Great Masters:
Robert and Clara Schumann—
Their Lives and Music

Professor Robert Greenberg

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Robert Greenberg, Ph.D.

San Francisco Conservatory of Music

Robert Greenberg has composed over forty works for a wide variety of instrumental and vocal ensembles. Recent performances of Greenberg's work have taken place in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, England, Ireland, Italy, Greece, and The Netherlands, where his *Child's Play* for string quartet was performed at the Concertgebouw of Amsterdam.

Professor Greenberg holds degrees from Princeton University and the University of California at Berkeley, where he received a Ph.D. in music composition in 1984. His principal teachers were Edward Cone, Claudio Spies, Andrew Imbrie, and Olly Wilson.

Professor Greenberg's awards include three Nicola De Lorenzo prizes in composition, three Meet the Composer grants, and commissions from the Koussevitzky Foundation of the Library of Congress, the Alexander String Quartet, XTET, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, and the Dancer's Stage Ballet Company.

He is currently on the faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where he served as Chair of the Department of Music History and Literature and Director of Curriculum of the Adult Extension Division for thirteen years.

Professor Greenberg is resident music historian for National Public Radio's "Weekend All Things Considered" program. He has taught and lectured extensively across North America and Europe, speaking to such corporations and musical institutions as Arthur Andersen and Andersen Consulting, Harvard Business School Publishing, Deutsches Financial Services, Canadian Pacific, Strategos Institute, Lincoln Center, the Van Cliburn Foundation, the University of California/Haas School of Business Executive Seminar, the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business, the Chautauqua Institute, the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco, and others. His work as a teacher and lecturer has been profiled in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Inc*. magazine, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *The Times* of London. He is an artistic co-director and board member of COMPOSER, INC. His music is published by Fallen Leaf Press and CPP/Belwin and is recorded on the Innova Label.

Professor Greenberg has recorded over 300 lectures for The Teaching Company, including the forty-eight–lecture super-course *How to Listen to and Understand Great Music*.

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Scope:

The work of Robert Schumann embodies the nineteenth-century Romantic tendency to combine literature and music and to use music as a highly personal form of self-expression. Indeed, we see in Schumann's work the dual influences of poet and musician that began, for him, in childhood. Schumann's father was a writer and bookseller, and his mother was a lover of music. Schumann showed an early talent for playing piano and composing musical "portraits" of his family and friends. As a young man, he also kept journals, in which he wrote poems, song lyrics, essays, and personal thoughts.

Schumann enrolled in the University of Leipzig a few years after the death (likely by suicide) of his sister and the early death of his father. There, he abandoned the study of law to devote himself full time to music, along with indulging his growing appetites for substances controlled and uncontrolled. He began taking piano lessons from Friedrich Wieck, father of Clara and a teacher who claimed to have developed a new method of keyboard instruction. Wieck's method, which involved practicing piano exercises for extended periods, were likely the cause of the repetitive stress injury that ended Schumann's nascent career as a pianist. As a result, Schumann turned to composing. One of the early fruits of that decision is *Papillons*, a stream-of-consciousness piano work that reflects Schumann's vision of reality as a series of mysteriously related fragments.

At the same time that Schumann was beginning to compose and launching his career as a music critic and journalist, Clara was being driven by her father, Friedrich Wieck, to become "the world's greatest pianist." She began taking lessons at five and embarked on her first concert tour when she was twelve. Clara was well received wherever she and her father traveled, but when she grew into adolescence, their relationship began to deteriorate.

In the early 1830s, Schumann was going through a difficult period; he had contracted malaria, mourned the deaths of his brother and sister-in-law, and suffered a nervous breakdown. He also experienced a failed romance with another student of Wieck's, Ernestine von Fricken, who nonetheless served as the inspiration for one of Schumann's most famous compositions, *Carnaval*. In 1835, Schumann found himself falling in love with the sixteen-year-old Clara Wieck, a situation that enraged Friedrich and prompted him to take Clara away from Leipzig.

Over the next few years, Clara and Robert maintained a secret long-distance relationship. Robert went through periods of manic compositional activity, producing such pieces as *Kreisleriana* and the *Arabesque*. Ultimately, Clara and Robert filed suit against her father and gained the court's permission to marry in 1840. Their first years together were happy ones. Like so many modern, married professionals, their biggest problems grew out of their attempt to balance active personal and professional lives.

We have a few songs written by Clara from this time that show her promise as a composer, had she chosen that path. From Schumann in 1841, we have the Symphony No. 1 in Bb Major, his first completed symphony. The work offers a prayer of thanksgiving for the rebirth of spring and reflects the compositional influences of Beethoven. The symphony was successfully premiered under the baton of Felix Mendelssohn in March 1841, a premiere that finally allowed Robert his share of the limelight with Clara and brought him recognition as a serious composer. Robert was productive in the years after his First Symphony, writing songs, essentially three more symphonies, and chamber music. By the 1840s, Schumann had successfully combined his Romantic programmatic impulses with the strict compositional technique and abstract musical content of the Classical era.

In 1844, Schumann's mental health began to decline, and he withdrew from teaching and writing his music journal. He still composed, even experiencing some periods of intense creativity, but not to the extent he had earlier. In 1850, Schumann was offered an appointment in Cologne as music director for the city of Düsseldorf. He and Clara were welcomed in the city enthusiastically and experienced a few years of happiness there. Schumann was captivated by the scenery, legends, and history of the Rhineland, which inspired him to write the Symphony No. 3 in Eb Major; a mass; a series of trios for violin, 'cello, and piano; and various works for chorus and voice and piano. Robert and Clara also met Johannes Brahms during this time and began an abiding friendship with him that would be a source of strength for Clara in the coming months.

In 1852–1853, Schumann began suffering bouts of depression, along with worrisome neurological symptoms. In October 1853, he was asked to resign as music director when he was unable to conduct a concert with the violinist

Joseph Joachim. In February of 1854, Schumann's mind gave way; he attempted to drown himself in the Rhine and was taken to an asylum. Despite early hopes that he was improving, Schumann died at the asylum two years later, almost certainly the result of syphilis exacerbated by the mental illness that had plagued him throughout his life.

After Robert died, Clara became the large family's sole breadwinner, giving concerts almost constantly to make ends meet. The early deaths of several of her children brought Clara even more pain. She maintained a close relationship with Brahms, and the two championed Robert's music for the remaining forty years of their lives.

Lecture One

Isn't It Romantic?

Scope: Romanticism was the dominant movement in European art in the nineteenth century. Its themes were the glorification of extreme emotion; nostalgia for a mysterious past; an enthusiasm for wild, unspoiled nature; and the primacy of emotional expression. The movement began in literature, with which later music of the period was merged to create a composite art form. Before Romanticism, in the Baroque era of the seventeenth century, music was viewed as a sublime and deeply spiritual art. In the eighteenth century, the era of the Enlightenment and Classicism, music was meant to be accessible to an idealized "everyperson." With Romanticism, musical expression became all inclusive, embodying pictorial, literary, and emotional content. The legacy of Romanticism is with us today; we are still drawn to the incredible and strange in science fiction, fantasy, and virtual reality.

Robert Schumann was a true practitioner of the Romantic tendency to combine literature and music and to use music as a form of self-expression. Schumann was born into a happy, intellectual, and creative family in 1810. His father was a bookseller and writer, and his mother was a lover of music. Robert showed an early talent for playing piano and composing; he was especially gifted at improvising musical "portraits" of friends and family members. Schumann also loved to write and kept journals filled with poems, song lyrics, and essays. Between the ages of fifteen and eighteen, he wrote thirteen songs that begin to reveal the duality of poet and musician in his personality and work. Before he went on to university, Schumann experienced two tragedies: the death (likely by suicide) of his sister Emilie and the sudden death of his father from a heart attack at age fifty-three.

Outline

I. The nineteenth century was a great age of literature. The writers and poets of the time celebrated several specific themes: the glorification of extreme emotion, in particular, love; nostalgia for a deep, mystic, legendary, and mysterious past; and an extraordinary enthusiasm for nature—a nature wild, uncontrolled, and free, unspoiled by the hand of bourgeois humanity.

- **A.** For the poets, writers, artists, and composers of the nineteenth century, the love of overt expression, nostalgia for the past, and the adoration of nature were the pathways that allowed them to get to the essence of their literature, art, and music: the primacy of spontaneous emotion and emotional expression.
- **B.** In the art of the nineteenth century, the word *Romantic* was first used apropos of literature and such English writers as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, and Byron. Romanticism was, initially, a literary movement.
- **C.** The cutting-edge composers of the nineteenth century believed that the future of music was tied to merging music with literature, creating a composite art form in which the whole was greater than the parts. In vocal music, this idea meant songs (German songs, or *lieder*, in particular) and operas in which words and music were ever more deeply conjoined and expressive, and instrumental music that described emotions, painted pictures, and told explicit literary stories in purely instrumental terms.
- **D.** No one believed more completely in the artistic necessity of combining music, literature, and intimate self-confession than did the pianist, composer, and aspiring poet and novelist Robert Schumann (1810–1856).

II. The phrase *Romantic era* has created confusion over the years. We associate the word *romantic* with physical or emotional affection or love; in this light, the phrase *Romantic era* would conjure up a nineteenth century of free love. But in application to the art, literature, and music of the nineteenth century, the word *Romantic* means something quite different.

- **A.** The adjective *Romantic* comes from the word *romance*, which was originally a genre of literature. A romance was a medieval tale or poem about some heroic persons or event, such as the Arthurian Romances, written in one of the Romance languages, that is, one of the languages descended from Latin, the Roman language.

1. As a result, when the word *romantic* first came into use around the middle of the seventeenth century, it carried with it legendary and fantastic connotations of an imaginary world quite different from the "real" world of the everyday.
2. Romantic art, then, plumbs a level of experience outside the everyday, laden with fantasy ("fantastic"), beyond the rules, beyond our experience, beyond our control.

B. Expressively, here at the onset of the twenty-first century, we are still surrounded by elements of Romanticism—science fiction, fantasy, virtual reality, anything that is meant to titillate us by exposing us to the incredible, the strange, and the "over-the-top" would constitute Romantic art or experience.

C. We also say that Romantic-era art, and Romantic-era instrumental music in particular, is inclusive; that is, Romantic-era instrumental music goes beyond the purely musical repetitions, variations, contrasts, and developments of Classical-era music (the music of Haydn and Mozart, for example) in that much of it seeks to tell stories, paint pictures, and describe complex emotions in purely instrumental terms.

1. For example, what is the following Classical-era music by Mozart "about"? If we had to ascribe some extra-musical content to this music, what might it be? If this were a soundtrack for some sort of scenery or action, what would that scenery or action be? (**Musical selection**: Mozart, *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, movement 1 [1787].)
2. Aside from its generically "upbeat" nature, this music does not explicitly describe anything; it is not inclusive of any extra-musical description, above and beyond its own pitches and rhythms. This is what we might call *absolute music*, music best and most easily described and discussed in purely musical terms.
3. Again, if we had to ascribe some extra-musical content to the following selection, what might it be? (**Musical selection**: Tchaikovsky, *Overture to Romeo and Juliet*, Love Theme [1869].)
4. This theme by Tchaikovsky—representing, as it does, idealized love and youthful passion—is as explicitly evocative of its emotional message today as it was at its premiere, more than 130 years ago.
5. Tchaikovsky's use of irregular phrases that climb ever higher to reach a frankly orgasmic climax is calculated to create just that extra-musical effect it has so well evoked for all these years. This is music, then, that is inclusive of some extra-musical element, be it emotional content, pictorial content, or literary content, and it is typical of much music of the nineteenth-century Romantic era.

D. As this comparison between Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* and Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* indicates, this sort of all-inclusive expressivity wasn't always the case in musical arts. For us to have a proper perspective on the Romantic "revolution"—and, by extension, the music of Robert Schumann—we must first examine the changing role of music in Western society from the late seventeenth century through the early nineteenth century.

III. In 1680, the philosopher and music theorist Andreas Werckmeister wrote, "Music is a gift of God, to be used only in his honor."

A. Herr Werckmeister's comment speaks directly to the North German, Lutheran, Baroque view of music as a divine, sublime, and deeply spiritual art, capable of describing the ineffable and transmitting the most powerful sorts of emotions.

B. Both the religious and secular music of Johann Sebastian Bach subscribe completely to Werckmeister's creed. (**Musical selection**: J. S. Bach, *St. Matthew Passion*, opening [1729].)

IV. In 1776, just forty-seven years after Bach composed the *St. Matthew Passion*, Charles Burney, perhaps the first true music historian, defined music this way in the preface to his *History of Music*: "Music is an innocent luxury, unnecessary, indeed, to our existence, but a great improvement and gratification of the sense of hearing."

A. Burney's definition of music reflects the Enlightenment/Classical-era belief that the best music was accessible, tuneful, and entertaining to an idealized "everyperson," who was a cause célèbre of the time. (**Musical selection**: Mozart, Piano Concerto No. 21 in C Major, K. 467 [1785].)

