concluded with an F-Sharp Major
Coda. Schumann used this form for many finales of his sonata form compositions as well as variations and fantasies. The most notable examples would be his two Piano Sonatas which followed soon after, roughly in the same year of 1835, the Finale of the Symphonic Etudes Op. 13 (1834), the Finale of the Fantasie in C Op. 17 (1839), and the first movement and the Finale of his Piano Concerto (1841-1845).

Schumann’s first instrumental concerto follows the exact model of the F-Sharp Minor Sonata Op. 11. The result is, on the surface, a disjointed and episodic fantasy-improvisation, but with a strong sense of continuity. The sense of continuity is reached through two key elements: Schumann’s use of the “Clara” motive to unite the piece, and the smooth harmonic transitions from one episode to another. While the F-Sharp Minor Sonata is a combination of eight different character pieces/episodes, the Piano Concerto contains the same character portrayed in different episodes.

It is as if the hero of the story, represented by the “Clara” motive, is thrown into a number of trials, emotions, and circumstances. As the composition progresses, the listener comprehends a very strong association with the theme, just like in a movie, when the main hero’s character is built throughout the diverse obstacles he or she must overcome. This association is not a coincidence and should be taken seriously since Schumann was a pioneer in programmatic music for the piano and was a poet in his heart.

The episodes of the first movement of the Piano Concerto are not smoothly connected, and the tempo of the first movement changes eight times: Allegro affettuoso, Animato, Andante espressivo, Allegro (Tempo I), Piu animato, Tempo I, Animato,
(Cadenza), and finally, Allegro molto. By now, in our modern time, we have become accustomed to hearing such multi-tempo compositions, because there are many composers who used Schumann’s form, namely, Tchaikovsky and Sibelius is their Violin Concerti. However, in the early nineteenth century, this was a very unique way of constructing the flow of the music. (For example, in a Classical concerto, the only shift in tempo would occur at the cadenza, where the performer took generous liberties in executing his unique interpretation.)

The first movement of the Violin Concerto shares the same disjointed and episodic structure with the Piano Concerto and Schumann’s F-Sharp Minor Piano Sonata. In the Violin Concerto, the “Clara” motive unites the episodic form into a more cohesive work through motivic stability.

In the case of the Violin Concerto, the main theme is represented in three different settings during the first movement. Each setting suggests a different affect and artistic color of the piece. The first setting is an agitated one, which is evident in the repetitive pulse of the orchestral accompaniment, which is a driving force overwrought with unbridled emotion. The canonic texture during this particular musical point is yet another symbol of difficulty and strife as the multiple “Clara” motives are fighting for superiority. In turn, the “Clara” motive is disjointed due to several large intervallic leaps. The octave drop symbolizes dramatic finality, which is almost operatic in nature. The ascending scales add to the soul-searching affect of the episode (See Example 23 below).

The second setting is the absolute opposite of the first (See Example 24). Here, the harmonic language is full of intervallic consonances. It is pleasing and predictable to the ear like a beautiful song. Because of the pedal point, there is a new feeling of repose and stability. The octave is shooting above now, but the octave jump is smoothened with the inner passing note. Since the octave is rising so smoothly, it now symbolizes lightness and playfulness.


During the course of the entire piece as a whole, Schumann goes back and forth between these two contrasting episodes. In many ways, these episodes represent his two selves, Florestan and Eusebius. The reason which Schumann was and still is criticized is for how abruptly he changes from one episode to another.

The first time this change occurs, as discussed in the previous chapter, is in the orchestral introduction of the second theme in measure 31 (See Example 24). Notice how the music abruptly shifts from a triple pulse to a duple pulse, from a canonic texture to
melody-accompaniment texture, from forte dynamic to piano dynamic, from an agitato affect to a dolce affect, and from a lively bass-line to a suspended pedal-bass.

These abrupt and unprepared shifts of mood can be justified, however, with one simple reason. He tricks the listener by posing his duality with all these contrasting parameters of music, but the most important parameter, the “Clara” motive, remains intact. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that Schumann is not shifting abruptly, but that he is simply calling our ears to pay attention to the most important constant in his life, and the main hero of the story during this time of madness, Clara.

In the middle of the first movement, the third episode is something special to note. Here, Schumann manages to combine the canonic texture with its affects to the beautiful dolce cantabile second episode. With this poetic gesture, Florestan and Eusebius are successfully combined into one individual (See Example 25). The dissonances that are the result of this mixture are incredibly beautiful. For most of the first movement, the orchestra plays the role of an accompanist to the violin solo, which is not a weakness or a surprise since Schumann originally titled the composition “Concerto for Violin with Orchestral Accompaniment.”¹⁴ This third episode is truly the only time in the first movement when the orchestra and the violin are finally at equal terms with each other.


¹⁴ George Schünemann, introduction to Robert Schumann Violin Concerto in D Minor for Violin & Orchestra, (Mainz: Schott’s Söhne, 1937), iii.
The first movement of the *Violin Concerto* is, of course, in sonata form, but one should not compare this to a sonata form of Beethoven’s and ergo, call it an inferior composition. Schumann’s sonata form is episodic. There are no transitions between the first, second, or closing themes. Schumann’s *Violin Concerto* can and should be considered as an example of musical theater. In its narrative, the solo violin part and the “Clara” motive are the main heroes. It is a concerto that concentrates and highlights the subject of the narrative by eliminating commonly expected norms such as highly accessible, chronological, and predictable sequences of musical events.

