



1838 — 1973 — 1828

**Beth Levin
Inward Voice**

Robert Schumann:

Kreisleriana

Anders Eliasson:

Versione

Franz Schubert:

Piano Sonata in C minor D 958



LC 28016

Beth Levin / Inward Voice

Studio Live Recording

Robert Schumann (1810 — 56)

Kreisleriana. Fantasien op. 16. Seinem Freunde Frédéric Chopin

zugeeignet (1838) 1 32' 38"

I Äußerst bewegt.

II Sehr innig und nicht zu rasch

* *Intermezzo I. Sehr lebhaft - Erstes Tempo - Intermezzo II. Etwas bewegter -
Langsamer (erstes Tempo)*

*III Sehr aufgeregt * Etwas langsamer – Erstes Tempo – Noch schneller*

*IV Sehr langsam * Bewegter – Erstes Tempo*

V Sehr lebhaft

*VI Sehr langsam * Etwas bewegter – Erstes Tempo*

*VII Sehr rasch * Noch schneller – Etwas langsamer*

VIII Schnell und spielend

Anders Eliasson (1947 — 2013)

Versione per pianoforte (1973) 2 06' 54"

Franz Peter Schubert (1797 — 1828)

Sonate c-moll D 958 (1828)

I Allegro 3 08' 52"

II Adagio 4 12' 37"

III Menuett. Allegro 5 03' 10"

IV Allegro 6 10' 17"

total 73' 30"

Beth Levin

In Beth Levins Spiel sind die Einflüsse mächtiger pianistischer und musikalisch-kultureller Traditionen zu einem unverkennbar eigentümlichen Stil transzendiert: die polnische Schule kantabler klanglicher Verfeinerung ihres ersten großen Lehrers Marian Filar; die strukturelle Klarheit und musikantische Natürlichkeit Rudolf Serkins; die monumentale Kraft und unwiderstehliche Brillanz Leonard Shures; und die unbestechliche Präsenz objektivierender Selbstbeobachtung dank des Unterrichts bei Dorothy Taubman. Beth Levins Spiel ist schlicht als zeitlos zu bezeichnen.. Mit

Beth Levin fashions a uniquely transcendent and personal style that combines four towering pianistic, musical and cultural traditions. From her first great teacher, Marian Filar, Levin acquired the melodic and timbral refinement of the Polish school. Another early influence, Rudolf Serkin, fostered a sense of structural clarity and natural musicianship, while Leonard Shure demonstrated his monumental force and irresistible brilliance to his young student. Finally, Levin gained an incorruptible presence and detached self-awareness from her studies with Dorothy Taubman. These influences seamlessly merge in playing that is unadorned and timeless.

12 Jahren debütierte sie als Solistin mit dem Philadelphia Orchestra. Sie machte sich einen Namen als herausragende Interpretin zeitgenössischer Musik und als Großmeisterin in der Musik Bachs und Beethovens. Ihre Live-Einspielungen von Bachs Goldberg-Variationen und Beethovens Diabelli-Variationen sowie letzten drei Klaviersonaten („A Single Breath“ bei Navona Records) sind innerhalb weniger Jahre legendär geworden. Ihrem hier vorliegenden, in Wien aufgenommenen Debüt bei Aldilà Records folgt eine weitere Aufnahme für Navona Records mit Schumanns Davidsbündler-Tänzen, Anders Eliassons „Disegno II“ und Chopins Sonate in b-moll.

After giving her solo début with the Philadelphia Orchestra at the age of twelve, Levin earned a sterling reputation not only as a grand-master of Bach and Beethoven, but as an interpreter of contemporary music. Within the span of a few years, from 2008 to the present, her live recordings have become legendary, including Bach's Goldberg Variations and Beethoven's Diabelli Variations (both on Centaur Records) as well as the last three Beethoven sonatas (A Single Breath, Navona Records). Here Aldilà Records presents her Vienna début, which will be followed by another recording for Navona: Schumann's Davidsbündler-Tänze, Anders Eliasson's Disegno II and Chopin's B-flat minor Sonata.