B. The Enlightenment dictum that stated, "that institution that does the greatest good for the greatest number is a good institution" had its musical corollary in "that music that appeals to the greatest number must, provided it is based on sound judgment and good taste, be the best music."

C. Obviously, Mozart's music would have sounded much different if he had been born in 1685, when Johann Sebastian Bach was born. Mozart's genius notwithstanding, the "style" of the music he wrote—the way he expressed his genius—was a product of his time, his environment, and his world. Born at another time, he would have found a mode of expression appropriate to *that* time. If Mozart were alive today, he would not be composing in a style appropriate to the Enlightenment and the late eighteenth century.

V. One last quote brings us to the place of music in European society during the early Romantic era. Sometime around 1820, Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann, novelist, librettist, composer, philosopher, and polymath, wrote, "Music is the *most* romantic of the arts, as its subject is only the infinite, the secret Sanskrit of nature expressed in tones which fill the human heart with endless longing, and only in music does one understand the songs of trees, flowers, animals, stones and floods!"

A. Music—because of its ephemeral, utterly subjective nature and expressive power ("the secret Sanskrit of nature")—can say the unsayable, describe the verbally indescribable, can make us conscious of feelings that the plastic or literary arts cannot even approach. The very mysteries of nature can be described and understood in music. Music was, for the Romantic era, the ultimate art form.

B. In a sense, all art is "Romantic" in that it draws its materials from everyday life and experience, only to transform, distill, and crystallize those materials into something quite removed from the "everyday." What sets the art of the nineteenth century apart from what came before it was the degree to which Romantic-era art emphasized strangeness, boundlessness, bizarreness, and extremes.

VI. Robert Schumann, a consummate Romantic, was born in the picturesque German town of Zwickau, in the region of Saxony, on June 8, 1810. He was the fifth, last, and apparently favorite child of August and Joanna Christiana Schumann.

A. For at least five generations before him, August Schumann's Lutheran ancestors had lived and worked in central Germany, the land of Johann Sebastian Bach and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

1. The teenaged August Schumann, who was born in 1773, was completely swept away by the *Sturm und Drang* movement, that pre-Romantic literary movement that emphasized passion, creative expression, and freedom of expression above all else.

2. In the biographical literature, Schumann's father is generally referred to as a "book dealer"; in reality, he was much more than that. Himself an author, August wrote, in particular, chivalry-laden medieval romances that were popular in his day. Ultimately, he made a small fortune by publishing German-language pocket editions of Sir Walter Scott's novels and other classics by such authors as Goethe, Schiller, Cervantes, and Lord Byron.

3. August Schumann was a clever, hard-working, intelligent man and a loving husband and father. He believed entirely in the Enlightenment spirit of *Bildung*, or self-cultivation, and he passed on his lifelong love of learning, the spirit of *Sturm und Drang*, and his passion for literature to his youngest son, Robert.

4. Schumann later spoke of his father's book dealership as "a great formative power for a youth" (Daverio, 20). An avid reader with a tremendous variety of books at his disposal, Schumann began writing poems around the age of ten. In a notebook he entitled "Leaves and Flowerets from the Golden Meadow," the thirteen-year-old Schumann wrote down his creations, including poems, song lyrics, bits and pieces of dramas, and fictitious letters.

B. Concurrent with the development of the literary Schumann was the musical Schumann. His mother, Joanna Christiana, loved to sing and had a great repertoire of music in her head.

1. Christiana sang to her children, and from the youngest age, Robert was able to sing back what he heard, in tune and in rhythm. At the age of seven, he began piano lessons with a local church organist. As we might expect, his progress was rapid, and within a year, he had written his first compositions, a set of dances for the piano.

2. More than anything else, it was Schumann's gift for improvisation that seems to have given him his greatest musical pleasure, and he used this gift to entertain and amuse his family and friends. He painted musical portraits "that captured people's mannerisms, movement, speech patterns, and physical appearance in sound" (Ostwald, 17).

3. We listen to a selection from Schumann's piano work *Carnaval*, Op. 9 (1835), completed when he was twenty-five years old. The work is a collection of twenty-one short pieces, most of them similar to the

musical portraits that Schumann took such pleasure in improvising as a child. When he wrote *Carnaval*, Schumann had a crush on his piano teacher's daughter, a talented sixteen-year-old named Clara Wieck. One of the movements of *Carnaval* is entitled "Chiarina," Schumann's pet name for the girl, and it betrays a passion, a fire, a hesitancy, and a delicacy that describe the young Clara, as well as Schumann's still secret passion for her. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Carnaval*, Op. 9, "Chiarina" [1835].)

C. In school, Schumann was, as is typical of so many great creative minds, given to daydreaming and not the best of students, but he did not lack ambition or self-esteem.

D. From an early age, Schumann loved performing and being the center of attention. With his next-oldest brother, Carl, and some friends, he set up a theater at his home. The boys put on improvised theatrical productions, and Robert—imaginative, quick, and with a genuine ear for impersonation and an eye for character types—was the star attraction and something of a neighborhood celebrity.

E. Robert had yet to choose a profession, but this was not a great concern to the young Schumann considering his early accomplishments as both a writer and musician. Ultimately, it was Schumann's desire to unify these two disparate elements of his personality—music and poetry—that led to his mature compositional style.

F. At age fifteen, Schumann, along with ten of his fellow students, founded a literary club dedicated to reading and discussing native German poetry, drama, literature, and biography. Through this club, Schumann was exposed to the cream of German Romantic authors and was especially influenced by the eccentric and psychologically penetrating writing of an author known as Jean Paul, Johann Paul Friedrich Richter.

G. Between the ages of fifteen and eighteen, Robert wrote countless poems, "lyrics" for songs yet uncomposed, critiques, and essays; he prepared metric translations from the original Greek of Homer and Sophocles; and he kept a detailed, revealing, and self-critical diary.

1. In the diary, he pondered whether he would be remembered as a "poet." Clearly, through his middle and late teens, this intelligent, sensitive, and introspective young man considered himself as much a person of literature as a musician.

2. Given his love for poetry and music, as well as his developing abilities as a pianist, it should come as no surprise that Schumann was drawn to the composition of *lieder*, that is, German-language art songs for voice and piano, which combine, as Schumann wrote, "poet and composer in one person."

3. Schumann developed, at this time, a basic belief that he would hold for the rest of his life: "Tone [music] is the purely extracted quintessence of the spiritual life." This idea is entirely Romantic, a view of music as the "secret Sanskrit of nature," able to reveal truths beyond the power of concrete substance, imagery, or words alone.

H. All told, Schumann wrote thirteen songs during this period of his life; they are the products of a composer with virtually no formal training, but they reflect perfectly the "duality"—poet and musician—that lies at the core of Schumann's creative world.

1. As an example of these early (and rarely performed) songs, we turn to *An Anna* (*To Anna*), composed sometime during the summer of 1828, from a poem by Justinus Kerner.

2. Justinus Kerner was a poet and a physician, and we can see his avocation and vocation combined in his poetry: He writes about the dark side of nature—illness and disease, somnambulism (sleep walking), magnetism, and clairvoyance—truly nineteenth-century German Romantic topics. Behind the folk-like simplicity of his poems lie the recurrent themes of grief, loneliness, madness, and longing for death.

3. Even at the age of eighteen, Schumann—oversensitive, emotionally overwrought, with a genetic predisposition toward mental illness—found Kerner a kindred spirit; Kerner's poetry spoke to Schumann's own heart and soul.

4. Clearly, in its largest meaning, this poem is about the unobtainable beloved, who can neither see her lover nor hear his words. More subtle, however, is the indication that Anna is dead: She appears as a hallucinatory image against the cross (the crucifix) of the poet's windowpane as "an angel of peace." What would seem, on the surface, to be a poem about lost love is more than that: It is a deeply felt poem of grief, a lullaby for someone who is at one with nature but deaf to her lover's words.

5. As we listen to Schumann's setting of this poem, note that Schumann sets the bulk of Kerner's text in a very flexible, almost recitative style; he may have intended us to feel that these words are being thought as much as they are being sung.

6. Note also that in his pursuit of subtle emotional nuance, Schumann supplies a seemingly endless number of expressive instructions in the score: In turns, the performer is told to sing rapturously, tenderly, dreamily, intensely, and solemnly. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *An Anna* [1828].)

I. Schumann, thrilled at having completed the thirteen songs of 1827–1828, wanted a professional opinion on their merits and flaws. He sent a number of them, including *An Anna*, to the Kapellmeister in Braunschweig, a nice man named Gottlob Wiedebein, and asked for his opinion. Wiedebein's response was kind and encouraging; he claimed that what flaws there were in the songs were not "sins of the spirit" but rather, "the natural sins of youth," and suggested that a little more self-criticism on Schumann's part was all the songs required.

VII. Before we move on to Schumann's university years and his development as a pianist and composer, we must return to his family and to the year 1825, when Schumann was fifteen years old.

A. In October of 1825, Schumann's sister Emilie, at twenty-nine years of age, apparently committed suicide. Schumann's biographer Peter Ostwald, a psychiatrist, suggests that based on contemporary descriptions of her behavior, she was suffering from depression or catatonic schizophrenia. Exactly how Emilie died is still uncertain, although the consensus is that she drowned herself.

B. As we would expect, Schumann and his family were devastated by Emilie's death. Ten months after Emilie's suicide, Schumann's father died suddenly of a heart attack at the age of fifty-three. Schumann was doubly aggrieved, and the losses would have a profound effect on Robert and his family.

Lecture Two

A Pianist in Leipzig

Scope: Schumann enrolled at the University of Leipzig in March 1828. His mother wanted him to study law, but he devoted his time increasingly to playing piano, along with drinking, smoking cigars, and indulging his sexual appetites. He began taking lessons with Friedrich Wieck, father of Clara and a teacher who claimed that he had developed an original method of keyboard instruction. In 1831, Schumann also made his debut as a professional music critic, publishing a review of a Chopin piece in a music journal.

Starting in 1830, one of Schumann's fingers began to go numb, probably as a result of practicing piano exercises for more than eight hours at a time. He tried various cures, but by 1832, Schumann knew that he would not have a career as a pianist. He turned to composition, beginning with *Papillons*, a stream-of-consciousness piece that describes a scene in one of the novels of Jean Paul, an author with whom Schumann was enamored. In July 1833, Schumann contracted malaria; later that year, his brother died of tuberculosis and his sister-in-law and dear friend died of malaria. Schumann fell into a deep depression and was seized by the fear that he was going mad. His slow recovery was partially assisted by the formation of a group of young, progressive musicians called the *Davidsbund*. The group published a successful music journal, and Schumann would serve as its principal reviewer for the next ten years.

Outline

I. According to the terms of August Schumann's will, Robert was left a generous trust and yearly stipend, provided he agree to complete a three-year course of university study. Acceding to the wishes of his mother, who saw music as a lovely hobby but an unpromising profession, Schumann enrolled at the University of Leipzig in March 1828, just short of his eighteenth birthday.

A. With a population of roughly 45,000 people, Leipzig was the second largest city in Saxony and a great university town, filled with teachers, writers, and thinkers. It was also among the great European cities of music—for performance, teaching, and publication. If Christiana Schumann really wanted to discourage her son's interest in music, she could not have chosen more poorly the place of his university education.

B. When Schumann got to school and away from parental observation, he did exactly as he pleased. Two months after arriving in Leipzig, Schumann wrote his mother and described his daily routine, which included two hours of piano practice, several hours of reading, some "poetizing," and regular attendance at law lectures. The last activity was added purely for his mother's benefit; according to his roommate, Schumann never entered a lecture hall.

C. At this time, Schumann was also composing—*An Anna*, which we listened to in Lecture One, was a product of this period—and had taken up drinking and smoking cigars.

D. Also around this time, Schumann's voluminous diary entries began to dwell on his sexual desires and sexual orientation. We must note that Schumann's sexual appetite was a defining element of his artistic life.

1. He almost certainly died of syphilis and, even as he was going mad later in life, both his and Clara's diaries reveal frequent sexual relations.

2. He was, by his own admission, a compulsive masturbator at a time when such behavior was universally denounced as a potential cause of madness. He also had serious substance abuse problems and was almost certainly bisexual.

E. Instead of attending classes at the university, Schumann continued his fledgling composing and found himself a local piano teacher named Friedrich Wieck.

1. Wieck was forty-two years old in 1828 when Schumann first met him. A hard, difficult man entirely lacking in subtlety, Wieck had grown up in abject poverty and was self-taught as a musician.

2. At the time Schumann arrived in Leipzig, Wieck was promoting what he claimed was an original and absolutely foolproof method of keyboard instruction. Wieck's "proof" of the effectiveness of his method was his own daughter, Clara, whom he was determined to turn into the "world's greatest pianist."

3. Clara, who was born in 1819, was nine years old when she first met the handsome, rather manic, eighteen-year-old Schumann.
4. Wieck, amused by his new student's passion for his lessons, dubbed Schumann the "hothead of the keyboard." To Wieck's ultimate and eternal horror, the piano wasn't the only thing in the Wieck household that Schumann was interested in.