The storytelling ballad-like nature is something that has been associated with Schumann from his earliest compositions and should be associated with the *Violin Concerto* in order to make a clear verdict of the composition’s quality and beauty. Any other verdict from a more traditional angle will prove useless and without contextual basis.
Chapter VI: A COMPARISON OF THE HARMONIC LANGUAGES IN THE
VIOLIN CONCERTI OF SCHUMANN AND BEETHOVEN

While this paper’s primary objective is not to scrutinize and analyze the Schumann Violin Concerto from the theoretical perspective, it is important to delve a bit past the surface in order to reveal the inner workings of his compositional modus operandi and to provide concrete proof to the many who do this concerto a disservice by looking down upon it with condescending eyes and labeling it as a weak concerto.

In this chapter, I will concentrate on comparing harmonic structures and the harmonic language of Beethoven’s Violin Concerto with Schumann’s Violin Concerto. I will provide self-made diagrams that will precisely depict the harmonic areas and the harmonic pace, which have been perfectly proportioned to each other for simple comparisons.

Compared to Beethoven’s Violin Concerto, Schumann’s Violin Concerto is very static in its harmonic language on the surface. However, when one considers that Schumann’s Violin Concerto should function as a one-movement composition, the slow and static harmonic pace starts to make sense in the larger scheme of things.

My main goal in this chapter will be to show that Schumann’s harmonic language is not weak, but rather, serves a higher purpose in uniting the entire concerto, and how Schumann’s approach to the unity of a multi-movement composition is different from Beethoven’s. Schumann’s structures make perfect sense and suddenly becomes harmonically complex when one considers the probability that Schumann thought of the entire concerto as a one-movement composition.
Expositions

The exposition of the first movement of Beethoven’s *Violin Concerto* is quite ambiguous. It is difficult to tell whether the home key of the first movement is D Major or D Minor even at the beginning of the orchestral introduction. As Diagram 2 shows, there are large sections that strongly emphasize D Minor. For example, at the beginning of the concerto as Beethoven tries to establish the key of D Major during the first 27 measures, suddenly, the entire orchestral force shifts to D Minor in fortissimo during the 15 measures which follow. The shift is unexpected and abrupt. Every musical parameter including texture, dynamics, orchestration, and many other attributes is different between these sections.


The exposition of Schumann’s *Violin Concerto* is quite stable in its home key of D Minor in contrast to Beethoven’s exposition (See Diagram 3). However, the shift from the D Minor theme to the F Major theme is equally abrupt and unexpected. (It is interesting that the first two harmonic shifts are nearly equal in length in both concerti: 27 vs. 28 and 15 vs. 13.)

While looking at the diagrams of the expositions side by side, it becomes obvious how stable Schumann’s exposition is. It is grounded in D Minor and its relative Major key, F Major. However, it is also important to notice that the entire exposition of Schumann’s *Violin Concerto* is 60% shorter, with the tempo of each concerto also considered in the calculation. This means that unlike Beethoven’s structure, which due to its large size would suffer from tight harmonic language, Schumann’s exposition works brilliantly.

The second justification of the dual-key-area (d-F) exposition, and for that matter, the entire first movement, is the strong probability that each one of these tonal areas represent Florestan and Eusebius. Schumann, as explained in previous chapters, incorporated Florestan and Eusebius in this manner in many compositions, with the most vivid example being *Kreisleriana*. Therefore, Schumann’s harmonic language is not poor, but is a fresh perspective of how a sonata form can function while integrating Schumann’s old structural techniques derived directly from the numerous depictions of Florestan and Eusebius.

**Developments**

The development of Beethoven’s *Violin Concerto* serves two main functions. The first function is to further destabilize the home key of D Major (See Diagram 4). Beethoven accomplishes this by spending the entire development, with the exception of the second section in A Major (8 measures in length), in non-closely related tonal areas to the home key such as C Major, A Minor, G Minor, E-Flat Major, and D Minor. (The closely related key areas of D Major are E Minor, F-Sharp Minor, G Major, A Major, and
B Minor. All of these tonal areas are only one accidental away from the home key). He also further weakens D Major by ending the development in D Minor (20 measures).


Secondly, Beethoven uses the key of G Minor, the focal point of the development, to create a bridge between the second movement, which is entirely in G Major, and the contrasting middle part of the Finale, which is in G Minor. This means that Beethoven intentionally lands on the distant keys of C Major, G Minor, and E-Flat Major, not by mere accident, but with a purpose of unity in mind.


In many respects, the function of musical elements is what separates a good composition from a great one. Unlike Beethoven’s development, and, in fact, the developments of every other Classical composer of the past, Schumann’s development hardly touches a new key area. The first reaction from a music-loving crowd should not be to criticize the concerto, but rather to try to understand what Schumann’s purpose is for not exploring new key areas in the development.
The only section where Schumann travels far from the overwhelming presence of D Minor is in the third section (See Diagram 5). This may be viewed as a weakness when compared to the tonal diversity found in Beethoven’s development. However, it is extremely important to remember that in this third section, Schumann introduces the heartbreaking second mutation of the “Clara” motive through combining the first and second versions with an imitative counterpoint.

