

# FANTASY & ROMANCE

Schumann: Music for cello and piano



**Emanuel Gruber, cello**  
**Keiko Sekino, piano**

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# *FANTASY & ROMANCE*

## Schumann: Music for Cello and Piano

Fantasiestücke, Op. 73

Adagio and Allegro, Op. 70

Drei Romanzen, Op. 94

Märchenbilder, Op. 113

Fünf Stücke im Volkston, Op. 102

Abendlied, Op. 85

Traümerei, Op. 15

Total time: 69:57

**Emanuel Gruber**  
cello

**Keiko Sekino**  
piano



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## Schumann: Music for Cello and Piano

### **Fantasiestücke, Op. 73** (10:59)

1. Zart und mit Ausdruck (3:06)
2. Lebhaft, leicht (3:24)
3. Rasch und mit Feuer (4:29)

### **Adagio and Allegro, Op. 70** (9:07)

4. Adagio (4:14)
5. Allegro (4:53)

### **Drei Romanzen, Op. 94** (12:07)

6. Nicht schnell (3:34)
7. Einfach, innig - etwas lebhafter (3:51)
8. Nicht schnell (4:42)

### **Märchenbilder, Op. 113** (15:56)

9. Nicht schnell (3:35)
10. Lebhaft (4:19)
11. Rasch (2:43)
12. Langsam, mit melancholischem Ausdruck (5:19)

### **Fünf Stücke im Volkston, Op. 102** (15:53)

13. "Vanitas vanitatum," mit Humor (2:49)
14. Langsam (3:41)
15. Nicht schnell, mit viel Ton zu spielen (4:20)
16. Nicht zu rasch (1:58)
17. Stark und markiert (3:05)

### 18. **Abendlied, Op. 85** (2:56)

### 19. **Traumerei, Op. 15** (2:59)

Total time: 69:57

**Emanuel Gruber, cello**  
**Keiko Sekino, piano**

## ARTIST'S PREFACE

From the very first notes, Schumann draws us into his magical world of fantasy, romance, and legends. He envelops us with his tenderness and gentle feeling; with his passion, poesy, longing, and love. He can be funny as well as philosophical, and his music touches us deeply.

Schumann did not originally write all these works for cello. But many cellists, in their eagerness to play this beautiful music, have made successful transcriptions and arrangements of them. The lyrical quality of Schumann's music makes the cello an ideal medium of expression – and the works, in their versions for cello, sound as natural and convincing as they do on their original instruments.

Keiko and I hope that our interpretations will convey to you our love for the music of this great composer.

## NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Of all of the stringed instruments, **Robert Schumann** (1810-1856) was particularly fond of the cello, having studied the instrument (along with flute and piano) as a boy and taken it up again as a young man, after an injured right hand dashed his hopes of becoming a concert pianist. One must

wonder, then, why he composed so little music specifically for the instrument: the only works originally composed for solo cello are his lovely Op. 129 cello concerto and the *Five Pieces in Folk-style* offered in this album. He is known to have composed another work for cello and piano: a set of five Romances written in 1853 – not long before his mental collapse and his death. His wife, Clara, destroyed the manuscripts many years later.

In 1849 Schumann had his most productive year, not only in his chamber music output, but also in a variety of other genres, including choral works, songs, orchestral works with soloists, and piano music. Three of the works recorded here were composed that year in their original versions for wind instruments. While Schumann suggested that several of them could also be performed on the cello (or other instruments), the remainder had to wait for various transcribers/arrangers to recast them in the versions heard here. (Who they were will be mentioned in the discussions of the works that follow.)

There was a practical purpose behind many of these works, as they were largely written to serve as what was then called "Hausmusik" (home music). At the time, there was a thriving market for music that could be played by accomplished amateurs for in-home music-making. Many cultured and reasonably prosperous households of the day had one or more musicians in the family, and playing chamber music was a popular and affordable

means of home entertainment as well as a mainstay of the domestic soirée tradition practiced by the cultural elite.