II. At this point of his life—during his late teens and early twenties—nothing entranced, intrigued, and inspired Schumann more than the writings of Johannes Paul Friedrich Richter, the erstwhile "Jean Paul" (1763–1825).

A. Jean Paul was one of those authors who appealed to intelligent, literary, oversensitive post-adolescent males who want to be swept away into a world of overstatement, over-emotion, and literary self-indulgence; a world that mirrors their own overwrought, overblown, sexually frustrated, and grandiose (if unformed) images of themselves.

1. Jean Paul's novels, which embodied all the extremes of German Romanticism, were thinly disguised autobiographies, the language convoluted and filled with complex metaphor.
2. What did Schumann find so enthralling about this complicated, digression-filled, often nonsensical literature? I might suggest that he found himself; he found a writer who helped him connect the threads of his own life, a writer who allowed him to perceive time not as linear but as cyclical, and most important, a writer who helped him recognize the duality of his own personality.
3. Inspired by Jean Paul, Schumann created a double personality for himself. His more extroverted and frankly machismo side he came to refer to as "Florestan"; his more introverted and quiet side, he called "Eusebius."
4. Florestan, the extroverted alter ego, is the hero of Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*; he is bold, assertive, and masculine. While sitting in a dungeon, chained to a rock, and about to be killed by the evil Pizzarro, Florestan is rescued by his wife, Leonora, who is disguised as a man named Fidelio.
5. Eusebius, Schumann's quiet, introverted alter ego, was a Catholic saint, a fourth-century priest who worked as a historian and wrote extensively about Christian martyrs. Eusebius himself was persecuted and ultimately killed. It has been suggested that Eusebius's interest in martyrdom, his own suffering, and his execution appealed to the masochistic and suicidal elements in Schumann's personality.

B. Inspired by Jean Paul, the young Schumann began to write a number of novels, none of which went beyond fragments, though all of which helped Schumann to order his worldview and artistic priorities. Among those priorities was his increasing emphasis on playing the piano.

C. Of course, as Schumann became ever more engaged with the piano, he began spending more and more time in the company and home of his piano teacher, Friedrich Wieck. Through Wieck, Schumann gained access to the musical elite of Leipzig and met the nine-year-old pianistic prodigy Clara.

D. Schumann's personal relationship with Clara lay far in the future. For the time being, he was consumed with wanderlust. He managed to convince his mother that his "law" career would be best served by trips to Switzerland and Italy, then a stay in Heidelberg, ostensibly to attend law lectures at the university there.

E. On July 30, 1830, two years after having left Zwickau to study law, Schumann wrote his mother a letter in which he announced his plan to become a professional musician. Schumann claimed in his letter that in six years, he would be able to hold his own against any living pianist.

F. Christiana Schumann grudgingly relented to her son's musical aspirations but not before sending him a letter containing a thinly veiled treat to cut him off financially and calculated to induce guilt for breaking his mother's heart.

G. Thus, Schumann joined that most impressive list of musicians who abandoned legal careers for careers in music, including Handel, Tchaikovsky, Hans von Bülow, Sibelius, and Stravinsky. Schumann began his pursuit of pianistic greatness, back in Leipzig, at the hands of Friedrich Wieck.

III. The next two years, 1830–1832, constituted Schumann's "undergraduate" degree in music. He continued his lessons with Wieck, although he found them increasingly unsatisfactory; Wieck was a disinterested teacher at best, who lavished the bulk of his time and energy on Clara. During these years, Schumann finally received some formal education in composition, studying harmony and counterpoint with a conductor and music theorist named Heinrich Dorn.

A. It was also during these years that Schumann made his debut as a professional music critic. His first review was published on December 7, 1831, in the prestigious *Allgemeine Musicalische Zeitung*.

1. The occasion was doubly auspicious; not only was Schumann being published as a writer, but his review—of Frederic Chopin's *Variations on Mozart's 'La ci darem la mano,'* Op. 2—introduced Chopin to the German musical world and set a new standard for musical criticism.
2. Schumann's review—so fanciful, so idiosyncratic, so musically on the mark—says as much about Schumann as it does about Chopin. He uses his alter egos, Eusebius and Florestan, to praise Chopin's virtuosity. (**Musical selection**: Chopin, *Variations on Mozart's 'La ci darem la mano,'* Op. 2.)

B. His rising stature as a music writer and critic notwithstanding, Schumann's aspiring career as a virtuoso pianist was about to come to a painful end.

IV. As early as 1830, at the age of twenty, Schumann began referring to his "numb" finger in his diary and letters, although exactly which finger caused Schumann problems is still a subject of debate.

A. His condition—described variously as a "weakness" or "laming" of the right hand—was likely caused by repetitive stress, brought on by his propensity to practice exercises at the piano for more than eight hours at a time, a regimen for which we might blame equally Schumann and Friedrich Wieck.
1. Some early Schumann biographers suggested that his hand problem was a result of mercury treatments for syphilis; in his biography, Peter Ostwald claimed that the stiffness in the middle finger of Schumann's right hand came about as a psychosomatic reaction to guilt over excessive masturbation.
2. Whatever the cause, Schumann undoubtedly made things worse by using a chiroplast, a finger-strengthening machine of the time. By June 1832, six months after the publication of the Chopin review, Schumann's injured finger was almost unusable.
3. At that point, Schumann consulted with one "Professor Kuhl," who recommended a remedy then known as the "animal bath." Schumann was instructed to soak his hand in the entrails of a freshly slaughtered animal. He was told that as a result, he would absorb "healing warmth" from the mixture of blood, intestinal slime, and various bits of fecal matter.
4. The cure was, obviously, useless. In November 1832, when he was twenty-two years old, Schumann wrote his mother that he knew that his finger was incurable.

B. Friedrich Wieck was appalled by the injury. He was terrified that his reputation would be "compromised" and that he would become known as a piano teacher who crippled promising young talents through overwork and excessive demands.
1. Ultimately, Wieck, a cold and calculating man, put as much distance between Schumann and himself as he could.
2. For his part, Schumann, who had come to think of Wieck as a sort of second father, was doubly injured: Not only did he see he career as a pianist going down the drain, but he was rejected by the very man and mentor who had promised him that career in the first place.

C. For the most part, Schumann seems to have handled the problem admirably. Of course he was distraught, but soon enough, he shifted his emphasis, from being primarily a pianist to being primarily a composer. In his heart, Schumann had always wanted to write—words or music, it made little difference.

D. He did not give up on finding a "cure" for his problem, and of course, he had moments of profound sadness and regret over his stunted pianistic career. Nevertheless, by 1834, Schumann's new self-image as a composer was firmly in place.

E. For ease of discussion, Schumann's compositional career is typically divided into two parts. The 1830s were, generally, "the decade of the piano," during which time he composed works mainly for solo piano. The 1840s and early 1850s saw Schumann turn to chamber ensembles and orchestral composition. Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, he continued to compose songs for voice (or voices) and piano.

V. We begin our survey of Schumann's early solo piano music with *Papillons*, Op. 2, published in November of 1831, at exactly the time that he was subjecting his hands to daily "exercise" in the chiroplast. *Papillons* is the first of Schumann's so-called "poetic cycles for keyboard"; in the words of biographer John Daviero, "*Papillons* shows us a young composer in the process of construing music as literature" (Daverio, 79).

A. *Papillons* consists of twelve brief, continuous movements preceded by an even shorter introduction. Some of these little pieces date back to 1828, when Schumann was in his first year of "law school." *Papillons* is rooted, then, in the relaxed atmosphere of the musical salons and cafes that Schumann frequented during his early student days. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Papillons*, Introduction and No. 1 (Waltz) [1831].)

B. Why entitle the piece *Papillons* (*Butterflies*)? Since almost the beginning of literature, the butterfly has been a symbol for metamorphosis, for the emergence of something delicate and beautiful from an unattractive, earthbound larval state.

1. In June 1831, Schumann began to sketch a poetic cycle entitled "Butterflies," which begins with the lines:

> Therefore do not rail against formative Nature!
> What once crawled on the ground
> Flits with divine lightness in the ether! (Daverio, 81)

2. Certainly, as his twenty-first birthday approached and his chosen career as a musician was finally being acknowledged by his family, Schumann's self-identification with the metamorphic qualities of the butterfly are clear.

3. More than Schumann's own post-adolescent, autobiographical mindset, however, *Papillons* is "about" the second-to-last chapter of Jean Paul's novel *Flegeljahre*. The chapter describes a masked ball during which the hero goes into a trance and feels like a butterfly as he is whisked onto the dance floor by his beloved.

4. In April of 1832, Schumann wrote his mother, asking her to have "everyone" read this scene because "*Papillons* actually transforms the masked ball into tones" (Daverio, 82). He also told a friend that the scene almost unconsciously propelled him to the piano, and the movements flowed out of him.

5. Schumann described a stream-of-consciousness process, by which the complex activities of this literary scene—the waltz music, the steps of the dancers, the feelings of the hero and his beloved, the sights and smells and heat of the night—are all translated into an extraordinarily personal and descriptive musical experience that, for Schumann, mirrors both the literary scene and his own emotional reaction to the scene, moment to moment. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Papillons*, No. 11 [Waltz].)

C. We must note one last vital bit of information apropos of *Papillons* before we move on, because it is a key to the music of Schumann and because it addresses a critical question leveled against Schumann's music since he first began composing.

1. First, the critical question: How and why should the listener construe all these little miniature movements—these "caprices"—into a literary whole greater than their parts?

2. The answer, and the key to much of Schumann's music, is that Schumann believed, as did Jean Paul and so many of the poets and philosophers of the nineteenth century, that life was a series of fragments—events, feelings, relationships—that could only be united, indeed, transfigured, by the poet. Schumann believed in this vision of reality as mysteriously related fragments of experience with all his heart and soul.

3. Of course, this is not to say that this fragmentary vision of reality, when translated into music, will be easily understood by an audience. It's one thing to describe this vision in literature, where the meaning of the individual fragments is revealed in words that everybody already understands. It's another thing entirely to attempt to do the same thing in instrumental music, which is much more obscure and abstract than literature.

4. The point is that music like *Papillons* did not go over well with audiences or critics. When Clara played *Papillons* at a soiree in 1832, the assembled guests simply could not keep up with the seemingly nonsensical progression of the individual sections. Clara reported that she saw the audience members looking at one another in confused amazement.

5. Not all of Schumann's compositions are collections of stream-of-consciousness miniatures. Rather, the idea of fragmentation was his starting point, the platform from which he departed on his quest to create a composite art in which music and literature were of equal import. Schumann understood the difficulties inherent in comprehending his music.

D. In Lecture Four, we will return to this miniaturized, literature-based, stream-of-consciousness music when we focus on two of Schumann's great masterworks for solo piano: *Carnaval* of 1835 and *Kreisleriana* of 1838. For now, we must move on to the events of 1833.

VI. The year 1833 was a bad one for Schumann, the worst year he'd had since the deaths of his sister Emilie and his father in 1825–1826.

A. In July 1833, Schumann contracted malaria; his recovery took three months and was slowed considerably by his heavy drinking. On August 2, 1833, Schumann's brother Julius died of tuberculosis. On October 17, 1833, Schumann's sister-in-law Rosalie, one of his best friends, died of malaria.

B. Rosalie's death, following so quickly after Julius's, sent Schumann, still weakened by malaria, over the edge. Between mid-October and December of 1833, Schumann fell into a neurotic state characterized by deep anxiety and depression, a pathological fear of being alone, periodic loss of consciousness, and shortness of breath. He may have been suffering a nervous breakdown or a panic disorder; he was seized by the fear that he was going mad.

C. Schumann recovered, slowly. According to one biographer, he may have had his first homosexual relationships during this period of recovery and reevaluation, with his roommate Carl Gunther and/or the pianist Ludwig Schunke, whom Schumann met in a bar and with whom he lived for nearly a year.

D. While he was living with Schunke, Schumann came up with the idea of the *Davidsbund*, or "David's Group," a brotherhood led by Florestan, who, like the biblical King David, would lead young, progressive musicians against their conservative, reactionary enemies: the artistic Philistines.

1. Schumann, his mental and physical state improving by the day, organized the *Davidsbund*. With this small number of like-minded friends and colleagues, he put much of his effort in late 1833 and 1834 into founding a musical journal, for which he would become the guiding light and principal critic.

2. The journal, entitled *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, was dedicated to promoting music of substance and fighting "Philistinism" in contemporary musical life. Schumann preached to his own choir, exhorting them to find, expose, and root out cultural mediocrity wherever they could find it.

3. Who could have predicted that this club of young Leipzig-based musicians would create one of the most important musical journals of the nineteenth century, with Schumann its most important writer and critic for ten years? Depending on the tone—exuberant or restrained—Schumann would frequently sign his articles and reviews as Florestan or Eusebius.

4. For the next twelve years, Schumann made his living as a journalist and critic, and such was the success of the *Davidsbund* journal that for many years, Schumann was far better known as a critic than as a composer. He could be merciless in his criticism but also recognized the geniuses of his time, including Chopin, Brahms, Mendelssohn, and even Liszt.