Since up to this point the harmonic language has been extremely stable, (d-F-d-F-F-d-…) this wandering away to G Minor, C Minor, and A Minor immediately demands special attention. Schumann is not following the usual expectations of a development, because it does not fit the narrative of his concerto. Rather, Schumann’s purpose is to numb our harmonic senses during the entire exposition and most of the development, so that he heightens the reaction of the listener to the sophisticated second mutation of the “Clara” motive, clothed in incredible passion.

**Recapitulations**

The struggle between D Major and D Minor continues in the recapitulation of Beethoven’s *Violin Concerto*. As Diagram 6 shows below, Beethoven spends 46 measures, 27% of the recapitulation, in D Minor. In fact, out of 525 measures that make up the first movement, 97 are clearly in D Minor. That is almost 20% of the tonal area of the first movement. All the diagrams of the first movement also show, however, that overall, Beethoven is constantly shifting between tonalities in contrast to Schumann.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keys</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>d</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>d</th>
<th>D plus the Cadenza</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of mm.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keys</th>
<th>d</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of mm.</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The narrow key areas of Schumann’s exposition become unstable in the recapitulation of Schumann’s *Violin Concerto* (See Diagram 7). Here, very much like Beethoven, Schumann creates a tremendous ambiguity by spending the last 78 measures of the first movement in D Major.

**Second Movements**

As rapid as the harmonic shifts between the tonal areas were in the first movement of Beethoven’s *Violin Concerto*, the second movement is the absolute opposite. It is true that Beethoven keeps the harmonic interest in the first four ten-measure groups through the clever use of the circle of fifths sequence, but the entire movement is undeniably rooted in G Major (See Diagram 8). Interestingly enough, nobody dares to attack Beethoven and call his concerto sub-par. The harmonic language
is so stable that it is difficult to call this a separate movement all together, especially since it functions as a wonderful prelude, a bridge idea to the *attacca* Finale.

---


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keys</th>
<th>(G)</th>
<th>(G)</th>
<th>(G)</th>
<th>(G)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>No. of 5ths</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Bridge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mm.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As I mentioned above, in the second movement of the *Violin Concerto*, Schumann’s harmonic language explodes (See Diagram 9). From the very beginning, the listener is thrown into the wonderfully fresh B-Flat Major tonality. After he establishes the key of B-Flat Major, Schumann travels through the ascending circle of fifths sequence to construct a bridge to the *attacca* Finale in the following fashion: B-Flat Major, F Major, C Minor, and G Minor. The Finale begins in D Major.

---

**Finales**

In the Finales, Beethoven and Schumann both use the Rondo form. The harmonic pace of the Finale of Beethoven’s *Violin Concerto* is the exact model which Beethoven employs for all of his five Piano Concerti Finales. There are many harmonic shifts, but Beethoven is strongly rooted in D Major. This serves Beethoven’s “purpose” very well (See Diagram 10). Since the first movement was full of D Major versus D Minor
ambiguity, in the Finale, Beethoven has to shed all doubt from the listener’s mind that the concerto is, indeed, in D Major.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keys</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>g</th>
<th>d</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>A♭</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of mm.</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Diagram 10. Ludwig van Beethoven, Violin Concerto Op. 61, 3rd mvt..**

On the other hand, although Schumann uses the same form as Beethoven, he finds a way to further complicate his harmonic language. The middle part of the Finale is complicated with the overwhelming presence of the B Major tonal area. (See Diagram 11). The first movement was almost exclusively in closely-related keys. In the second movement, all the key areas were closely related to each other. In the Finale, B Major is a non-closely related key area, three accidentals away from D Major.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keys</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>f#</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>B♭</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of mm.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Diagram 11. Robert Schumann, Violin Concerto WoO 23, 3rd mvt..**

The common criticism of the Finale is the fact that Schumann spends 132 measures, nearly half of the Finale, entirely in D Major. What many do not realize is that Schumann needs this stretch of the D Major tonality to stabilize the frantic harmonic pace that the concerto assumed from the beginning of the second movement.

**Conclusion**

Schumann’s *Violin Concerto* must be viewed as a one-movement composition in order to understand the greatness of its harmonic structures. Indeed, it does work as a
multi-movement composition, but it was not designed to work as such, which is why it falls short of the great ingenuity we expect from such a great composer when viewed in this multi-movement fashion. Schumann unites the three movements in two ways: thematically with the “Clara” motive, as well as harmonically with harmonic structures which encompass all the movements.

The entire Violin Concerto should be viewed as a sonata form. As Diagrams 12 and 13 show below, it is clearly visible how the first movement acts like an exposition, and the last movement acts as a recapitulation. All the proportions are what one might expect from a Classical sonata form. It is important to remember that the “Clara” motive comes back at the opening of the Finale, so even thematically speaking, the Finale acts as an expected beginning of an ordinary recapitulation.