ILFORD LIDE-OLIS

2744



QUITE A Wild Love

(Robert Schumann, Kreisleriana:
Phantasien für das Pianoforte, op. 16)

Gil Reavill
(2014)

"Clara," whispers Robert, "you will smile so sweetly
When you discover yourself in it."

And: "Quite a wild love is present in a few movements,
And your life, and mine, and some of your glances."

Quoth Clara: "Why hurry over beautiful things? Why not
linger and enjoy them?" And: "The tea is ice-cold,
The room grows colder and colder,
But I grow warmer and warmer."

Alone, separated from his love, undrunk for once,
Robert roughs out a first draft in Leipzig
Over the course of four furious springtime days
In April 1838. Clara is off becoming
The toast of Vienna, elevated by the Emperor
To the rank of "Imperial Court Pianist."

A love story for the ages. Each serves as muse
To the other. But during that terrible
Lonely, beautiful spring, they are kept separate,
Like the twin rails of the Vienna-Leipzig line,
That merge only in the distance, only as an illusion.
The twain never meet. The poles of the magnet
Switch their energies, positive and negative,
Virgin and vampire, Eros and Thanatos,
Clara and Robert, Vienna and Leipzig,
Back and forth, forth and back, forever and ever.
"Men and women, women and men,"
Writes the modern author, "it'll never work."
The lark, when she flies, beats her wings
To heaven, but calls back to earth.
The tomcat, when he leaps, lands softly.
The hammer, when it falls, effects a caress.
Consider the multiple intercessions that come
Between the pianoforte's anvil and mallet:
String, damper head, damper felt,
Damper rail, damper wire, hammer.
It's Rube Goldberg. It'll never work.
In life as in Kreisleriana, flux is the crux
Low follows high, Sehr langsam, very slowly
Trips into the fugato, Sehr rasch, very fast
Wild eccentricity comes hard on the heels

Of dreamy romanticism. We are poised
Between the kiss and the miss, the cry
And the sigh, the shout and the clout.
In conclusion, there is no conclusion.
The aim is not for resolution, but
For our (painful, triumphant, disjointed,
Agonizing, untamed, volatile, improvisatory,
Veiled, incomplete, agitated, fractured) embrace,
Embrace, embrace, and once more, embrace



Kreisleriana — Versione — pianistische Eroica / Eroica pianistica

Als ich Beth Levin erstmals hörte, in ihrer phänomenalen Live-Aufnahme der letzten drei Beethoven-Sonaten für Navona Records, war klar, dass wir mit ihr zusammenarbeiten wollten. Und es war klar, dass wir uns als Beginn ein dramatisches, idealerweise ‚titanisches‘ Programm wünschten. In Beths Spiel fließen starke Einflüsse zusammen: Marian Filars zeitlose lyrische Größe, Rudolf Serkins strukturell-musikantische Klarheit, Leonard Shures unbestechlich kraftvolle pianistische Größe. Doch über all dem steht nicht nur die nüchterne Emphase ihrer starken Persön-

I heard Beth Levin for the first time in her phenomenal live recording of the last three Beethoven sonatas for Navona Records. From that moment it was perfectly clear that we wanted to work with her. It was equally clear that we wanted to begin with a dramatic program, ideally a “titanic” one. Thus we have the present album of Kreisleriana by Robert Schumann, Versione by Anders Eliasson and Franz Schubert’s Sonata in C Minor.

Levin’s playing unites several strong influences: Marian Filar’s timeless lyrical

lichkeit, sondern vor allem ihre vollkommene Versenkung in den energetischen Fluss und die Grenzen des Klaviers überschreitenden Charakter der Musik. Beth Levin spielt, gemessen an dem, was wir heute kennen, wie aus einer anderen Welt, geradezu, als hätte sie eben noch mit Eduard Erdmann, Edwin Fischer, Artur Schnabel und Wilhelm Backhaus zu Mittag gegessen.