Lecture Three

Clara

Scope: Schumann's teacher and Clara's father, Friedrich Wieck, was an ambitious and difficult man who drove his first wife (Clara's mother) away from their marriage. Wieck kept the children from that marriage, determined to transform Clara into the "world's greatest pianist" using his teaching methods. Clara began taking lessons at five and, by the time she was nine, was giving private concerts to aristocratic audiences. She played solo at the Gewandhaus when she was eleven and began her first concert tour when she was twelve. Clara was well received wherever she and her father traveled, but when she grew into adolescence, her relationship with Friedrich predictably deteriorated.

Robert Schumann lived with the Wiecks for almost a year starting in 1830 and endeared himself to Clara and her brothers by entertaining them in the evenings. Clara learned to play Schumann's *Papillons*, and he was thrilled with her interpretation. By the time she was sixteen, an intelligent, famous, and beautiful young woman with her own promise as a composer, Clara and Robert would fall in love.

Outline

I. Sometime in 1815, Friedrich Wieck (1785–1873), then thirty years old, moved to Leipzig. Having graduated from the University of Wittenburg with a degree in theology, he spent the next nine years of his life as a *hauslehrer*, a private tutor for various wealthy families. Wieck was apparently a natural teacher, and he gravitated toward the subject that was nearest to his heart—music.

A. As a musician, Friedrich Wieck was weak. He fancied himself a pianist, a chorister, and a composer, but he was entirely self-taught and not very good at any of his musical pursuits, except teaching music. He had a good ear and a sixth sense that enabled him to understand the idiosyncrasies and needs of his students, although he was a harsh taskmaster.

B. Ferociously ambitious, Wieck set himself up as a piano teacher and proprietor of a piano store and music shop in Leipzig in 1815. His timing was impeccable. Leipzig was rebuilding from the Napoleonic Wars, and as a commercial center, the city was prosperous and filled middle-class families who wanted pianos in their parlors and lessons for their children.

C. Within a year, his business prospering, Wieck decided it was time to settle down and have children. On June 23, 1816, he married one of his students, Marianne Tromlitz; on the surface, it seemed to be a practical and desirable match.

1. Marianne Tromlitz was, at nineteen, twelve years younger than Wieck. She was an extremely talented singer and piano player. She performed with the Gewandhaus Orchestra as both a solo singer and pianist and took on singing students. Because she was by far the better pianist in the Wieck household, she also took on the more advanced piano students.

2. Marianne and Friedrich had five children, three of whom survived infancy. The second born and oldest surviving child was Clara, who was born on September 13, 1819. She had two younger brothers, Alwin and Gustav.

D. In 1824, Marianne gathered up her children and belongings and walked out after nearly eight years of marriage. It is very likely that she had been having an affair with a pianist named Adolph Bargiel, whom she later married. Of course, her marriage was probably in trouble before the affair as a result of Wieck's "driving ambition, vanity, and exploitation of his young wife" (Reich, 13).

E. Under Saxon law, the children were the legal property of their father. On September 17, 1824, four days after her fifth birthday, a sobbing Clara was forcibly removed from a hysterical Marianne and taken back to Wieck in Leipzig.

F. Marianne ended up living, performing, and teaching in Berlin and had four more children. She would not reenter Clara's life until 1839, when Clara, twenty years old and one of the most famous musicians in Europe, broke with her father and moved to Berlin, there to rediscover her mother and her mother's love.

II. Even before Clara was born, Wieck had made the unilateral decision that the child would grow up to be one of the greatest pianists of all time, a living, walking testament to his pedagogic skill, a validation of his existence, and a steady paycheck in his old age.

A. Clara's formal lessons were begun at the age of five, at just the time she was taken from her mother. Those early years with Friedrich were undoubtedly difficult. He quickly wrote off his sons, Gustav and Alwyn, who had neither the musical talent nor compliant personalities necessary to fulfill their father's ambitions.

B. Friedrich remarried four years after his divorce, when Clara was nine years old, to a twenty-three-year-old woman named Clementine Fechner.

1. Clementine and Friedrich had three children together in a marriage that lasted forty-five years.

2. Clementine was an intelligent, patient, cultured, and obedient woman, capable of managing the household, taking care of the children, and looking after the family's piano business during Friedrich's many long absences.

C. These absences were the result of Friedrich's advancement of Clara's career. He and Clementine even spent their honeymoon in Dresden, where the nine-year-old Clara gave some private concerts. Clara and her career always came first; it was Friedrich's good luck that Clementine tolerated the situation, although Clara and her stepmother had a rocky relationship from the beginning.

D. Starting when she was seven years old, Clara began to keep a diary. Her entries dealt with every aspect of her life and career and were made with religious regularity.

1. For eleven years, until she was eighteen, the entries were frequently dictated and supervised by her father. Those entries that Clara made on her own were critiqued and amended by Friedrich, in his own hand, in the margins.

2. For Wieck, Clara's diary became an essential mode for both educating Clara and communicating with posterity. The diaries are filled with his preaching and philosophizing, praise and condemnation; many of the entries are copies, in Clara's hand, of the angry letters he wrote to his friends and enemies, newspaper editors, concert producers, and the like.

E. That Friedrich Wieck worked his daughter hard goes without saying. Her attendance at school consisted of a total of eighteen months at two schools and ended when she was seven. Whatever friendship and socialization skills she might have gleaned from being around other children were clearly considered unimportant.

1. Wieck arranged for Clara to study with various private tutors; she was taught reading, writing, French, English, music theory and composition, violin, and score reading, because Wieck believed that these subjects would be useful for her future career.

2. In addition, from the time she was six years old, Clara saw almost every opera mounted in Leipzig and every other city she and her father visited. By the age of eight, Clara was a participating, contributing member of a musical circle that met at Wieck's home in the evenings.

3. In short, Wieck was a demanding, temperamental, and exploitative man who focused his energies on his daughter to an extent that we would consider destructive today.

F. For the small, docile, desperate-to-please Clara, Friedrich Wieck was a father, mother, teacher, friend, manager, disciplinarian, and guru, and she worshipped him. Of course, as always happens in such relationships, when the child becomes an adolescent with her own ideas, the parental object of worship comes to be seen for what it really is: a desperate and dictatorial person attempting to fulfill his or her own stifled ambitions through the innocent services of the child.

III. Wieck was careful not to expose Clara to the public too early, and in this, he was wise. She made her first public appearance as a pianist at the age of nine, at the Gewandhaus, on October 20, 1828, and received warm notices.

A. This concert was soon followed by a trip to Dresden, where the ten-year-old Clara was paraded before the wealthy and influential. Both Clara and Friedrich played their respective roles perfectly. Clara enchanted all who saw her, and the aristocrats showered her with gifts. Wieck was requested to give lessons and share his methods.

B. Clara's public "coming out" as a concert pianist can be accurately dated to November 8, 1830, when she was eleven years old and played solo on the stage of the Gewandhaus.

C. Wieck had decided that the time was right; in September of 1831, he and Clara left Leipzig on their first concert tour, with Paris as their ultimate goal.

1. Their first stop was Weimar, where Clara played twice for Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and the court and received as a token of Goethe's affection a medal with his portrait and a note inscribed: "For the gifted artist Clara Wieck."

2. Father and daughter worked their way west across Germany, giving concerts in Erfurt, Arnstadt, Gotha, and Frankfurt; rave reviews followed them wherever they went. Tiring though it was, Clara seemed to love the travel and the attention. She also learned—by copying virtually all her father's business correspondence into her diary—how to run a concert tour.

3. Paris was a hard sell for Friedrich Wieck; the Parisians had no patience for his bad French, his bluffing and posturing, his provincial German manners and attitude. But everyone liked Clara, and she met many important and influential people who would help her to make her own career—without Friedrich—in just a few years.

4. The money Clara earned was invested by Wieck in state bonds and his own business; there was never any question that Wieck considered the money his to do with as he pleased. According to German law, Clara, as a female, had no legal rights to the money; this fact only reinforced Wieck's belief in his moral right to keep everything.

D. By the time Clara turned fifteen, the relationship Wieck had so carefully crafted with his daughter began to disintegrate. While on a concert tour of northern Germany in the winter of 1834–1835, Wieck wrote home to Clementine that Clara had lost interest in playing and had shifted her concentration to her appearance and young men.

E. Before we go on, we must sample some of Clara's music.

1. Remember that the education Wieck had designed for Clara included music theory and composition. Clara's main composition teacher was the composer/conductor Heinrich Dorn (1804–1892), director of the Leipzig opera.

2. One of Clara's first complete compositions is the song *Walzer* (*Waltz*), written on a text by a family friend named Johann Peter Lyser. It's a charming, energized salon song, filled with youthful energy and solid craft. (**Musical selection**: C. Schumann, *Walzer* [1834].)

IV. As we have already discussed, Robert Schumann first came into the Wieck household in 1828 and, in 1830, moved in (he would live there for close to a year) to take daily lessons from Wieck. Eugenie Schumann—one of Clara and Robert's daughters—described those days as happy ones for her mother. Robert entertained Clara and her brothers in the evenings with stories and games.

A. Schumann, who grew up in a loving and relatively quiet household, was shocked by some of the "interactions" he witnessed in the Wieck household. For example, an entry in Schumann's diary dated August 21, 1831, described a scene in which Wieck threw his son Alwyn to the floor because the boy had not played the violin well.

B. Schumann soon became disillusioned with Friedrich Wieck's teaching and was particularly unhappy with the finger exercises Wieck insisted he practice for hours on end. Neither did it help that he was witness to little Clara's mastery on a daily basis. Publicly, Schumann continued to venerate his teacher; privately, in his diary, the truth came out: "Wieck seems more dull, insipid, and arrogant every day" (Schumann, *Diaries*, vol. 1, 389).

C. As we know, Robert's aspirations as a concert pianist died with the injury to his right ring finger. Wieck put as much distance as possible between himself and his former student so that he would not be blamed for injuring Robert.

D. Again, as we know, in 1832, with the publication of *Papillons*, Schumann decided to dedicate himself to composition. Clara learned to play *Papillons*, and Schumann was thrilled with her interpretation. The thirteen-year-old Clara became, for Robert, the most important interpreter of his piano music.

E. Later in life, Clara claimed to have fallen in love with Robert Schumann in 1833, when she was fourteen years old. As for Robert, his fascination with Clara didn't likely turn into "true love" until 1835, when she was sixteen. During the year before that, he fell for a woman named Ernestine von Fricken (about whom we will talk more in Lecture Four), and it was not until that affair ended—and Clara had truly grown into her early womanhood—that Robert found himself hopelessly in love with her.

F. Clara Wieck at sixteen was a rare and beautiful young woman: brilliantly talented, famous, intelligent, sassy, at ease among adults, and increasingly aware of her power over men. Her sixteenth birthday was truly, for her, a "coming of age" and one of the best days of her life. Robert also remembered Clara's sixteenth birthday, which may have been the day he allowed himself to fall in love with her.

G. Clara composed her *Soirées musicales*, Op. 6, just a few months later. These six short pieces—"Toccata," "Nocturne," "Mazurka," "Ballade," "Mazurka," and "Polonaise"—are filled with joyful exuberance and youthful energy. Obviously strongly influenced by Chopin, the set nevertheless bears the stamp of a talented young composer.

1. We listen to the first-movement "Toccatina"—"little *toccata*." (**Musical selection**: C. Schumann, *Soirées musicales*, Op. 6, No. 1 "Toccatina" [1836].)

2. How much help did Clara get from her father and Schumann? We can't say, but we can see, nevertheless, that she had the potential to become a composer.

H. In the next lecture, we will return to the life and music of Robert Schumann, before we describe Schumann's break with Wieck over the romantic relationship with Clara.

Lecture Four

Carnaval

Scope: As we recall, Schumann was going through difficult times in the year 1833. He had contracted malaria, experienced the deaths of his brother and sister-in-law, and suffered a nervous breakdown. His recovery was assisted by the founding of the *Davidsbund* and its progressive music journal. At this time, Schumann also met and fell in love with Ernestine von Fricken but broke off their romance when he discovered that she was of illegitimate birth. He composed *Carnaval*, however, based on themes derived from the letters of Ernestine's hometown. *Carnaval* is made up of twenty-one miniatures that describe Schumann's friends and colleagues in the setting of a masked ball. It is highly impressionistic, idiosyncratic, and personal music that was assailed by conservative and avant-garde critics alike.

In 1835, Schumann found himself falling in love again, this time with the sixteen-year-old Clara Wieck. Friedrich Wieck eventually discovered the relationship and was enraged; he took Clara away from Leipzig and severed all ties with Schumann. Over the next few years, trying to maintain a relationship with Clara drove Schumann to episodes of mania and depression. During one of his manic periods, he composed *Kreisleriana*, a set of eight pieces for the piano that serves as a kind of "spiritual diary" of his emotions and personality at the time.

Outline

I. We return to Robert Schumann and the years immediately before Clara's sixteenth birthday. The year 1833 was a bad one for Robert. In July, he had contracted malaria, and his recovery took three months; in August, his brother Julius died of tuberculosis; in October, his sister-in-law Rosalie, one of his best friends, died of malaria; and from October to December, Robert fell into a deeply depressed and neurotic state.