The second movement functions as the perfect development because of its rapidly changing tonal areas. Furthermore, it also functions as a development thematically because it develops the “Clara” motive. The common criticism to the last 132 measures of the Finale being harmonically stale are shed away when one considers that it is merely reprising the last sections of the first movement: (d 61-measures) + (D 78-measures) = (139 measures in D) versus 132 measures in D Major at the end of the Finale, which acts as a Coda to this large sonata form (See Diagrams 12 and 13).


Since the first movement of Schumann’s *Violin Concerto* functions as the exposition of a larger one-movement composition, in this light, it is perfectly understandable why Schumann does not expose himself harmonically in the first movement of the piece. Each consecutive movement brings with it faster harmonic pace than the one before it, which is clearly seen in the Diagrams 12 and 13 above.

Not only is Schumann’s *Violin Concerto* not a failure in form or harmonic diversity, but it is a masterclass of compositional wit and genius. The *Violin Concerto* is not only one of the best compositions that Schumann wrote, but it is also the most unique of all violin concerti in the repertoire because of its incredible harmonic unity and unique narrative pacing.

Schumann’s *Violin Concerto* is a testament of Schumann’s love and admiration of the Classical sonata form and his complete mastery of the form. The theorists and musicians who criticize the concerto should strongly reconsider their opinions before labeling the work as mediocre. Schumann was not at his optimal mental state in 1853, but perhaps this played a factor in constructing one of the best compositions that came out of his tortured soul.
Chapter VII: A COMPARISON OF ORCHESTRA-SOLOIST INTERACTION IN THE VIOLIN CONCERTI OF SCHUMANN AND MENDELSSOHN

Schumann’s Violin Concerto is very often criticized for having a poorly written orchestral part. Many agree that his orchestration lacks the qualities we have come to expect from great instrumental concertos. Let us compare Schumann’s “failed” concerto with the most famous concerto in the violin repertoire.

It is important to remember the fact that Schumann originally titled the concerto “Concerto for Violin with Orchestral Accompaniment.” For the majority of the first movement, when the soloist is performing, the orchestra almost always takes the role of the subordinate accompanist. However, in the development section, the orchestra is in an intense dialogue with the soloist. Perhaps this intensity is magnified since it is the first time that both forces join together as equal partners in music making.

Another fact to keep in mind is that unlike Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto, Schumann’s Violin Concerto has a traditional orchestral exposition. After this exposition, the listener needs much more time to be acquainted with the soloist, therefore, the accompaniment role which the orchestra takes for the majority of the first movement is a welcome necessity. This is not a weak concerto of Schumann’s. It is, in fact, the only concerto out of the seven which Schumann composed with a traditional orchestral opening, and therefore, it is bound to be very different in orchestra-soloist interaction.

In the first movement of Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto, there is an enormous amount of dialogue between the orchestra and the soloist, most notably in the second theme and the development. However, these dialogues never overlap each other. Even in the development section, Mendelssohn, being an excellent contrapuntist, did not choose
to put any of the melodic ideas in a canon or an imitative counterpoint as Schumann does with his *Violin Concerto*. (See Example 35 on page 59) Although on the surface, the Mendelssohn concerto seems to be more involving between the orchestra and the soloist, it neither quite reaches the complexity of Schumann’s development section, nor reaches the simplicity of the strict accompaniment-soloist roles of Schumann’s exposition and recapitulation sections. Simply put, Mendelssohn is in a middle ground throughout the first movement while Schumann is quite bipolar, either being extremely simple or extremely complex with his orchestral involvement and textures.

In the second movement of Mendelssohn’s *Violin Concerto*, the violin carries the melody while the orchestra’s role is purely accompanimental. Although, there are some small sections of dialogue, it is never as complex and contrapuntally dense in its textures as Schumann’s second movement is, which, in their density and complexity, are much closer to the textures found in Brahms and Beethoven violin concerti than that of Mendelssohn’s. (See example 39 on page 61)

The second movement of Schumann’s *Violin Concerto* is the absolute contrast to the Mendelssohn’s *Violin Concerto*. In this movement, the orchestra and the soloist are on equal terms. The textures are much more symphonic and there are many instances of carefully crafted contrapuntal moments. There are no dialogue-like exchanges in this movement, but rather, there are many interwoven and contrapuntal lines.

The third movement of Mendelssohn’s concerto is very similar to the third movement of Schumann’s concerto. From the very beginning, the violin and the orchestra are in strict dialogue with each other. However, unlike Schumann’s concerto, there is not a single theme or a musical texture which is exclusive to the orchestral part. The
dialogue, therefore, in the third movement of Mendelssohn’s concerto is much simpler. The fact that the last version of the “Clara” motive is exclusive to the woodwinds in the Finale of Schumann’s Violin Concerto heightens the aggression and the sharpness of the orchestra’s individuality versus the soloist’s counterpart. (See Example 22 on page 34)

Schumann’s Violin Concerto is not only interesting and constantly changing in its orchestra-soloist relationship from movement to movement and offers everything that Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto has, but it also offers two crucial tools which Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto lacks: complex canonic/polyphonic textures between the orchestra and the soloist, and the woodwind-exclusive “Clara” motive which takes the musical dialogue and the narrative of the Finale to another level.
Chapter VIII: A COMPARISON OF MOTIVIC TRANSFORMATIONS IN
THE VIOLIN CONCERTI OF SCHUMANN AND BRAHMS

In the last two chapters, I showed that Schumann’s harmonic structures in the
Violin Concerto are as complex as those in Beethoven’s Violin Concerto. I also discussed
that the interaction of the orchestra with the soloist in Schumann’s Violin Concerto is at
least as engaging as Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto. In this chapter, I will show how
Schumann’s Violin Concerto is an equal in its motivic transformation to the meticulously
crafted Brahms Violin Concerto.