Robert Schumanns ‚Kreisleriana‘ op. 16 waren von Anfang an als musikalischer Spiegel von E.T.A. Hoffmanns skurriler ‚Kapellmeister Kreiserl‘-Fantasiefigur (aus den 1814-15 veröffentlichten ‚Phantasie-stücken in Callots Manier‘) beabsichtigt und sind zwischen dem 19. März und dem 3. Mai 1838 in Wien entstanden: „Kreisleriana will ich es nennen, in denen Du und ein Gedanke von Dir die Hauptrolle spielen und will es Dir widmen“ (Schumann an Clara Wieck am 14. April 1838). „... dann die Kreisleriana gemacht in vier Tagen – ganz neue Welten tun sich auf [...] Kreislerstück in G Moll im Feuer compo-

grandeur, Rudolf Serkin's structural lucidity and Leonard Shure's impeccable and powerful pianism. But towering above them all is the sober urgency of her own strong personality. Her total immersion in the energetic flow and character of the music seems to transcend the limitations of the piano. Compared to much of what we hear today, Beth Levin plays as if from another world, as if she had just lunched with Eduard Erdmann, Edwin Fischer, Artur Schnabel and Wilhelm Backhaus.

Robert Schumann's Kreisleriana (Op. 16) was intended from the very first beginning as musical mirror of E.T.A. Hoffmann's bizarre imaginary character "Kapellmeister Kreiserl" (from the author's Fantasy Pieces in the Manner of Callot, published in 1814-15). Schumann composed the work in Vienna between March 19 and May 3, 1838. As he wrote to his fiancée, Clara Wieck, on April 14, 1838: "I want to call it Kreisleriana. You and a thought of you will play the main

nirt“ (Tagebucheintrag Schumanns am 3. Mai). Kurz zuvor hatte Schumann, ein Jahr vor Drucklegung, als einer der ersten die knapp zehn Jahre zuvor entstandenen drei letzten Klaviersonaten Franz Schuberts zu Gesicht bekommen, doch konnte er nicht wirklich in ihre Welt eintauchen, zu stark umfing ihn seine eigene in ihren äußersten Aufgipfelungen und Entgrenzungen. Die ‚Kreiserleriana‘ sind das Gegenteil eines lose geformten Zyklus, sie sind ein vom ersten bis zum letzten Ton bezwingend zusammenhängendes Ganzes, mit einer höchst zerklüfteten Entwicklung, die in einem zum Bersten gespannten Höhepunkt ihr Ausdrucksmaximum erfährt. Nur wenige Musiker sind in der Lage, diese frei und unkonventionell, gleichwohl absolut nicht willkürlich geformten, labyrinthisch verschlungene Pfade beschreibenden, weit ausladenden Phantasie-Mosaiken, wie sie auch insbesondere die ein Jahr später entstandene ‚Humoreske‘ op. 20 darstellt, in sinnfällig korrelierter Weise zum Klingen zu bringen. Die ‚Kreiserleriana‘ bewegen

role, and I want to dedicate it to you.” A diary entry of the same day informs us that “Kreiserleriana [was] done in four days – entirely new worlds open up [...] Composed G Minor Kreiserler piece in white heat.”

Kreiserleriana is the opposite of a loose-limbed cycle; it forms a convincing and cohesive whole from first note to last, with a jagged development that reaches maximum expression in a climax tense to the point of bursting. Few musicians are capable of imparting logic and solidity to these free, unconventional, expansively imaginative mosaics—“Phantasien,” as Schumann termed them. The fantasies tread their labyrinthine, convoluted but never haphazard paths, paths later found above all in the Humoresque (Op. 20), composed a year later. Kreiserleriana is poised on a razor’s edge and moves heedlessly on the brink of chaos. But the crucial secret for the pianist is to maintain constant close contact with the chaos, rather than getting lost in it.

sich auf Messers Schneide, entfesselt am Rande des Chaotischen entlang, doch entscheidend ist die beständige Tuchfühlung mit dem Chaos, ohne darin verloren zu gehen.