A. At the age of twenty-three, Schumann suffered a genuine nervous breakdown, which would not be his last and from which he recovered slowly. Along with a number of friends and colleagues, he put much of his effort in late 1833 and 1834 into founding a music journal for which he would become the guiding light and principal critic.

1. The journal, entitled *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, was dedicated to promoting music of substance and fighting "Philistinism" in contemporary musical life.

2. Schumann and his friends referred to themselves as the *Davidsbund*, that is, "David's group," identifying themselves with the Israelite king who slayed Goliath. Schumann exhorted his friends on the journal to expose and root out cultural mediocrity wherever they could find it.

B. In 1834, at the time he was getting the *Neue Zeitschrift* off the ground, Schumann fell in love. The object of his desires was a young woman named Ernestine von Fricken, who hailed from the city of Asch, a village on the Bavarian-Bohemian border.

1. Ernestine came to Leipzig to study piano with Friedrich Wieck, and at his home, she and Schumann fell into a whirlwind romance. They met in April, fell in love over the summer, and became engaged in September.

2. Schumann saw in Ernestine a "tender and thoughtful" spirit and "all I could wish for in a wife," but some other descriptions of the young woman are not quite so generous. She was well developed but not an intellectual.

3. Ultimately, Schumann's relationship with Ernestine came to a bad end. In August of 1835, Schumann learned that Ernestine was illegitimate, which offended his middle-class sensibilities. Schumann was mortified and ended the relationship, but before that episode, Ernestine would be Schumann's inspiration for one of his most famous compositions, *Carnaval*, Op. 9.

C. Schumann began composing *Carnaval* in December of 1834. The piece is a piano work based on three tiny "themes" (or "sphinxes," as Schumann called them), all derived from the letters ASCH—Ernestine's hometown. In German, the letters A – S – C – H refer, respectively, to the pitches A – Eb – C – B. Indeed, Schumann subtitled *Carnaval* "Tiny Scenes on Four Notes." (**Musical selection at the piano**: R. Schumann, *Carnaval*, Sphinxes [1, 2, and 3].)

1. We should also note that "sphinx" no. 1 orders the pitches as S – C – H – A, the four musical notes contained in Schumann's own name!
2. Of the twenty-one miniatures that make up *Carnaval*, only a few do not feature—at some level, thematic or accompanimental—one or another of the "sphinxes," these autobiographical melodic markers that refer to both Ernestine von Fricken and Schumann and unite the disparate parts of *Carnaval*.

D. *Carnaval* (also called *Mardi Gras*) is a festival that precedes the forty days of fasting and contemplation of Lent. The Venetian *Carnaval* is a masked ball, during which the anonymity provided by masquerade allows for the emergence and indulgence of secret fantasies and passions. The Romantics loved the idea of *Carnaval*, which was for them, a metaphor for the emergence of the true self.

E. The various movements of Schumann's *Carnaval*, then, describe in miniature Schumann's friends and colleagues (many wearing the masks of characters from the Italian Commedia dell'arte); some of the movements are merely mood-setters, while others represent specific physical actions. As in *Papillons*, these miniatures are supposed to present life and experience as a series of high-profile fragments (inspired by Jean Paul) that, when taken together, offer us a brilliant collage of existence.

1. *Carnaval* opens with a stirring and fanfarish "Préambule" ("Preamble/Prelude"). Please note that for all its machismo and bluster, the "Prelude" is a dance, a waltz, in ¾ time. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Carnaval*, Op. 9, "Prelude" [1835].)
2. The second movement, entitled "Pierrot," offers us a comic picture of the bumbling, wistful, white-faced clown. Note the sudden, loud, downward gestures/motives that interrupt the music every few seconds; these are meant to represent Pierrot's stumbling and bumbling personality. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Carnaval*, Op. 9, "Pierrot.")
3. The third movement is entitled "Arlequin" ("Harlequin") and paints a musical portrait of that lively, playful, devilish clown of the Commedia dell'arte. It also offers a complete contrast with the previous movement's portrait of Pierrot, thus clarifying one aspect of *Carnaval* from the beginning: As we would expect at a masked ball, many of the movements—many of the characters—are paired, putting their differences into high relief. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Carnaval*, Op. 9, "Arlequin.")
4. The fourth movement, "Valse noble," allows the "background" music—the dance music—of the masked ball to come front and center. If *Carnaval* were a movie, this would be a moment when the camera pulls back to offer us a grand sweep of the ballroom and the dance floor. Soon enough, the camera pans forward for a close up of another couple.
5. Movements five and six describe Schumann's twin alter egos, Eusebius and Florestan. Eusebius was Schumann's name for the introverted and introspective side of his personality. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Carnaval*, Op. 9, "Eusebius.") Florestan was the passionate, extroverted, mercurial, impetuous side of Schumann's personality. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Carnaval*, Op. 9, "Florestan.")
6. Each movement is a miniature masterpiece in terms of its programmatic content, its reliance on one of the "sphinx" motives, and Schumann's extraordinary use of the piano. Schumann pays homage to himself and Jean Paul in the brilliant ninth movement—entitled "Papillons." (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Carnaval*, Op. 9, "Papillons.")
7. In the eleventh movement, entitled "Chiarina" (Schumann's pet name for Clara Wieck), he rather passionately describes the soon-to-be sixteen-year-old Clara, a girl he will marry in five years. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Carnaval*, Op. 9, "Chiarina.")
8. Immediately following "Chiarina" is a movement entitled "Chopin," in which Schumann tries his hand at writing in the lyric, ethereal, and rhythmically flexible style of Chopin. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Carnaval*, Op. 9, "Chopin.")
9. Immediately following "Chopin" is a brief but passionate movement entitled "Estrella," Schumann's pet name for Ernestine. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Carnaval*, Op. 9, "Estrella.")
10. In a movement entitled "Pantalon et Colombine," the fat, miserly Pantalone is pictured chasing the lovely and coquettish Colombina around the ballroom! (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Carnaval*, Op. 9, "Pantalon et Colombine.")
11. In the seventeenth movement, entitled "Paganini," Schumann writes a virtuoso showpiece in the style of Paganini's violin Caprices. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Carnaval*, Op. 9, "Intermezzo: Paganini.")

12. The twenty-first and final movement of *Carnaval* is entitled "March of the Davidsbundler against the Philistines." This movement depicts nothing less than a battle between the musical progressives, the good guys—Schumann, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Paganini—and the conservative academes and populist Philistines arrayed against them. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Carnaval*, Op. 9, "March of the Davidsbundler against the Philistines," conclusion.)

F. Schumann claimed more than once that the descriptive titles he provided for his miniatures were added only after the music had been written, but such claims may be disingenuous.

1. From the youngest age, as an improviser, Schumann's greatest pleasure was creating musical portraits of his friends and family. Like a great sculptor or painter, we are told that he had an uncanny knack for capturing a person's mannerisms and personality in purely musical terms. We do not believe that he abandoned this unique skill as a mature composer.

2. Schumann may have been afraid that his titles would prevent him from being taken seriously as a composer and that listeners would fasten too firmly onto the programmatic content implied by such titles and fail to notice how well a particular movement worked in purely musical terms. In his solo piano music, Schumann was a great portraitist, his comments to the contrary notwithstanding.

G. The music of *Carnaval* is virtuosic, impressionistic, literary, pictorial, dramatic, idiosyncratic, and incredibly personalized. This is music as dairy, as confessional; it is music that makes sense only if we know Schumann and, as best as we can, Schumann's mind.

1. Pieces like *Carnaval* were assailed from both the right and the left, by both conservatives and the avant-garde. Academic classicists found works like *Carnaval* "strange, formless, anarchic."

2. In Paris, Chopin publicly made fun of Schumann's piano music; Schumann's friend Felix Mendelssohn found little to praise in it; and even Liszt, who could have sold his audiences on almost anything, had little success in introducing Schumann's music.

3. Schumann was well aware of the difficulties such a piece as *Carnaval*—with its constant, dizzying changes of mood and tempo—would pose for an audience.

4. For her part, Clara—both a loyal supporter and outspoken (if private) critic of Schumann's music—begged him to consider writing more accessible, more frankly "popular" music.

5. If Schumann knew how difficult such pieces as *Carnaval* would be for his audiences and critics, why did he write such music? The answer is that like any nineteenth-century Romantic-era creator, Schumann fancied himself an artist, not an artisan. He could write only what he felt; for Schumann and his contemporaries, the time when the artist wrote for the amusement and entertainment of the audience was long past.

II. Even as Schumann was ending his relationship with Ernestine von Fricken, a new love had entered his life. At sixteen, Clara was no longer cute; she was beautiful, and her maturity bespoke someone older than her years. Schumann was twenty-five, nine years her senior. They shared their first kiss in November 1835, as Robert was leaving her house late one evening. Clara was overwhelmed.

A. The kisses continued in December when the couple met in Schumann's hometown of Zwickau during a concert tour. Wieck was still under the impression that Schumann and Ernestine were involved, so at first, he paid no attention to the fact that Clara and Robert were spending a good deal of time together. Wieck seems to have figured out what was going on sometime soon after New Year's Day of 1836. He hustled Clara out of Leipzig on January 14, took her to Dresden, and left her there.

B. In his naiveté, flushed with love, Robert assumed that Wieck would welcome him as a prospective son-in-law. Of course, just the opposite was true. For Wieck, Clara was not just a daughter; she was his life's work, his creation, the finest exponent of his pianistic method, his reward, his validation, and his future. Wieck could not and would not separate his own life from his daughter's. Clara Wieck was to be the greatest concert pianist of all time, not a housewife.

C. We are told that Wieck threatened to shoot Schumann if he met with Clara again. He also turned the anger he had shown to her brothers against Clara. He scheduled a concert trip to keep her away from Leipzig and severed all connections between his household and Schumann.

D. Robert, of course, was bereft, despondent. His relationship with Ernestine was over, his mother died in February, and his beloved Clara has been spirited away by her father—his one-time mentor, who seemed to have gone completely insane.

E. Schumann thought that Wieck objected to him personally, but Wieck would have opposed anyone or anything that might have stood between himself and Clara. Over the next four years, Wieck used every weapon at his disposal—slander, deceit, libel, even physical violence—to get rid of Schumann.

F. This first separation from Clara continued for eighteen months, until August of 1837. Schumann suffered, drank excessively, and sought consolation from prostitutes (and, in doing so, likely contracted the syphilis that would ultimately kill him). He also edited his magazine and composed. Clara, of course, was the essential inspiration for his compositions over the next three years.

G. In August 1837, Schumann managed to have a letter spirited into Clara's hands. He asked if she had remained true to him and if she would give to her father a letter from Schumann on her eighteenth birthday. Clara replied that she would give the letter to her father, but the outcome was not as happy as the pair expected.

H. Wieck did, however, concede two points to Schumann on the occasion of his daughter's eighteenth birthday: Robert and Clara were allowed to see each other in public places and they could write to each other when she was on tour.

1. Schumann found both of these "provisos" humiliating and became increasingly convinced that Wieck had no intention of letting anyone get too close to his darling and highly profitable daughter.

2. Over the next year, Schumann's spirits rose to manic heights and fell to depressive depths with alarming frequency, depending on his perception of his relationship with Clara.

I. During one of his manic periods in 1838, Schumann composed a set of eight pieces for piano entitled *Kreisleriana*. If we are to believe his diary, Schumann composed the eight pieces in five days, again, inspired by Clara.

1. The title, *Kreisleriana*, refers to a fictional, half-crazed musician created by the writer E. T. A. Hoffman. Without a doubt, Schumann identified personally with Kreisler, driven, as he was in 1838, almost mad by his passion for Clara.

2. When heard in sequence, the eight pieces of *Kreisleriana* paint a kind of portrait of Schumann's complex temperament, which was deeply affected by Clara. We might think of each of these movements as an entry into a sort of "spiritual diary," embodying self-revelations at their most intimate.

3. Movement 1 is said to represent Schumann's spontaneity and masculinity. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Kreisleriana*, No. 1 [1838].)

4. Movement 2 is understood to represent Schumann's feelings of tenderness for Clara, his capacity for love and affection. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Kreisleriana*, No. 2.)

5. Movement 3 is understood to represent Schumann's restless and mercurial nature (Florestan). (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Kreisleriana*, No. 3.)

6. Movement 4 is said to represent Schumann's depth of feeling. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Kreisleriana*, No. 4).

7. Movement 5 is understood to represent Schumann's moodiness and rapid changes of heart; movement 6, his steadfastness and inner calm; movement 7, his wildness; and finally, movement 8, his nobility of character and spryness of spirit!

8. In this series of discrete piano miniatures (only one of the movements—the second—runs for more than four-and-a-half minutes), each movement represents a fragment of Schumann's personality, his conscious and unconscious inner life.

9. Looking at any single movement of Schumann's *Kreisleriana* (or *Papillons* or *Carnaval*, for that matter) is like staring too closely at a newsprint photo or a Chuck Close painting; all we see are the dots, the matrix. Only when we step back and perceive all the discrete parts as belonging to a whole—a whole that is infinitely greater than the parts—does the larger portrait emerge.