In the Brahms Violin Concerto, the listener is immediately introduced to a germ
idea, which can be found in the first two measures of the orchestral introduction (See
Example 26). This germ idea is comprised of a long note (dotted half note) followed by
three descending short notes (quarter notes).


At measure 41, Brahms is reintroducing this germ idea (in the Oboe and Horn
parts) with intervallic transformation (See Example 27 below). The first note is now
twice as long as its original length. Rather than leaping a third up from the long note, the
line steps up, and rather than leaping down three quarter notes, the line now steps down
three notes.
At measure 69, Brahms introduces the third version of the theme (See Example 28). This time, the long note is at the end of the motive. As you can see, it is developing from the original form to something that looks very similar to Schumann’s “Clara” motive.

The final version of the germ idea can be found starting at measure 84 (See Example 29). This time, everything is flipped upside down. First of all, the germ idea functions as a bass line rather than a melody. Secondly, the contour of the line is ascending. In this final fourth version right before the entrance of the soloist, the bass line is literally the “Clara” motive pitch-by-pitch. It is very unlikely that this is a coincidence.
Many scholars maintain that Brahms and Clara Schumann had a special relationship with each other. It is not known exactly how intimate their relationship was, but it was dear enough to Brahms to include the “Clara” motive in his own compositions.

I do not want to dwell on proving how wonderfully developmental Brahms is in his Violin Concerto, a compositional trait for which he is known in all genres of his art. Instead, I want to show that Schumann’s mastery of motivic transformation is on the same level as Brahms’s in his own Violin Concerto.

At first glance, Schumann seems much more melodic in his writing than Brahms does, but if we study the score closely, it is evident that Schumann bears the same kind of motivic thinking. Schumann’s germ idea happens to be the octave part of the “Clara” motive. Although an octave is an interval that can be associated with many compositions, it is crucial to observe that this octave is highlighted with two whole notes and is part of the focal point of the entire composition (See Example 30). The examples to follow will demonstrate that Schumann indeed views this octave as a motivic germ idea for transformation. The sheer number of examples are overwhelming.


The first transformation of the octave comes moments after the initial opening of the concerto. As Example 31 shows below, starting at measure 11, Schumann uses the octave leap as the bass line rather than the melody, and transforms the idea into a canon.

The second transformation takes place at measure 31, where Schumann uses the three-note descending idea in the secondary key area of F Major (See Example 32). The octave is inverted, and instead of leaping from the low C straight to the high C, Schumann adds a passing tone.

Example 32. Robert Schumann, *Violin Concerto* WoO 23, 1st mvt., mm. 31-32.

The third transformation takes place from measures 159-161, where the violin enters the development section of the first movement (See Example 33). In this case, Schumann has doubled the original octave to two octaves to portray a heightened dramatic entrance of the soloist.

The fourth transformation occurs shortly after the soloist enters (See Example 34).

In this example, Schumann is diminishing the time span of the idea by two by using a rhythmical diminution technique and shortening the note values from a whole note to a half note. Notice how even the eighth note triplets that follow the octave leap in Example 33 are twice as long as those in Example 34.

Example 34. Robert Schumann, Violin Concerto WoO 23, 1st mvt., mm. 173-175.

Example 35 shows the fifth transformation which occurs in the middle of the development during the dialogue between the soloist and the woodwinds. Here, the entrance of the octave germ idea is displaced metrically from the first beat to the third beat. This creates metric instability in the development and takes away from the authoritative power of the germ idea.

Example 35. Robert Schumann, Violin Concerto WoO 23, 1st mvt., mm. 186-188.

The sixth transformation occurs moments before the recapitulation section for the first movement (See Example 36 below). In this section, the lower strings are painfully
and systematically stretching the pedal point A towards an octave A, but notice how in the last measure, measure 217, it overshoots to an interval of a ninth, from A to B-Flat. Measure 218 is the start of the recapitulation section, which begins just like the opening, with the strong D to D octave. Only in this measure is the goal of Example 36 forcefully reached.


The seventh transformation of the germ idea appears at the start of the second movement (See Example 37). In these sections, the celli continue the octave-stretching idea straight from Example 36. The one difference here is that the idea transforms from being the harmonic interest of the section found in Example 36 to the melodic interest of the entire second movement. This seventh transformation is rocking back and forth from the low F to the high F, and from the high F back down to the low F. It gives an incredible sense of serenity, flexibility, and peace.