The three ***Fantasiestücke, Op. 73 (Fantasy Pieces)***, were composed in February 1849 in only two days: one of Schumann's fabled "fits" of creative energy and productivity. Originally scored for clarinet and piano, it is one of this program's works that Schumann suggested could be played by other instruments; in this case, either cello or viola. He initially called them "Night Pieces," but changed the title – probably due to the second and third pieces' rather manic nature, abrupt mood swings, and almost improvisatory abandon.

The first piece is indeed nocturnal in nature: a pensive and often melancholy reverie that's marked "Zart und mit Ausdruck" (Delicately and with expression). But the second – marked "Lebhaft, leicht" (Lively, light) – quickly breaks the previous number's dreamy spell as the music unfolds in a happy tumble. The mostly frenzied and recklessly driven final piece, labeled "Rasch und mit Feuer" (Fast and with fire), can – in the right hands – leave the listener breathless. All three pieces glow with Schumann's unique brand of passionate romanticism – and, together, they take the listener on a roller-coaster ride of shifting emotions and intense passion that could only have come from this composer.

That work and the Op. 70 piece described just below are heard here in transcriptions/

editions for cello and piano by cellist, composer and editor/arranger Friedrich Grütz-macher.

Also composed in 1849, the ***Adagio and Allegro, Op. 70***, was originally written for French horn and piano – again, as a piece of "Hausmusik," though the rather demanding horn part required a highly skilled amateur to do it justice. It was written specifically for the valve horn, then a fairly recent instrumental innovation that permitted the precise playing of half steps. It's not as much of a challenge for the cello – for which (along with the violin) Schumann also published versions.

The Adagio section immediately touches the heart with sweetly wistful cello "singing" ... listen for the half-step passages originally intended for horn as the Adagio unfolds in serenely long-breathed lines. The energetic Allegro explodes abruptly, with exuberant "laughing cello" passages alternating with more lyrical episodes that draw their rhythmic and melodic ideas from the Adagio.

The ***Drei Romanzen, Op. 94 (Three Romances)***, originally scored for oboe and piano, are heard here in an arrangement by Valter Despalj. These pieces avoid showy virtuosity for the most part, calling instead for more lyrical and songlike modes of expression. The first, marked "Nicht schnell" (Not fast), is particularly subdued yet infused with quiet emotion. The cello's dialogue with the piano is distinctively original and effective,

especially in the somewhat darker middle section. The second piece – “Einfach, innig – etwas lebhafter” (Simple, intimate – somewhat livelier) – continues the opening number’s mood and pace for the most part, while adding a touch of breezy spirit – though its central section evokes a sense of ominous tension. The set concludes with another movement marked “Nicht schnell,” though, for the most part, it’s livelier than what has gone before – but with a middle section that recalls the predominant calmness of the first two pieces.

The four pieces of ***Märchenbilder, Op. 113 (Fairytale Pictures)*** were composed in 1851, originally for viola and piano. It is offered here in a transcription for cello by Alfred Pizzati and Christian Bellisario. The title, however, leads many listeners to expect music that is more fanciful and optimistic, in keeping with our modern conceptions of fairytales. But these pieces can be said to more faithfully reflect the nature of typical 19th-century European fairytales, many of which were quite violent and horrific. It has also been suggested that the often dark – even unsettling – impressions they convey could have much to do with Schumann’s deteriorating mental health, just a few years before his final breakdown and institutionalization.

The opening piece, “Nicht schnell” (Not fast), is a rather somber and bittersweet number with a skillfully wrought dialogue between the instruments that seems to conjure up

happier times. The far more exuberant following movement, marked “Lebhaft” (Lively), comes across as an energetic and nobly questing march, with contrasting moments of lighthearted whimsy. Next comes “Rasch” (Fast), a mostly manic and hard-driving (also relatively virtuosic) piece – full of tense, triplet-laced figurations over crashing chords from the piano, generating impressions of headlong pursuit and helpless fear. A fleeting moment of relief comes with the graceful middle section. The title of the finale – “Langsam, mit melancholishem Ausdruck” (Slow, with melancholic expression) – describes the music’s serenely sad mood well ... reminding us that not all fairytales have a “happily ever after” ending.