10. Of course, we understand all this because we've been listening to and thinking about *Kreisleriana* for more than 160 years. Clara's contemporary reaction to *Kreisleriana* the first time she heard it was not unrepresentative of the time: "Sometimes your music actually frightens me, and I wonder: is it really true that the creator of such things is going to be my husband?" (Daverio, 168).

Lecture Five

Marriage and Songs

Scope: While Robert and Clara were working to maintain their relationship, Robert was also trying to determine how he could make a living outside of Leipzig. He traveled to Vienna with the idea of moving the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* there, but Wieck thwarted his efforts to set up shop in the city. During his visit, however, he discovered some previously unknown works by Franz Schubert and wrote some music of his own, including the *Arabesque*.

When Robert learned that Wieck was planning to disinherit Clara, he persuaded her to file suit against her father. Ultimately, the two won the suit and were married a day before Clara's twenty-first birthday. At the same time, Robert was composing prodigiously, producing almost 150 songs in the year 1840, including the achingly beautiful *Frauenliebe und Leben* (*Woman's Love and Life*). The early days of Robert and Clara's marriage were happy ones, but the realities of balancing their demanding professional and personal lives soon brought conflict to the couple.

Outline

I. Even as Robert and Clara were trying to sustain their relationship, meet surreptitiously, and generally confound Friedrich Wieck's attempts to keep them apart, Robert still had to make a living. With his bad right hand, he clearly could not survive as a pianist and he never made more than a pittance from his compositions. Increasingly, Schumann made his living as a writer and critic for the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, which was becoming a successful newspaper and music magazine.

A. Ever more aware that if he wanted to marry Clara he would need a steady income stream and would have to live somewhere other than Leipzig, Robert—with Clara's prompting—decided to move the base of operations of his journal. To that end, the couple decided that Robert should take a fact-finding trip to Vienna to test the waters for a possible move.

B. He arrived in Vienna in October 1838 with a plan of action.

1. He would continue to write for and edit the *Neue Zeitschrift* but under the auspices of a Viennese publishing firm; finding the right firm and contracting with it was the essential goal of the Viennese junket.

2. Profits from the publication and performance of his compositions would augment his income as an editor, writer, and critic.

3. Clara, who would continue her concert career, would land a position on the faculty of the Vienna Conservatory.

4. These arrangements would be complete by Easter of 1840 (roughly seven months after Schumann's arrival in Vienna); Clara would leave Leipzig and join Robert in Vienna.

5. Friedrich Wieck would have no choice but to sanction their marriage, such a sanction being legally required for daughters under the age of twenty-one.

C. Reality did not cooperate with Robert's plans in Vienna.

1. First, to publish anything in Vienna, Schumann—a foreigner—needed permission from the government censors. He met with the court censor, then visited the publishing houses of Anton Diabelli and Tobias Haslinger, where he was treated coolly. Apparently, Wieck had already contacted both Diabelli and Haslinger and had poisoned them to Schumann's plan. It is now believed that Haslinger himself wrote to the censor and recommended that Schumann not be allowed to write for publication in Vienna.

2. The censor did not announce his final decision to reject Schumann's application until March of 1839, five months after Schumann had arrived in Vienna. Within a month of his arrival, however, a discouraged Schumann had already determined that the lynchpin of his plans—and his ability to make a living in Vienna—would likely come to nothing. Sadly, Schumann became depressed and began to drink heavily.

3. Schumann's hope of securing a teaching position for Clara at the Conservatory likewise came to nothing. He became more and more frustrated; he felt that if Clara herself came to Vienna, she'd have

no trouble getting a position at the Conservatory. Over and over again, he tried to pry her away from her father.

D. As Robert's prospects in Vienna grew dimmer, both he and Clara began to worry about whether Schumann could ever earn a decent living outside of Leipzig. Late in 1838, Clara wrote Robert and suggested that they put off thinking about marriage until she had earned more money. For Schumann, battling his own emotions, his lack of success in Vienna, and the temptations offered him by Viennese women and men, Clara's letter was the last straw. He wrote back that he no longer wanted to know her.

E. Of course, Clara was distraught by Robert's letter, and a friend was called to mediate. The situation was obviously one of burnout: Two oversensitive, overemotional, overwrought artists had sustained a relationship in the face of incredible pressure and hostility and were starting to wonder if all the trouble was worthwhile. Although Clara and Robert got over this particular episode, it illustrates well the sort of pressure they felt while Robert was in Vienna.

F. The stay in Vienna was not, however, a total failure. Certainly Schumann enjoyed being in Vienna, the capital city of German music, and at least two good things came out of his Viennese stay.

G. The first was a result of a visit he made to Franz Schubert's brother Ferdinand. Franz, who had died nine years before at the young age of thirty-one, had left behind a number of unpublished works.

1. During a visit to Ferdinand Schubert on January 6, 1839, Schumann was shown a treasure trove of virtually unknown music among Schubert's papers, including operas, four masses, and four or five symphonies.

2. Among the unknown works was a Symphony in C Major, now known as Schubert's Symphony No. 9, "The Great." Schumann read the manuscript score at the piano and was completely overwhelmed by it.

3. He immediately contacted Felix Mendelssohn, conductor of the Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig, told him about the piece, and arranged for its premiere and publication.

4. Schumann also wrote a long and glowing article about the symphony for the *Neue Zeitschrift*. It is not an exaggeration to say that we owe the survival and popularization of Schubert's C Major Symphony to Robert Schumann. (**Musical selection**: Schubert, Symphony No. 9 in C Major, "The Great," movement 1 [1825].)

H. Schumann's other accomplishment in Vienna was to write some music. He borrowed a piano, took on a couple of piano students to provide himself with some money, and turned out, among other works, one of his most delightful and popular pieces, the *Arabesque*, Op. 18.

1. Schumann considered the *Arabesque* as a trifle, "nothing of consequence." He claimed that he wrote the piece to "capture the feminine market for piano music in Vienna," composing it as *hausmusik*, that is, music to be played in the salons of private homes.

2. Schumann's aims of simplicity and directness paid off in the *Arabesque*. Structurally, the piece, a rondo, is entirely straightforward. It features a gentle, lyric principal theme in C major that alternates with two slower themes in minor. The principal theme is imbued with a grace and an elegance that is pure Vienna, a song without words, one of the most wistful and lyric tunes Schumann ever wrote. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Arabesque*, Op. 18, theme [1839].)

3. The first contrasting episode is likewise songlike in its directness; a single musical phrase is repeated ever more dramatically until, finally, it gives way to a lyric transition back to the principal theme. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Arabesque*, Op. 18, theme.)

4. The second contrasting episode is energized and dramatic. It fades quietly back into the main theme, which itself is followed by an achingly gorgeous coda; the piece recedes, evaporates, like a sweet and brief memory. We listen to the remainder of the *Arabesque*, beginning with the second contrasting episode. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Arabesque*, Op. 18, theme.)

II. Through 1838 and the first half of 1839, Schumann experienced extreme mood swings, depressive episodes, anxiety attacks, and periods of hyper compositional activity, followed by long periods of writer's block. He also indulged in frequent episodes of binge drinking. For his part, Friedrich Wieck did everything in his power to tear Robert and Clara apart.

A. Schumann returned to Leipzig from Vienna on April 14, 1839. Five days earlier, Clara had written Robert from Paris to inform him that she had discovered that Wieck was planning to disinherit her, keep the money she had earned from her concerts, and initiate a lawsuit against both Clara and Robert if she did not cut off all relations with Robert.

B. Robert hired a lawyer named Wilhelm Einert. Schumann's plan was to file a complaint against Wieck with the Saxon Court of Appeals, asking the court to grant him permission to marry Clara.

1. For her part, Clara was deeply conflicted and frantic with indecision; she wanted to marry Robert, but she still loved her father, in spite of all his flaws.

2. In September of 1839, five months after returning from Vienna, Schumann finally convinced Clara to sign the affidavit and, in doing so, initiate their suit against her father.

3. When he found out about the suit, Wieck was enraged. He locked Clara out of the house, forcing her to move, temporarily, to Berlin, where she was reunited with her mother, Marianne Bargiel.

4. Wieck proceeded to make a complete and utter fool of himself. He wrote to every piano dealer he knew and warned them not to let Clara play their pianos, because she would likely destroy their action. He did his best to drive away her audiences. He circulated falsehoods of her "shameless" behavior and described her as a "miserable, demoralized girl." On those rare occasions when he encountered Schumann in the street, Wieck would spit in Robert's face.

C. Clearly believing that the best defense is a good offense, Wieck prepared a document setting out five basic conditions under which he would consent to Clara and Robert's marriage. Needless to say, the terms he laid out were entirely ludicrous, amounting to nothing more than extortion:

1. The couple must not live in Saxony.

2. The 7,000 thalers so far earned by Clara would be withheld, with only 4% of the capital being paid to her.

3. Schumann's statement of income must be guaranteed by the courts.

4. Schumann must not communicate with Wieck until Wieck gave permission.

5. Clara would lose all rights to claim an inheritance from Wieck. (Walker, 18)

D. In one last attempt at conciliation, Robert and Clara sent their lawyer to present their case directly to Wieck. The out-of-control Wieck screamed that he would have his way "Even if it meant the destruction of 30 people!" (Walker, 18). For his part, Schumann held up quite well during these proceedings, remaining strong and confident.

E. In December 1839, when the parties finally met in court, Wieck had run out of delaying tactics and subterfuge. Acting on his own behalf, Wieck became so verbally abusive of both Robert and Clara that he had to be silenced several times by the judge. Clara was appalled; she wrote in her diary that the day in court had severed their ties forever.

F. Ultimately, the court did more than just silence Wieck. On January 4, 1840, the court threw out Wieck's case, acknowledging only one of Wieck's allegations, that Schumann had a tendency to drink.

G. The appeals now began, each going to a higher court. Finally, on August 11, 1840, eleven months after Clara had signed the affidavit, the lawsuit was over. Wieck's appeals were exhausted, and the court let stand its judgment, allowing Clara Wieck to marry Robert Schumann without any compensation to her father.

H. Robert and Clara were finally married on September 12, 1840, the day *before* Clara's twenty-first birthday, when she would have been legally free of her father's control and allowed, by law, to marry anyone she chose. September 12 was the last possible day that Wieck could have been legally beaten, and Robert and Clara wanted to make sure that he knew it.

I. As a postscript, in 1840, Schumann successfully sued Wieck for slander. Wieck was sentenced to eighteen days in prison, although there is no evidence that he ever served his sentence.

1. In 1843, by which time Schumann's reputation as a composer had grown enormously and the couple had had the first two of their eight children, Wieck finally came to his senses and initiated a reconciliation.

2. To Robert's credit, he accepted Wieck's "apology," and for the rest of his life, Wieck was able to enjoy the company of his daughter and grandchildren.

III. Despite all the domestic upheaval, 1840 was, compositionally, a great year for Schumann, particularly in the realm of song. When he was composing, Schumann worked maniacally. He'd finish a set of pieces and, literally before the ink was dry, move on to the next.

A. The year 1840 saw the composition of 147 songs, including Six Lieder for men's voices, Op. 33; the eight songs that constitute Op. 24; the twenty-six songs that constitute *Mythren*, Op. 25; the five songs of *Lieder und Gesang*, Op. 27; the eight songs of *Frauenliebe und Leben*, Op. 42; and many more.

B. Such composition is almost obsessive, but the songs are quite good. Once again, by writing songs, Schumann was "poet and composer in one person." No other compositional genre came so naturally to him and no other genre so exploited the two complimentary halves of his personality—musician and poet.

C. Perhaps the most autobiographical set of songs of 1840 (and ultimately, prophetic) is the set entitled *Frauenliebe und Leben* (*Woman's Love and Life*), Op. 42. The eight songs—based on poems by Adelbert von Chamisso (1781–1838)—trace, from a woman's point of view, marital life, love, and existential pain; from seeing her future husband for the first time, to romance, marriage, and motherhood, ending, ultimately, with his death and her grief.

D. Schumann composed the eight songs of *Frauenliebe und Leben* in just two days—on July 11 and 12, 1840—five days after the courts first granted permission for he and Clara to marry and five days before the deadline set for Friedrich Wieck's final appeal.

1. As examples of Schumann's hundreds of mature songs, we will listen to three of the eight songs that make up *Frauenliebe und Leben*: the first, entitled "Since first I saw him"; the fourth, entitled "You, ring on my finger"; and the eighth and final song, "Now you have hurt me for the first time."

2. "Since first I saw him" is an achingly beautiful song that seems to float, to be performed almost "out of time," with only the slightest hint of a beat. It provides a perfect depiction of the love-addled trance the singer is experiencing in her first, great flush of passion for her beloved. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Frauenliebe und Leben*, Op. 42, No. 1, "Since I first saw him" [1840].)

3. The glorious and straightforward lyricism of the fourth song, "You, ring on my finger," is reinforced and, indeed, deepened by Schumann's amazing use of harmony and phrase, which together give it an extraordinary depth of feeling and pathos. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Frauenliebe und Leben*, Op. 42, No. 4, "You, ring on my finger.")