Example 38 shows the eighth transformation. In this section, the soloist is using the octave as a boundary to flow up and down using the harmonic arpeggios of the given bass line. It is a very beautiful section where the soloist is complimenting the easy-going and peaceful nature of the opening of this second movement.


The ninth transformation occurs around measure 24 (See Example 39). In this section, Schumann puts the inverted version of the soloist’s line found in Example 38 (the eighth transformation) to a counterpoint with the seventh transformation from Example 37, which is played by the violin section of the orchestra this time. This section is full of turmoil. A big contribution to this affect is the sheer density of transformational ideas taking place. It is the complete contrast to the peaceful beginning of this movement.

The tenth transformation occurs at the opening of the Finale as Example 40 shows. In this tenth transformation, the original octave is now stretched from one to two octaves, but is also full of diverse passing tones. Notice also how the beginning of the octave now is a pick-up. In this way, although the octave is present, its presence is hidden since the important landing note is the downbeat of each measure, not the pick-up.


Example 41 shows the eleventh transformation. Here, the soloist is wrapping up its entrance by giving the listener three gestures that should resemble the dramatic octave drop from the opening of the first movement. In this case, however, the drops are not only merely intervals of a sixth, but they sound comical and light-hearted because of the quickness of their execution, the trills that ornament them, and the harmonic speed at which they occur.

However, in measure 64 when the orchestra enters, it immediately contrasts the light-hearted dialogue opened by the soloist in measure 63 by reinstating the octave theme in a dignified and grandiose fashion typical to the Polonaise.

Example 42 demonstrates the twelfth transformation of the germ idea in the solo violin part. The first octave in this example is particularly capricious due to the *sforzando*. The second octave jump is fast and overshoots from B to A. After this, a sequence of sixteenth notes follow, all highlighting the octave leap up.

![Example 42. Robert Schumann, *Violin Concerto* WoO 23, 3rd mvt., mm. 73-76.](image1)

The sixteenth note passage bears a very close resemblance to the ninth transformation of the germ idea in its inverted form (See Example 43) and has the exact same articulation as the latter.

![Example 43. Robert Schumann, *Violin Concerto* WoO 23, 2nd mvt., mm. 24-25.](image2)
The thirteenth transformation found in Example 44 is a special one. In this mutation of the germ idea, Schumann manages to combine the descending three-note pattern, which symbolizes Clara, to the octave leaps. He also manages to retain the trill on the second note of the octave idea, which by now, in this concerto, is inseparable from this germ idea. Because of the speed of this particular passage, Schumann replaces the trill with a tighter ornamentation, a mordent.


In Example 45, the fourteenth transformation is a straightforward example of metric disproportionality. The first note of the octave is emphasized with the trill, as the last note is given very little importance. This is Schumann’s playfulness coming through in this joyful Finale. Never before in Schumann’s *Violin Concerto* with the exception of this transformation has there been a trill on the first note of the octave, which is why this sounds so strikingly fresh.

In the fifteenth transformation, Schumann puts the trill on both notes of the octave (See Example 46). The hierarchy is again switched; the first note is proportionally much shorter than the second.


Example 47 shows the sixteenth transformation of the germ idea where the idea is literally doubled. The symbolic trill on the low note is charmingly reminiscent of all the transformations that came before it as the concerto is nearing its end.

Example 47. Robert Schumann, *Violin Concerto WoO 23, 3rd mvt., mm. 278-281.*

In the final seventeenth transformation of the germ motive, Schumann fills the octave boundaries of this run with multiple passing tones (See Example 48 below). Both the sixteenth transformation and the final seventeenth transformation are full of energy like never before and put an extremely satisfying and highly energetic conclusion to this beautiful *Violin Concerto.*

As these seventeen different mutations of the original motive show, Schumann was equally phenomenal in crafting a composition from a single cell as composers such as Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms. Schumann’s genius, however, went unnoticed by the violinists of our generation, because of their lack of skill to identify his hidden structures. In so many ways, Schumann’s music is forward-looking, complex, and difficult to understand, but in the case of the *Violin Concerto*, he is looking back to the Baroque fugal style in his motivic delivery.

Schumann gives the main motivic cell of the entire concerto at the very beginning of the composition and follows through until the very end. It is as simple as any fugue of J. S. Bach where the theme in its simplest form is given at the beginning and is developed until the last measure of the composition.
Chapter IX: PAGANINI, THE PIONEER OF VIOLIN TECHNIQUE, AND HIS INFLUENCE ON SCHUMANN AND HIS VIOLIN CONCERTO

A letter addressed to Joachim from Schumann dated in 1853, the year the *Violin Concerto* was written, asked if selected passages were deemed too difficult or unplayable. Schumann’s revisions of particular passages thereafter are a testament that he sought to infuse the *Violin Concerto* with a certain level of virtuosity and refinement.

Schumann was not a violinist. He borrowed violinistic techniques from Paganini, a figure he deeply admired. Schumann’s transcription of a number of Paganini *Caprices*, namely, his *Etudes After Paganini Caprices* Op. 3 and *Six Concert Studies on Caprices by Paganini* Op. 10, as well as Paganini’s portrayed appearance as a movement in Schumann’s *Carnaval* Op. 9, along with the numerous virtuosic compositions written for piano in the very early years of his compositional output, all point to Schumann’s immense reverence to Paganini. It has also been said that one of the greatest disasters of Schumann’s life, the injury of his hands, was caused by his desire to equal Paganini on his own instrument. All of these instances are a testament of his Schumann’s love for this true virtuoso.