Hieronymus Truhn berichtete, wie Schumann ihm ein kurzes Stück vorspielte: Es „hatte einen wilden, fortreißenden Charakter. Er spielte es zweimal nach einander durch; es gefiel mir sehr, und ich fragte, ob es zu den Kreisleriana gehöre: Er sprach das Wort ‚Macbeth‘ [...] Schumanns Klavierspiel war unbeschreiblich. Er bewegte seine Finger mit einer fast beängstigenden Geschwindigkeit, als ob Ameisen auf der Klaviatur herumkrabbelten; er spielte seine eigenen Sachen mit nur wenig Accentuierung, aber mit reichlicher Anwendung beider Pedale.“

Zwischen die beiden großen Werke von Schumann und Schubert kann nur ein Stück passen, das in relativer Kürze eine entsprechende Tiefe und Substanz offenbart und zugleich einen starken Kontrast bildet. Anders Eliasson war nicht nur

Hieronymus Truhn reported his own first-hand experience of hearing Schumann at the piano. “Schumann’s playing was indescribable. He moved his fingers with almost frightening speed, as if ants were crawling on the keyboard. He played his own music with little accentuation but with generous use of both pedals.”

Only a relatively short piece that reveals a similar depth and substance is capable of fitting between the two great works by Schumann and Schubert. Not only was Anders Eliasson Sweden’s most important composer, in the eyes of an increasingly large number of musicians he was a towering genius who stood astride the turn of the new millennium. In his symphonic oratorio Dante Anarca, the Symphonies Nos. 1, 3 and 4, the Sinfonia per archi, the final String Trio of 2012 and many other works, Eliasson created masterpieces of our era, the true import of which was unknown to most listeners at the time of their creation.

Schwedens bedeutendster Komponist, sondern nach Ansicht von immer mehr Musikern das überragende musikalische Genie um die Jahrtausendwende. Mit dem symphonischen Oratorium ‚Dante Anarca‘, den Symphonien Nr. 1, 3 (mit obligatem Altsaxophon solo) und 4, der Sinfonia per archi, dem finalen Streichtrio von 2012 und vielen weiteren Werken hat er Jahr um Jahr zeitlose Klassiker unserer Epoche geschaffen, deren Tragweite zur Zeit ihrer Entstehung den meisten Hörern noch nicht bewusst war. Eliasson wurde nicht müde, zu betonen, dass „nicht ich es bin, der entscheidet, wie die Musik sich bewegt, sondern die Musik selbst, aus den ihr innewohnenden Kräften heraus“. Auch sein relativ schmales Œuvre für Klavier solo ist von höchstem Karat. ‚Versione‘ entstand 1973 – ein Drama der Tonbeziehungen, ausgehend von dem Zwiespalt, den die Begegnung des fallenden Kleinterz-Schritts f-d und des fallenden Kleinsekund-Schritts es-d in medias kreieren, und endend in der aufwärts, „ins Freie“ strebenden gro-

Eliasson never tired of emphasizing his unique view of composition. "It is not I who decides how the music will emerge, but the music itself from the forces dwelling within it." His relatively slender oeuvre for solo piano is of his usual sterling quality. Versione, composed in 1973, is a drama of tonal relations. It proceeds from an intrinsic dichotomy produced by the clash of a descending minor-3rd (F-D) and a descending semitone (E-flat-D), and ends in an ascending major 3rd (A-C sharp), soaring upwards from an ascending whole step (C-D). This music requires close attention to subtle intervallic tensions and their sculptings. It can give rise to a dynamic understanding of Eliasson's "triangulatory" harmony, based on rotating similarities of minor-3rd relations (i.e. every third 5th) that seem to escape the force of gravity.