4. In the eighth song, "Now you have hurt me for the first time," Schumann's stark, angular, dissonance-filled, recitative-like setting depicts the loneliness, grief, and anger of the singer. Schumann concludes this song—and with it, the cycle—with a quiet and heartbreaking piano postlude, in which the music of the first song returns as if in a dream, a dream of love found, of love felt and lived, and ultimately, of love lost. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Frauenliebe und Leben*, Op. 42, No. 8, "Now you have hurt me for the first time.")

E. Clara, along with everybody else who heard them, was stunned by the musical gift revealed in these songs.

IV. We cannot say that after all the time, energy, and suffering Robert and Clara had expended in their relationship, they lived happily ever after. Ultimately, they were two ambitious professionals with demanding careers living in the real world.

A. One reason we know so much about the first three years of Clara and Robert's marriage is that aside from their individual diaries, they kept a so-called "marriage diary." On Clara's birthday, the day after their wedding, Robert presented her with a blank book with the instructions that it was to record all the wishes, hopes, and even the misunderstandings of their marriage.

B. The first entries in the diary indicate a happy couple. But soon enough, real-world professional issues intruded on their existence. The first casualty of the marriage was Clara's piano practice, which fell behind when she could not disturb Robert at his composing.

C. Robert's troubles would come when he accompanied Clara on tour. Everyone knew that Clara was a star, a familiar and beloved figure in the concert halls and salons of Western Europe, but Robert Schumann was relatively unknown.

D. On one occasion, Schumann was so insulted by the way he was treated while on tour with Clara that he left her behind and returned to Leipzig by himself. Schumann's subordinate position was painful to him, but he ultimately learned to accept the situation.

E. Like so many modern, self-employed professional couples, the Schumanns had to work hard to balance their personal needs with their professions and, eventually, their responsibilities as parents. Their first child, Marie, was born on September 1, 1841. That year also marked another auspicious birth, because in 1841, Schumann finally wrote a symphony.

Lecture Six

The Symphonic Year

Scope: Soon after Robert and Clara were married, Robert convinced Clara to write some songs, and Clara convinced Robert to write a symphony. Her results show a great deal of promise; had she chosen to become a professional composer, she undoubtedly would have been quite good. Robert's output, the Symphony No. 1 in Bb Major, Op. 38, was brilliant and wonderfully received by both audiences and critics. Inspired by the symphony's triumph, Robert wrote a number of other orchestral works, including the Symphony in D Minor, as well as chamber music, including three string quartets and the Piano Quintet in Eb, Op. 44.

Not content with the role of stay-at-home mother, Clara returned to touring just three months after the couple's first child was born. The attention Clara received on tour again brought tension to the marriage, but Robert and Clara somehow managed to strike a balance in their professional and personal lives. Clara was enchanted with Robert's music, and Robert had finally established himself as an accomplished composer. He was moving away from the completely subjective piano works of his early compositional years to music that combined his expressive impulses with a more objective style.

Outline

I. During the months immediately preceding and following his marriage, Robert Schumann was hard at work writing songs. Clara's career as a touring pianist had come to a temporary halt; her father had been her manager, and her career would only continue once she had begun to manage and promote it herself.

A. In the months after her marriage, Clara had the unaccustomed luxury of having a little time on her hands, and Robert encouraged her to try her hand at composing after a hiatus of roughly five years. Clara's initial response was that she didn't have the intellect to compose. More likely, she was so overwhelmed with the events of her life and career that she simply didn't have the strength to even think about writing music.

B. Three months after they were married, in December of 1840, Clara decided to try to compose some songs. She completed three songs that she intended to give to Robert for Christmas.

C. Robert was thrilled, and the three songs Clara wrote for him are wonderful. One of them is a setting, in German, of Robert Burns's poem "Musing on the Roaring Ocean."

1. Given that we cannot hear her play the piano, the only way we can truly touch Clara, as a musician, is through her compositions, which are few in number.

2. Despite her protests to the contrary, as a composer she was a gifted amateur, always competent, sometimes derivative, and sometimes, as in her setting of Burns's poem, inspired.

3. Listen, in particular, to the roiling and passionate piano part, which well depicts the foaming, stormy ocean evoked by the text. (**Musical selection**: C. Schumann, *Am Strand* from "Musing on the Roaring Ocean" [1840].)

4. Clara's life as a touring pianist and mother, to say nothing of the societal conditions and pressures arrayed against her, precluded her from pursuing a career as a professional composer. But if "Musing on the Roaring Ocean" is any indication, there is no doubt that she would have been very good, perhaps even excellent, had she been willing and able to choose such a path.

II. Clara had been urging Schumann to write for orchestra for years, a task that is obviously much different from writing idiosyncratic piano works, songs for voice and piano, and the other small-scale pieces that Robert usually attempted. The symphony hall and the opera house—in Schumann's time, as in ours—are where composers make their marks.

A. Clara's ambitions for Schumann only grew once they were married. Aside from his own compositional ambitions, it was Clara's overwhelming confidence that gave Schumann the push he needed to write his first mature symphony. In addition, he lived in an incredibly stimulating environment in 1840–1841.

1. Leipzig, where the Schumanns lived from 1840–1844, had become, almost overnight, one of the major musical centers in Germany.

2. At the heart of Leipzig's musical life stood Felix Mendelssohn. In 1835—at the age of twenty-six—Mendelssohn was appointed conductor of the Gewandhaus concerts. Under his baton, the

Gewandhaus became a musical shrine at which the faithful gathered to hear the masterpieces of the past—Beethoven, Schubert, and Bach. Schumann was awed by Mendelssohn's intellect and musical talents and even called Mendelssohn "the Mozart of the nineteenth century."

3. According to Schumann biographer Frederick Niecks, Mendelssohn began Schumann's acquaintance with two prejudices that he never quite overcame: "that against literary writers on music, and that against dilettantism."
4. Mendelssohn's dislike of musical journalists and critics was understandable. He had the creative artist's contempt for people who criticize art and artists instead of making and practicing it. When Mendelssohn and Schumann first met in 1835, Schumann was known as the critic, journalist, and editor-in-chief of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*; his compositions were almost unknown.
5. To make matters worse, Schumann frequently gave the impression of being a dabbler, a dilettante. For example, he wanted desperately to be known as a conductor, especially a conductor of his own works, but by every account, Schumann was a dreadful conductor, lacking even the most rudimentary technique.
6. Nonetheless, Mendelssohn did a great deal to champion Schumann's orchestral music; among other things, he arranged for and conducted the premiere of Schumann's Symphony No. 1 at the Gewandhaus on March 31, 1841. Despite the ups and downs in their relationship, Schumann never lost his reverence for Mendelssohn.

B. Despite its numerical designation as "No. 1," the so-called "Spring Symphony" of 1841 (Symphony No. 1 in Bb Major, Op. 38), isn't Schumann's first symphony. That designation belongs to an incomplete work Schumann composed in 1832, referred to today as the "Zwickau Symphony."

1. Although Schumann completed only the first two movements of what was intended to be a full four-movement symphony, this "torso" of a symphony is of great significance. The year 1832 was the time when Schumann resigned himself to his finger injury, gave up his ambition to be a concert pianist, and decided to pursue a career in composition.
2. At the same time, Schumann had begun a series of Beethoven-related projects: He made keyboard transcriptions of Beethoven's Fourth Symphony and Third *Leonore* Overture, and he began work on a set of piano variations based on the slow movement from Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. (**Musical selection at the piano**: Beethoven, Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op 92, movement 2.)
3. Inspired by the model of Beethoven and Beethoven's symphonies, Schumann decided to try his hand at symphonic composition in 1832. The two completed movements of the Zwickau Symphony clearly show that Schumann did his best to capture in his work the same sort of structural integrity, angularity, power, and rhythmic drive that he saw and heard in his Beethovenian model. We hear the opening two minutes of the first movement. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, Symphony in G Minor, "Zwickau," WoO 29, movement 1 [1832].)

C. When Schumann sat down to write a symphony in 1841, his experience with the Zwickau Symphony, based, as it was, on Beethoven's model, came back to him in all its intensity. That experience also posed a question for Schumann that he had to answer for himself before composing his first complete, mature symphony.

1. The question was, "How can a composer build on the model of Beethoven's symphonies and still be original, above and beyond the Beethoven model?" In other words, "How do you do what Beethoven did—structurally, motivically, expressively—without actually sounding like Beethoven?"
2. For Schumann, the answer lay in writing a piece that tread the fine line between absolute and program music, between compositional integrity inspired by the Classical era and program music inspired by the Romantic era.

D. Schumann sketched his Symphony No. 1 in just four sleepless days and nights, between January 23 and 26, 1841. He himself designated the symphony "Spring," later explaining that it was inspired by a poem by Adolph Bottger.

1. According to Schumann's biographer John Daverio, the horn and trumpet fanfare at the beginning of the symphony is a wordless setting of the last lines of Bottger's poem:

> O wende, wende deinen Lauf,
> Im Tale blüht der Frühling auf!
>
> O turn from this, your present course,

Springtime blossoms in the valley!

(**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, Symphony in Bb Major, Op. 38, movement 1, opening fanfare [1841].)

2. Soon enough, the slow, rather solemn introduction that follows this opening fanfare gives way to a brilliant exposition, consisting of an energized and propulsive main theme followed by a delicate and rather more lyric second theme. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, Symphony in Bb Major, Op. 38, movement 1, themes 1 and 2.)
3. The second-movement *larghetto* is a series of variations based on a broad, almost prayerful theme—intended, perhaps, as a prayer of thanksgiving for the rebirth that is spring. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, Symphony in Bb Major, Op. 38, movement 2, theme.)
4. The third movement is a powerful scherzo that acknowledges the middle symphonies of Beethoven in terms of both expressive content and structure. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, Symphony in Bb Major, Op. 38, movement 3, scherzo 1.)
5. The fourth movement is a bold, balletic, and altogether satisfying conclusion to what must rank as one of the best "first symphonies" in the repertoire. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, Symphony in Bb Major, Op. 38, movement 4, opening.)

E. Schumann's Symphony in Bb was premiered at the Gewandhaus on March 31, 1841. Clara, four months pregnant with their first child, was also on the program; she played the first two movements of Chopin's Piano Concerto in F Minor, a piano duet with Mendelssohn, and short pieces by Scarlatti, Sigmund Thalberg, and her husband.

F. The concert was a great success, and the premiere of his symphony provided Schumann with one of the few unadulterated triumphs he was to receive during his career as a composer. The audience realized that Schumann was now a full-blown composer, not just a music critic and the husband of Clara. In one bold stroke, Schumann's reputation as a composer advanced by an order of magnitude. His First Symphony "electrified" its audiences and remained his most popular orchestral work in his lifetime.

G. Inspired by the premiere, Schumann went immediately back to work. By the end of 1841, he had completed, among other orchestral works, the *Symphonette*; the *Overture, Scherzo and Finale for Orchestra*; the Symphony in D Minor (which, when revised ten years later, would bear the designation "Symphony No. 4"); and the first movement of the Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 54 (which he would return to and complete in 1845).

H. Hand in hand with Schumann's growing success as a composer was his increasing disinterest in his journal. He began to refer to it as his "vexatious stepchild" and "the damned journal." Clara noted that the journal "bores him horribly."

III. The first major crisis in Clara and Robert's married life occurred in 1842.

A. The couple's first child, Marie, was born in September of 1841. Schumann immediately notified Wieck, whose response was indifferent. Clara's mother, Marianne, with whom Clara had been lovingly reunited since 1839, came immediately from Berlin to attend the baby's christening.

1. Clara had not been raised to be a wife and mother; unlike almost every other woman her age, she knew nothing about babies. She grew up in the company of men and concert halls and cigars, not with girls and women; her fantasies had always revolved around playing the piano, not raising a family. Her attitude initially manifested itself in her reluctance to breast feed.
2. Before Marie was even three months old, Clara was already giving concerts again. Her attitude was unequivocal: She would play, because that was what she was trained to do, what her life had always been about, and who she was.

B. The marital crisis of 1842 was precipitated by a concert tour on which Clara and Robert embarked on February 18, 1842.

1. Robert did not want to go. For weeks before their departure, he had been suffering from a number of real and imagined illnesses. He complained of feeling "very ill" and "always sick and melancholy."
2. On March 9, while on the tour, Schumann complained about the noise in the pub downstairs and left the next morning, returning alone to Leipzig. Clara went on to Copenhagen. They didn't see each other again for six weeks.

C. The couple's problems were numerous. First and foremost, Schumann—especially after the success of his First Symphony—was tired of being "Clara Wieck's husband."

1. The tour had thrown Clara and Robert into a whirlwind of rehearsals, soirées, performances, and banquets across northern Germany, with Clara, obviously, as the center of attention. Schumann was jealous of his wife and felt guilty about his reaction.

2. In addition, Robert's pride was wounded by the treatment he received. In February, for example, Clara had given a concert in Oldenburg. After the concert, a special reception was held for Clara at court. Schumann was not invited to the reception, but Clara attended nonetheless. Schumann was furious at both the situation and Clara, and typically, his fury manifested itself in depression and psychosomatic illness.