By the time Schumann composed the *Violin Concerto*, he possessed a keen understanding of the mechanics of the violin as an instrument through score study, observation, and by writing numerous compositions for the instrument. As mentioned previously in chapter one, this is evidenced by Schumann’s astute judgment to use D

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Minor as the tonal center for his *Violin Concerto*, knowing that it would prove more idiomatic to the soloist.

Paganini singlehandedly expanded the violin-playing technique and revealed the instrument’s capabilities through his brilliant *Solo Violin Caprices*, Op. 1, and simulated creative exploration in violin pedagogy in doing so. Schumann saw Paganini live in concert in Frankfurt in 1830, and he claimed that it cast a spell of wonderment upon him.\(^\text{17}\) Schumann studied each *Caprice* intently, taking note of the wide use of violin techniques Paganini employed and adapted it for the piano as closely as possible in his *Etudes After Paganini Caprices* Op. 3 and *Six Concert Studies on Caprices by Paganini* Op. 10. To further prove Schumann’s understanding and successful attempt at integrating elements of Paganini’s techniques into his *Violin Concerto*, let us observe the most technical points in each movement of the *Violin Concerto*.

The first obvious instance of technical difficulty occurs in the first movement of Schumann’s *Violin Concerto* at measure 114 and continues until measure 128 (See Example 49 below). At measure 114 in the first movement of his *Violin Concerto*, just as the music is becoming livelier, Schumann writes octaves with a pedal point “D” in between each octave. The octaves require a precise left hand in order to execute with good intonation.


This same technical idea can be found in Paganini’s *Second Caprice* (See Example 50). While in Paganini’s *Caprice*, the span of the double stop is not an octave, but a tenth, the pedal points, “A” and “D,” in the middle of the tenths remains and the idea is quite similar in nature.


Within the same abovementioned passage in Schumann’s *Violin Concerto*, which occurs from measure 115 until measure 121 in the first movement, we encounter a two-voice passage, where each voice contributes to the melodic content (See Example 51 below). To start, Schumann writes a tied single pitch, “A” in the top voice, and below it, he writes a form of measured tremolo in the second lower voice. This continues in the same fashion with different pitches over the course of the seven measures given below. This particular voicing technique is difficult to execute well because although the lower voice contains more notes, it must not overpower the top voice, which contains the melodic line.
Example 51. Robert Schumann, *Violin Concerto WoO 23, 1st mvt., mm. 115-121.*

In Paganini’s *Caprices*, two similar examples of this left hand technique can be found. The first is in Paganini’s *Sixth Caprice*, which is marked by two main voices (See Example 52). The top voice contains a single pitch which serves as the melodic line, while the bottom voice is comprised of left hand measured *tremolando* throughout the entire caprice.

Example 52. Niccolò Paganini, *Violin Caprices Op. 1, Caprice No. 6, m. 1.*

The second instance of this technique in Paganini’s *Caprices* can be found in the *Eighth Caprice* after a brief introduction (See Example 53 below). Although the role of the voices is reversed in this *Caprice*, the idea is still the exactly the same. Here again, we can observe that there are two distinct voices. The upper voice contains a single whole note pitch whose duration is for an entire measure, while the lower voice, the melodic content in this case, executes running 16\textsuperscript{th} notes below the sustained upper voice.

The next point of interest in Schumann’s *Violin Concerto* occurs in the first movement right before the end of the exposition, where Schumann writes rapid 32nd note arpeggios spanning approximately two octaves as a closing idea (See Example 54).


These arpeggios require the use of all of the strings of the violin, beginning with the G string and arriving at the E string at the top of the arpeggio, and must be performed with left hand clarity and correct bow technique to perform the runs with ease. A similar example can be found in Paganini’s *Fifth Caprice* (See Example 55).


Paganini’s *Fifth Caprice* begins with waves of running arpeggios, which span three octaves or more at the beginning and the closing of the *Caprice*. Like Schumann’s closing arpeggiated idea, the arpeggios in Paganini’s *Fifth Caprice* also entail speedy string crossings and precise left hand articulation.
In the third movement of Schumann’s *Violin Concerto*, there are even more similarities to be found with regards to Paganini’s *Caprices*. The first occurrence of marked virtuosity can be found in measures 113 and 114 of the third movement, (and later, measures 247 and 248 in the recapitulation), where Schumann writes lightning fast 32\(^{\text{nd}}\) chromatic runs (See Example 56).

**Example 56. Robert Schumann, *Violin Concerto* WoO 23, 3\(^{\text{rd}}\) mvt., mm. 113-114.**

The runs require left hand precision and clarity, as the chromatic line serves to give momentum and direction to the overall passage in which it occurs. In Paganini’s *Seventeenth Caprice*, the same idea is prevalent, and similarly, functions as transitional material to bridge the “A” and “B” sections of the Caprice together (See Examples 57a and 57b).