Yet another product of Schumann’s incredibly fruitful year of 1849 is the five-piece cycle, ***Fünf Stücke im Volkston, Op. 102 (Five Pieces in the Folk-style)***, the only one of this album’s works originally written for cello and piano. Again, intended more as “Hausmusik” for accomplished amateurs than as concert fare, these pieces pose challenges that are more interpretive than technical.

Schumann gets this largely easygoing cycle going with a touch of humor: “Vanitas vanitatum,” mit Humor (Vanity of vanities, with humor) comes across as a bumptious drinking song. This may well be what the composer intended, probably having been inspired by a Goethe poem of the same title telling the tale of a drunken one-legged soldier,

with flights of fantasy offsetting the music's primary sense of unbalanced "lurching." In stark contrast, the gently rocking "Langsam" (Slowly) is as sweet and lovely a lullaby as you could ever hope to hear.

The most intensely pensive and serenely romantic piece of the set is "Nicht Schnell, mit viel Ton zu spielen" (Not fast, to be played with much tone). Note the inspired double-stopped passages called for in the central section's aching theme. A happy outburst comes with "Nicht zu rasch" (Not too fast) – soon yielding to a melting, yet somewhat restless melody before the opening sunny mood returns. A novel sense of drama distinguishes the emphatic finale, "Stark und markiert" (Strongly and accentuated); its ominous fairytale-like tone makes it seem almost threatening.

The program's final two short selections are Lothar Lechner's lovely arrangements for cello and piano of keyboard pieces composed at various times in Schumann's career. The first of these is **Abendlied, Op. 85 (Evening song)** – the final number in his cycle, *12 Klavierstücke für kleine und große Kinder* (12 piano pieces for small and big children), Op. 85 – and the second is perhaps Schumann's most beloved piano gem of them all: **Träumerei, Op. 15 (Dreaming)**, from his immortal cycle *Kinderszenen* (Scenes from childhood).

*Abendlied* is a simple, yet luscious nocturne that fares beautifully in this ravishing

arrangement entrusting the mellow main theme to the cello. Likewise, what more beautiful melody could the cello "sing" than that of *Träumerei* ... that dreamiest of all of Schumann's piano pieces ... and what better way to end this enchanting program?

– Lindsay Koob

**Emanuel Gruber** is celebrated as a cello soloist, chamber musician, and teacher. He has brought his "authority, sensitivity to musical values, wide dynamic range, and great mastery of his instrument" (*Music Journal, New York*) to collaborations with artists such as Neville Marriner, Rudolph Barshai, Shlomo Mintz, Pinchas Zukerman, Miriam Fried, Philippe Entremont, Jean Bernard Pommier, Tamas Vasary, and Janos Starker.

The *Jerusalem Post* wrote that Emanuel Gruber is "one of our great artists," citing "his extraordinary capacity for projecting the deepest meaning of the music." Awarded the Pablo Casals prize by the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, he also won the Concert Artists' Guild Auditions in New York City early in his career.

He has been principal cellist with the Israel Chamber Orchestra and co-principal of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra. He was a member of the Sequoia Quartet, Camerata





Trio, Tel Aviv Piano Quartet, and leader of the Israel Cello Ensemble. He is a founding member of the Tel Aviv Chamber Music Society, and currently teaches cello and chamber music at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina.

Emanuel Gruber has performed in many major festivals including the Salzburg, Bath, San Sebastian, Northwestern (Portland), Eilat (Israel), Musike (France), Musical Spring (St. Petersburg), and Rostropovich Cello Festival (Riga). He was a jury member for the Second Davidoff International Cello Competition in Kuldiga, Latvia, and for the Salou Music Competition in Spain.

Mr. Gruber has also served as a visiting professor at the Indiana University School of Music in Bloomington, and has taught at the Academy of Music in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. He teaches periodically at Barcelona School of Music, the International Cello Seminar in Israel, the Canetti International Summer Course, the Summit Music Festival in New York, the International Academy of Music in Italy, the Burgos International Music Festival in Spain, and the Zodiac Academy and Festival in France.