A short while before he composed Kreisleriana, Schumann had been among the first to lay eyes on Franz Schubert's final three piano sonatas, composed some

Ben Terz a-cis, die aus der aufsteigenden großen Sekunde c-d hervorgeht. Diese Musik erfordert ein intensives Erspüren der subtilen Intervallspannungen und ihrer Ausfaltungen, woraus sich ein energetisches Verstehen der auf der rotierenden Verwandtschaft der Kleinterz-Beziehungen (also der jeweils dritten Quint) beruhenden „triangulatorisch“ schwebenden, gleichsam der Schwerkraft entwunden fliegenden Harmonik ergeben kann.

Franz Schubert schrieb seine drei letzten Klaviersonaten in seinem Todesjahr 1828, und spätestens in diesen ist er durchweg auch in der großen dual konstituierten Formdimension der Sonatenform auf einer Höhe mit den Hauptwerken Beethovens, dessen titanische Größe ihm, dem ‚Liedkomponisten‘, die wohlmeinenden Kritiker so permanent vor die Nase hielten. Die Sonaten waren als Dreierzyklus geplant, wurden im September vollendet und sind in der autographen Reinschrift überliefert und nicht, wie die Legende lange besagte, innerhalb kürzester Zeit entstanden, was

ten years earlier. At that point in time, the works were still a year from their publication. By his own account, Schumann seemed unable to truly enter the challenging universe of Schubert's sonatas, being too deeply enmeshed in his own world, with its extreme pinnacles and liberties. Here were timeless messages from a decade past, written in 1828, in the final months before the composer's death at age thirty-one.

By these works Schubert had taken the measure of Beethoven's major creations in large-scale bipartite sonata form. Well-intentioned critics continued to label Schubert a "song composer" and constantly dangled Beethoven's impressive grandeur before the young composer's nose. Conceived as a three-piece cycle, the sonatas were finished in September and have come down to us in autograph fair copies. The surviving sketches reveal that they were not, as legend would have it, dashed off in a short burst. Shortly after Schubert's death, his brother Ferdinand sold the three sonatas to the pu-

wir anhand der erhaltenen Skizzen wissen. Kurz nach Schuberts Tod verkaufte sein Bruder Ferdinand die drei Sonaten an den Verleger Haslinger, der sie zwar ankündigte, aber nicht veröffentlichte. Sie erschienen erst 1839 im Wiener Verlag Diabelli im Erstdruck. Die Sonate in c-moll D 958 ist die erste der finalen Trias, und nicht nur in der dunklen Tonart steht sie Beethoven am nächsten. Schubert geht in diesen letzten Sonaten weiter denn je mit seiner radikalen Entwicklung der großen Form, die sie als symphonisch konzipierte Werke mit imaginärer Orchestration erscheinen lassen. Eine besondere Herausforderung bildet das Absinken der tiefen Basslinie ins Pianississimo in der Durchführung des machtvoll abgründigen Kopfsatzes. Extreme Kontraste exponiert das herrlich sangliche Adagio, und gewissermaßen vergleichbar dem Trauermarsch aus Beethovens ‚Eroica‘ ist der Zerfall des Themas auskomponiert, wenngleich hier in ganz anderer, harmonisch kühn opponierender Art, als korrespondierten verschiedene Welten über wei-

blisher Haslinger, who advertised them but left the works unpublished. It was not until 1839 that they were finally issued in print by Anton Diabelli in Vienna.