**Example 57a. Niccolò Paganini, *Violin Caprices* Op. 1, Caprice No. 17, mm. 12-14.**

**Example 57b. Niccolò Paganini, *Violin Caprices* Op. 1, Caprice No. 17, mm. 18-19.**
The second occurrence of heightened difficulty in the third movement of Schumann’s *Violin Concerto* occurs from measure 178 until measure 187 and contains an extended passage of 32\textsuperscript{nd} and 64\textsuperscript{th} scalar runs (See Example 58).

Example 58. Robert Schumann, *Violin Concerto* WoO 23, 3\textsuperscript{rd} mvt., mm. 178-185.

While scalar in nature, the runs are incredibly swift and require adept left hand ability along with astute bow distribution and weight control. Paganini’s *Seventh Caprice* contains a similar idea, characterized by running 64\textsuperscript{th} passages throughout the *Caprice* (See Example 59). Although they are not exactly scalar in nature, Schumann’s idea to incorporate this particular kind of virtuosity is certainly not a coincidence.

The third display of technique in Schumann’s third movement can be found in measures 275-281, where he writes double trills, with the trilling notes forming the span of a third (See Example 60). Double trills require a high level of left hand dexterity and finger independence in order to perform both trills clearly and at the same speed.


Similarly, the double trill technique can be found very clearly in Paganini’s *Third Caprice* in the introduction (See Example 61). The double trill was something that Paganini himself invented and often used them as a virtuosic form of embellishment to indicate the end of a work. It is no mistake or coincidence that Schumann chose to integrate this infamous technique into the Coda of his *Violin Concerto*.


The final and perhaps most intriguing technical display which is found in the third movement of Schumann’s *Violin Concerto* occurs towards the very end of the concerto (See Example 62 below). From measure 302 until 305, Schumann writes incredibly virtuosic arpeggiated figures, which sometimes require large, sudden shifts in the left hand.
When this portion is compared to Paganini’s Finale of his *Twenty-Fourth Caprice*, the similarities are quite striking in both the technique displayed and their individual placement in the works (See Example 63). Both instances function as incredibly dazzling examples of virtuosity which are placed at the last few measures of their respective works, and both lead to victorious and triumphant closings to the end of both composers’ works. It is difficult to say with certainty if this is a deliberate homage from Schumann to Paganini, but the passages are undeniably similar.


In summary, as clearly demonstrated in the above examples, it is without a doubt that Schumann held an exceptional understanding of the violin techniques and how to portray them effectively within his *Violin Concerto* while exploiting the wondrous virtuosic capabilities of the instrument.
Chapter X: CONCLUSION

Schumann’s wonderful *Violin Concerto* has been neglected in vain. While in the case of Schumann’s *D Minor Symphony* Op. 20, Brahms defied Clara’s desire for the work to never see the light of day in order to preserve Robert’s reputation as a composer, completed the symphony, published it, and thereby, saved this shunned work of Schumann’s which would have otherwise remained unknown, the *Violin Concerto* did not end up in such loving and knowledgeable hands to be saved.

Because Brahms published Schumann’s *D Minor Symphony* against her will, Clara was extremely upset with Brahms for a year and refused to speak to him. After a year went by, however, she changed her mind and ultimately, she was very grateful to Brahms for saving the work. This gives us a clear indication that Clara Schumann was not the best judge of the qualities of Robert’s compositions. It would take a great composer like Brahms to see these qualities which Clara evidently did not have the ability to decipher.

It is equally important to remember that Brahms’s own *Double Concerto* was heavily criticized by Joachim and Clara Schumann during its premiere in 1887, the very same people who played an instrumental role in condemning Schumann’s *Violin Concerto*. Therefore, Joachim’s opinions should also not be considered so highly.

It is extremely fascinating, that while around 1825, Chopin and Brahms were highly criticized for their “old style” compositions, Robert Schumann was one of the few to see their geniuses, and publicly proclaimed his support in his periodical. Yet, world-class pianist of the time, Clara Schumann, and world-class violinist of the time, Joseph
Joachim, did not have the instincts needed to see the genius behind Schumann’s *Violin Concerto*.

The mid-nineteenth century marked the rise of the *Virtuoso*, with the likes of Paganini, Franz Liszt, Clara Schumann, and Joseph Joachim. The rise of the so-called *Virtuosi* would eventually separate the composers from the performers all together, a tragedy that is still eating the musical world to its core today.

Clara Schumann was not only a pianist, but a well-known composer, yet, she lacked the instincts to see the greatness of Robert’s *Violin Concerto* and his *D Minor Symphony*. She also happens to be the wife of the composer, the person who lived with him on a daily basis, and is assumed to have known his musical genius.

In today’s times, with the modern performers and the modern composers being on the polar opposite sides of the musical spectrum, they simply do not stand a chance in understanding the value of Schumann’s *Violin Concerto*, not to mention that most violinists have very little or no knowledge of Schumann’s musical style, since most of his instrumental compositions circled around the fortepiano.

I hope that this paper has shed light on this remarkably powerful and worthy composition. Robert Schumann’s *Violin Concerto* deserves its rightful place among the greats in the history of the violin concerto genre.
Bibliography