He began his cello studies with the distinguished Romanian pedagogue Paul Ochialbi, and graduated from the Rubin Academy of Music in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Under the auspices of the America-Israel Cultural Foundation, he completed his musical training

with Gregor Piatigorsky and Janos Starker. He has recorded for CDI, Israel ("The Heart of Cello"); for EMS, Belgium ("Festival of the 20th Century"); for Beit Hatefutsot, Israel ("In Hasidic Style"); for Erasmus, Holland (Clarinet Trios with Camerata Trio); and for Eroica, USA (complete Beethoven works for cello and piano).

Mr. Gruber plays a David Tecchler cello made in Rome in 1706.

Pianist **Keiko Sekino** enjoys an active career as a solo recitalist and chamber musician in the United States and abroad, having performed at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Bennett-Gordon Hall at Ravinia Park, and Palacio de Festivales de Cantabria in Santander, Spain. She has participated in festivals including Ravinia, Norfolk, Yellow Barn, and Four Seasons in the United States and Kuhmo, Encuentro de Música y Academia de Santander, La Gesse, and Pontino in Europe.

In 2006, Ms. Sekino was one of four pianists invited to participate in the Thomas Quasthoff Workshop in German Lieder at the Weill Institute at Carnegie Hall. As a duo with soprano Awet Andemicael, she worked with baritone Thomas Quasthoff and pianist Justus Zeyen on Lieder by Schubert, Wolf, and Strauss in public masterclasses and was presented in recital at the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall. An accomplished chamber musician, Ms. Sekino has shared the



stage with violinists Ana Chumachenko and MinJung Kang, violist Gérard Caussé, and members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Peabody Trio, and the Los Angeles Piano Quartet.

A 2001 Presser Music Award recipient, Ms. Sekino has also received an artistic fellowship from the La Gesse Foundation, and in 2005 and 2006, grants from the Mu Phi Epsilon Foundation to pursue further studies in Italy and France. She has won first prizes in the Yale Friends of Music Recital Competition and Commonwealth Competition for Young Pianists. She achieved other competition successes at NMTA Yamaha Competition and East Connecticut Symphony Competition.

From 2004 to 2006, Ms. Sekino served as a pianist for the Tanglewood Festival Chorus of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. In this capacity, she worked with conductors John Oliver, James Levine, and Keith Lockhart on symphonic, operatic, and choral repertoire. A compelling performer of contemporary music, she has worked with composers Sofia Gubaidulina, Joan Tower, Mario Davidovsky, and Jake Heggie.

Ms. Sekino completed a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the Peabody Conservatory of the Johns Hopkins University and holds additional degrees from Yale University in economics and music. At Yale, she was the recipient of the Sudler Prize from Trumbull College and the Charles Miller Memorial

Scholarship from the Yale School of Music; and at Peabody, the Sydney Friedberg Prize and the Sarah Stuhlman Zierler Prize. Among her teachers are Peter Frankl and Robert McDonald. She has also worked closely with Elisso Virsaladze, Claude Frank, Boris Berman, and Margo Garrett. Ms. Sekino joined the faculty of the East Carolina University School of Music, Greenville, North Carolina, in 2006.

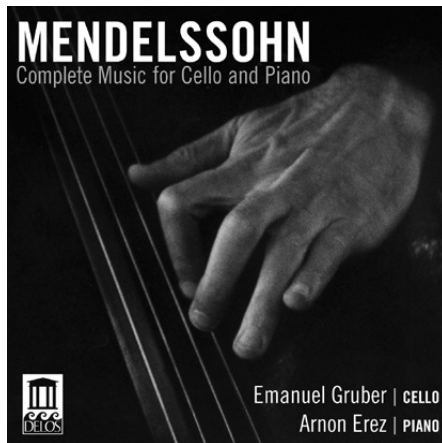


**This CD is dedicated to my beautiful wife, Gabriella**

This program was recorded June 29 – July 2, 2011 at the University of South Carolina, in the School of Music's Recital Hall.

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