The C Minor Sonata (D 958), the first piece in the triptych, is closest to Beethoven, and not only in its choice of a dark key. In these final works Schubert went farther than ever before in his radical exploration of large-scale form, making the sonatas seem like symphonies with imaginary orchestration. One special challenge in the present sonata is the descent of the low pianississimo bass line in the development section of the mighty and inscrutable first movement. Extreme contrasts dominate the magnificently cantabile slow movement; the disintegration of the theme is written out in a way distantly related to the funeral march of Beethoven's Eroica, albeit in a quite different manner, with boldly clashing harmonies resembling two antithetical worlds communing across broad expanses of space and time. The movement ends with

te räumliche und zeitliche Entfernungen hinweg. Ein einsam sich erhebender Gesang beschließt den Satz, auf den wie ein neutral-anmutiges Feld das kurze Menuett folgt. Das Finale bezieht seine Spannkraft aus der Gegenüberstellung zweier extrem gegensätzlichen Themenwelten, die jeweils weit ausgesponnen werden. Das etwas weniger bewegte zweite Thema ist in sich schon von überwältigender Mannigfaltigkeit im gleichzeitigen Auseinanderklaffen der rhythmisch unveränderlich ostinat wiegenden Begleitung in der Art eines summenden Chorgesangs, dem das Spektakel der Einwürfe der rechten Hand gegenübertritt. Wie im Finale der großen C-Dur-Symphonie hat die Tatsache, dass Schubert hier viele Seiten mit vielen Noten gefüllt hat, oberflächliche Kommentatoren dazu verführt, Schumanns Wort von den „himmlischen Längen“ missbräuchlich weiterzuverwenden. Nichts ist zu lang oder zu kurz geraten in dieser in jeder Hinsicht einzigartigen, formvollendet visionären Musik.

a solitary rising song, after which a brief minuet follows in neutral but graceful respite.

The final movement draws its tension from the juxtaposition of two sharply contrasting thematic realms, each of which is spaciouly elaborated. The slightly less agitated second theme is in itself overwhelming in its diversity, with an undulating, rhythmically unchanging ostinato accompaniment standing out like hummed choral singing against the spectacle of the right-hand interpolations. As is the case with the finale of the composer "Great" C Major Symphony, the fact that Schubert filled the pages with many notes has led glib commentators to misuse Schumann's quip about "heavenly lengths." Nothing is too long or too short in this visionary music, a work unique and consummately wrought in every respect.

text

Christoph Schlüren, February 2015
English Version: Bradford Robinson





VERSION

(Anders Eliasson, Versione)

Light broke slow – night is day
Made blind – as dawn is night
Foxed – purple purred to pearl
Then white – magnesium
Volcano skies – the diamond
Violence of the sun – a furnace
To burn us into char – that we
Might rise again – firebirds flown
From ashes – blown on high
Constellated – and named
For gods – dead of twilights past

GIL REAVILL

(2014)



Schumann's KREISLERIANA

 p. 16

Composed in 1838 and dedicated to his friend F. Chopin, Kreisleriana is a pianistic standout, worth perhaps two Carnivals.

1. Äußerst bewegt (Extremely animated), D minor

The treble climbs in slurred, accented intervals to a brilliant high D at measure 8. That D feels triumphant because of the treacherous intervals before it, smaller ledges leading to the mountaintop.

Pedal marked in the bass helps the dotted (staccato) octaves carry weight and tone

as they support the mercurial right hand.

Measure 9, ff: an intensity is reached here and held by sforzandi that grow from tiny crescendo – A-Bb-A, A-Bb-A – that minor second tugging, yearning. The treble surrounds the sparser bass line with 16th notes in chordal patterns – simple, elegant, filling out the harmony, a Puckish midsummer dance.

At measure 25 a switch to the key of B-flat major removes the music from its unrequited state to a place of temporary peace, utter repose, almost resolution. The two-note slurs and falling 16ths, a gentle rain.

The opening is reiterated at measure 49. We must leave the sweet garden to relieve darker times. Throughout the work this pull of conflicting moods, dynamics, colors and emotions will continue to thrill.

Note to pianists: Don't be afraid to use rotation in the opening intervals and to play at different parts of the key – it's wild!

2. Sehr innig und nicht zu rasch
(very inwardly and not too quickly), B-flat major

A sublimely serene melody rises and falls twice before stretching out to fulfill eight measures. Schumann seems always to be using Nature as his guide. And Bach.

The middle voices at measure 5 echo the opening theme and work well to counterbalance the line above them. At measure 7 the bass enters with important material and the performer searches for just the right sound – think Chaliapin – to differentiate the lines. Looking, say, at measure 24, there exists a glorious duet between soprano and alto. The pianist must be alert to this inter-

nal action to give it character.

Intermezzo I Sehr lebhaft (very lively)

This movement breaks the serenity with its pointed left hand working against two-note slurs in the right, all accents, dots and speed. Not merely new material but a second, outgoing character is introduced.

Schumann is nothing if not about contrast.

Erstes Tempo at measure 55 returns us to the utter calm of the opening. The continual repetition of this legato melody beckons to a place of introspection.

Intermezzo II Etwas bewegter

Yet another variation within a variation with its swirling legato lines and rich woven textures. Schumann presents a singing melody at measure 92 and answers it further on in the bass and alto, the effect being one of intricacy, color and variation. He highlights a melody by imbedding it inside patterns of running 16th notes and leaves no spaces, a river of sound.

The music at measure 119 has an improvised feel and forms a perfect transition

– using fragments of the theme and the *Intermezzi* to seamlessly work back to the first material at the first tempo. We are home.

3. Sehr aufgeregt (Very agitated), G minor

Accented triplets act out a sprite-like melody in G minor to form this movement's character. An excitable piece following a spiritual one keeps us on guard. What next?

I think Schumann was aware of qualities that seduce the ear. While his music is never programmatic it has a visual aspect. His musical characters spring to life in the hands of a good interpreter.

At measure 33 the music shifts to B-flat major (still sharing E-flat and B-flat from its relative minor). Again Schumann creates a refuge in the midst of turmoil. A small suspended high G at measure 41 is delicate and touching. He recreates moments of music as feeling, of the felt, the known.

Measures 61 to 67: An arcing line over repeated B-flats creates a feeling of rest-

lessness in the listener even as it makes a transition to the theme. He bends the music like clay.

At measure 85 the sprites return to play. A bombastic coda at 116 brings out their wild side. The falling octaves at 140 are powerful, requiring a sense of abandon to the very last note.

4. Sehr langsam (Very slowly), B-flat major/D minor

Ah, permission to play slowly – to breathe, sing, dream.

Schumann's turns, grace notes and rolled chords, usually performed quickly here take on an aspect of slow motion and are given more of a melodic role. A *ritardando* in this tempo stretches rhythm to the breaking point as in measure 5 and again at measure 10. One's sense of timing expands, the extreme becomes the norm. Don't be afraid.

Pedal markings here and there aid in the suspension of time and the blending of colors. Leonard Shure once told me to play

with clarity despite the pedal. It can be used quite artfully in Movement 4.

As in most of Kreisleriana a middle section emerges with contrasting ideas to the original theme. Here at measure 12 the music is suddenly flowing after being held in limbo. A tender and singing melody in quarter notes debuts as sixteenths provide motion and harmony around it. One cannot describe adequately the beauty of Schumann's melodies, their fragility, the tenderness they relay. As with his songs, one experiences true soulfulness.

Chopin knew how to sing at the piano; in this section Schumann shows his love and respect for Chopin. Measure 24 returns to the original material and tempo ending with an Adagio measure that serves as a perfect segue to movement 5.

5. Sehr lebhaft (Very lively), G minor

Some of movement 3's impishness returns with an infusion of dotted rhythms, one of Schumann's trademarks. Long...

short long...short long...etc. Here they add punch and contrast to the legato eighth notes without elongating dots.

A musical gesture begins to build in measure 15, Schumann seeming to reach higher and higher, and by the third time peaks on a high F. So many of his melodies seem to reach upward, perhaps never to be satisfied. He knew how to create leaps and large shapes and transform them to physical entities.

At measure 51 he opens up to a delicious section of harmonies and eighth notes in unison that verge on the ultra-Romantic. One has to keep from getting lost in the soup.

At measure 67 he goes all out in ff and the momentum and power are overwhelming. Again, when confronted with such force of beauty, the performer must be in control or fall over the edge. One works for a sense of abandon and control that can seem to coexist.

6. Sehr langsam (Very slowly),

B-flat major

The opening, in lulling 12/8, is short-lived. At measure 5 a sharp key change to C minor in forte ignites several bars of a fiercer mood. Surges of quick notes like small glissandi climb to and fall from accented chords. After a fermata at measure 8 a pp transforms the driving notes to a delicate filigree like the dissipation of anger.

At measure 11 the opening theme appears in the bass, taking on a more lumbering quality. Soprano lines take over and gradually return us to the original material. While Schumann's brush strokes are simple, the result is orchestral.

The opening few bars seem to provide Schumann with the means to create an always changing canvas, a now-you-see-it-now-you-don't sleight-of-hand. Schumann the magician!

7. Sehr rasch (Very fast),

C minor/E-flat major

Movement 7 is short and wild, a great release from the more deliberate 6. In a

suite of dances such as Kreisleriana the performer must time the entrances just so, sometimes letting several beats elapse before moving ahead. Schumann writes a fermata or hold at the end of his movements; the exact timing is up to the performer.

Accented bass chords support the rushing treble sixteenths in forte with a fragment of a fugue appearing at measure 36, all unrelenting, never coming up for air.

Here as in the others a second contrasting section emerges, in this case a hymn-like arrangement of chords in quarters that slows down the harmonic rhythm and frenetic energy. A ritardando, another, one more signal, the end.

Schumann's use of ritardando and other markings reflect his temperament. He would often place three ritardandi within the space of a few measures and thus maneuver time in a manner close to Nature.

8. Schnell und spielend

(Fast and playful), G minor

Schumann wrote: the title is understandable only to Germans. Kreisler is a figure created by E.T.A. Hoffmann ... an eccentric, wild and clever Kapellmeister.

To paraphrase Koji Atwood, Kreisler, kept alive by music, personifies the Romantic soul in its struggle to invoke the deepest of personal feelings, often at the risk of madness or death. Hoffmann had intended that his hero would go mad or pass his final days in a monastery. Ultimately, Schumann emulated Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler all too well: Unable to control the demon of Art, it destroyed him.

We have arrived at the final piece, an amalgam of themes and characters rich in paradox and in longing. Contrast in Schumann is never merely black/white or dark/light but rather a juxtaposition of worlds felt at the deepest level.

An elf opens the proceedings: G minor, pp, staccato. Only a slur at measure 2 adds poignancy to the otherwise carefree character. A bass figure enters at measure 25 with a comedic feel: rolled chords as melody,

heaviness on the heels of Puck.

Arrival at measure 73 (Mit alle Kraft - with all one's strength) is a critical moment for the work as a whole: a heart-felt melody in forte that seems to embody Schumann's yearning (perhaps for Clara) and for the pursuit of Art he felt to be just beyond his grasp.

The performer must dig deep to portray a depth of culminating passion at the heart of Kreisleriana.

At measure 113 the tiny elfin feet that began the movement return (in ppp and a decrescendo) to the final notes of Kreisleriana.



text
Beth Levin,
May 2014 (lafolia.com)

SONATA / SONNET

(Franz Schubert, Sonata in C minor ^{1 1} D. 958)

RE AVILL
(4)
1 2 0

The boy walks out and sings a summer lied
A journey joy-written and daylight-safe
The forest closes tight, he wields a rod
To beat the weeds and entertain himself
The shadowed leaves, a looming darkling sky
Troubles prize a young careless mind, defeat
A feckless peace with ancient symmetry
A shivering hint of life's death, love's hate
Summer boy, winter's fell in every month
There are beasts abroad that would do you ill
Silence springs shut the happy open mouth
Each bed's a grave, each song's a dying fall
O wandering son O wondering one
You will be dust, not now, not sometime soon