3. For her part, Clara, still so young and accustomed to being the center of attention, was remarkably insensitive to the situation. It would have helped matters if she had been willing to program some of Schumann's music on her recitals, but Robert was represented by only a single movement, from his *Novelletten*, Op. 21, in Clara's touring repertoire.

D. That Robert and Clara managed, among the minefields of their early-married years, to find and maintain something of an equilibrium between their private and professional lives was nothing short of a miracle.

IV. Despite these marital issues, Schumann was, by the fall of 1842, again composing productively.

A. The year 1840, the so-called "year of the song," saw his almost obsessive cultivation of the genre of *lied*; likewise, 1841 saw the creation of what were, de facto, three symphonies.

B. During the second half of 1842, Schumann turned his compositional attention to chamber music and, in doing so, created some of the most enduring works in the repertoire: the three string quartets Op. 41, Nos. 1, 2, and 3; the Piano Quintet in Eb, Op. 44; and the Piano Quartet in Eb, Op. 47.

C. We turn to the Piano Quintet (a string quartet plus piano) in Eb, Op. 44, a piece that has been an audience favorite since it was composed and was even well received by critics of the period.

1. The quintet makes an overwhelming first impression. Beyond its engaging themes, beyond its brilliant use of the ensemble, beyond its complex counterpoint and formal coherence is its incredible energy, its relentless rhythmic drive.

2. The first movement opens with a brash and magnificent statement, genuinely orchestral in impact and scope. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, Piano Quintet in Eb, Op. 44, movement 1, opening [1842].)

3. The second movement is a somewhat slow funeral march; the influence of Beethoven, particularly the second movement of Beethoven's Third Symphony, is impossible to miss here.

4. The third movement of Schumann's quintet is a brilliant, skittering scherzo; note the extraordinary interplay of the piano and the string quartet in the opening passage. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, Piano Quintet in Eb, Op. 44, movement 3, opening.)

5. The last movement of the quintet is filled with everything from Bach-like fugal counterpoint to stomping peasant dance music!

D. Clara—for whom Schumann had written the piano part—was enchanted by the quintet. In reference to Schumann's chamber works of 1842, Moritz Hauptman, cantor and musical director of St. Thomas's School in Leipzig and one of the foremost German critics of the day, wrote, "These compositions are without reservation among the finest that recent times can show in this department . . ." (Walker, 222).

E. At thirty-two years old, Robert Schumann had finally and firmly established himself as a composer to be reckoned with. Certainly, the orchestral music of 1841 and the chamber music of 1842 show Schumann moving away from the idiosyncratic and expressively subjective solo piano works of the 1830s toward a more "objective" compositional style based on the musical genres and forms of the Classical era and Beethoven.

F. To put it another way, in the works of the 1840s, Schumann's literary and programmatic impulses share, increasingly, equal time with strict compositional technique and abstract musical content.

1. Frankly, this is the best thing that could have happened, for both Schumann and his audience. The idiosyncratic compositional style of Schumann's solo piano music could not have been translated to the larger genres of chamber and orchestral music.

2. Schumann's growth as a composer, as well as his awareness of historical models, allowed him to mature and to adapt his expressive impulses to the inherently different requirements of different compositional genres.

Lecture Seven

Illness Takes Hold

Scope: With the popularity of his First Symphony, Schumann's compositional career took off. In 1843, he wrote the oratorio *Das Paradies und die Peri*, a work that combined his love of dramatic music with his developing symphonic techniques and was one of the most popular pieces in his lifetime. In 1844, Schumann's mental health began to decline. Robert sold his journal, resigned from teaching, and slowly withdrew from everyday activities. Robert and Clara moved to Dresden to be closer to Robert's doctors. His work from this period includes the opera *Genoveva*; the Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 54; and the Symphony No. 2 in C Major, Op. 61. In 1847, Felix Mendelssohn died, dealing another blow to Robert's already precarious mental health. When violence came to the streets of Dresden, Robert and Clara moved to the village of Kreischa. There, Schumann experienced a period of intense creativity. In 1850, Schumann was offered an appointment as music director for the city of Düsseldorf. The Schumanns were initially welcomed in Düsseldorf with enthusiasm; three years later, however, the orchestra there would demand Schumann's resignation.

Outline

I. With the rapid popularization of his First Symphony, Schumann's career took off. Typically, his success inspired him even further.

A. We've already discussed 1840 as Schumann's "year of the song," 1841 as the "year of the symphony," and 1842 as the "year of chamber music." Despite the inaccuracies such designations inevitably create, 1843 can be called "the year of the oratorio." In 1843, Schumann again returned to vocal music, but not to the miniature compositional genre of song; the great work of this year was the oratorio *Das Paradies und die Peri* ("Paradise and the Peri") for vocal soloists, chorus, and orchestra.

B. Schumann's *Peri* was a watershed work for him, combining his love of vocal and dramatic music with his developing orchestral and symphonic compositional techniques. It is a secular oratorio—essentially, an opera presented as a concert work, without staging or costumes.

C. Schumann's *Paradise and the Peri* is loosely based on one of the four poems from Thomas Moore's oriental epic *Lalla Rookh*. The story revolves around the quest by "the peri" for a place in paradise.

1. According to Persian mythology, on which Thomas Moore's poem was based, the "peris" were elf-like angels who fed on the aroma of flower blossoms and were beautiful beyond description.

2. The particular peri that Moore and Schumann wrote about had a problem: As the product of a union between a fallen angel and a mortal, she is excluded from Paradise. She is told that her only way into Paradise is to come up with a "suitable" gift for the heavenly guardian. The three large parts, or acts, of Schumann's oratorio describe the finding and delivering of three such gifts.

3. In Part I, the peri brings the blood of a young warrior killed by a cruel tyrant. The gift is not accepted. In Part II, she brings the sighs of a maiden who has expired in the arms of her plague-stricken beloved. In Part III, she finally brings to heaven the tears of a vicious criminal who wept at the sight of an innocent boy at prayer. The peri is admitted to heaven and the oratorio ends with triumph.

4. The story is a classic Christological yarn of sin, sacrifice, and redemption: Paradise (the state of innocence) is lost after the fall from grace (and into a state of sin); ultimately, Paradise is regained through an act of self-sacrifice, and redemption is granted.

D. Drawing from a German translation of the poem by his childhood friend Emil Flechsig, Schumann wrote the libretto of *Paradise and the Peri* himself. The music was begun in January of 1843. Schumann threw himself into his work with an intensity that genuinely worried those around him, although the oratorio took him four months to compose.

E. We will listen to two excerpts from Schumann's *Paradise and the Peri*; first, a bit of the Part II Finale, No. 17, featuring the peri herself.

1. Remember that the peri is supposed to be an elfin creature of such beauty as to be, literally, indescribable. Creating music appropriate for such a creature will be something of a challenge, even for Schumann, but he rises to it magnificently. Note the hymn-like music Schumann here provides the

peri and the angelic quality with which it imbues her character. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Paradise and the Peri*, No. 17 ("Schlaf'nun und ruhe") [1843].

2. We listen now to the fantastic conclusion of the oratorio, the peri's entrance into Paradise, Schumann's musical vision of redemption. Note the finesse with which Schumann handles the vast performing forces that he has placed at his disposal. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, *Paradise and the Peri*, No. 26, Part III, Finale.)

F. Schumann finished *Paradise and the Peri* on June 16, 1843. It was first performed—under Schumann's own, rather careless baton—at Leipzig's Gewandhaus on December 4 and again on December 11. *Paradise and the Peri* was a hit with audiences and critics from the beginning. It was one of Schumann's most popular works in his lifetime, and it brought him international success, with performances in Berlin, Hamburg, Utrecht, Amsterdam, Prague, Riga, Zurich, the Hague, and New York.

II. For all their ups and down, the years 1840–1843 were good ones for Schumann and his growing family, but 1844 brought difficulties.

A. The year started off well enough, with Robert and Clara traveling to Russia for an extensive concert tour. Much had changed in Robert's compositional career since the foreshortened tour of 1842, but all would not be well during the four-month Russian visit.

1. Predictably, Schumann didn't want to go, but this time, Clara had an ally—Felix Mendelssohn—who convinced Schumann that such a trip would be like a second honeymoon for him and Clara and would provide untold inspiration for Schumann himself.
2. Robert and Clara departed for Russia on January 25, 1844. Despite the hardships—uncomfortable travel, filthy hotel rooms, the brutal cold of the Russian winter—the trip was, initially, a success.
3. Clara was a triumph wherever she went; enthusiastic audiences greeted her from Latvia to Estonia to St. Petersburg to Moscow. Among the many honors that were showered on her was an honorary membership in St. Petersburg's otherwise all-male Philharmonic Society, the first woman to be so honored.
4. Financially, the concert tour was an unqualified success; the Schumanns realized a profit of over 3,000 thalers, a significant amount of cash in those days.
5. In addition, the trip offered no shortage of inspirational sights and experiences. As they traveled through Russia, Robert and Clara were awed and enchanted by what they saw. They fell in love with St. Petersburg and Moscow.
6. Unfortunately and predictably, Robert's mental health began to decline as the tour progressed. By the end of February, he suffered an attack of "nervous fever," severe enough to keep him in bed for almost a week. His condition, of course, kept him far away from Clara's concerts and the flattering and flirting crowds of men who surrounded her at the post-concert receptions.
7. Schumann's depression, anxiety attacks, and jealousy of Clara brought on frightening psychological and physical symptoms: weakness, dizziness, impaired vision, incessant trembling.

B. We must ask ourselves, once again, what were the causes behind Schumann's growing depression and his attendant physical ailments?

1. Any number of reasons have been suggested: the lukewarm reception his music received in Russia, the fact that Clara was "the star" to whom Schumann had to take a back seat, and so on.
2. These explanations, however, are hard to credit; a mentally healthy person might be disappointed, annoyed, even angered by such events, but that person wouldn't be reduced to catatonia by them. No, Schumann was mentally ill, and it was an illness that would come to rule his life and the lives of those around him.

C. Sadly, the Russian tour marked a turning point for Schumann. Increasingly, his life and world would be dominated by the mental and physical illnesses that would culminate in his death twelve years later.

III. Schumann's illness continued after the couple returned to Leipzig. He was profoundly depressed, and the daily elements and routines of his life—large and small—began to grind to a halt.

A. In May 1844, soon after returning from Russia, Robert stopped making regular contributions to the marriage diary. In June 1844, he put his journal up for sale. By November, he had sold the *Neue Zeitshrift* to Franz Brendel for a mere 500 thalers. In September, Schumann attempted to resume his teaching duties

at the Leipzig Conservatory, but because he could not physically rouse himself to go to school, he was forced to resign. In hindsight, we can see that he was withdrawing from the world.

B. In October, when Clara and Robert traveled to Dresden to seek medical advice, things became worse still. Clara, clearly approaching her own breaking point, wrote in her private diary that Robert no longer slept and "his imagination painted the most terrible pictures."

C. Hoping that a new start would be beneficial and wanting to be closer to his doctors, Robert and Clara moved to Dresden, which would be their home from late 1844–1850. The neurotic/depressive phase that began in Russia during the winter of 1844 would last until 1847.

D. Schumann and his doctor both provide us with descriptions of Schumann's mental condition during his years in Dresden, including insomnia, weakness, tremors, hearing problems, and a variety of phobias.

E. For his part, Schumann followed his doctor's advice and did what he could to relieve his symptoms. He exercised, took mineral baths, even tried hypnosis—"mesmerism"—but all, obviously, to little avail. Yet, through all of this, life went on: More children were born (there were six by 1849); Schumann became part of the Dresden musical community, organizing subscription concerts; and he got to know Richard Wagner, who was the conductor of the Dresden Royal Opera.

F. Any number of Schumann biographers date his "creative decline" to the years in Dresden, claiming that he would never again compose works the likes of which he did between the years 1840–1843.

1. The Dresden years saw a fall-off in terms of the amount of music Schumann produced, but in no way did they see a fall-off in terms of the quality of the music he composed.

2. All in all, Schumann composed more than twenty-five works between 1844 and 1849, including his opera *Genoveva*; the Symphony No. 2 in C Major; the *Concertstück* for Four Horns and Orchestra, Op. 86; the *Introduction and Allegro Appassionato* for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 92; and what may be the great masterwork of these years, the Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 54, begun in Leipzig in 1841 and completed in 1845.

IV. Schumann's piano concerto began its life in 1841 as a one-movement work entitled *Concert-Allegro for Piano and Orchestra*. By 1845, frustrated by his inability to get the piece performed or published, Schumann decided to add two additional movements and substantially rewrite the existing music, which became the first movement.

A. The concerto points the way toward Schumann's late music in that it integrates the lyricism and intimacy of his songs with the power and narrative drama of his more newly acquired symphonic and orchestral skills.

B. The first movement begins with a "yin-yang," or "masculine versus feminine," opening. A stirring, almost martial piano "announcement" instantly gives way to a lyric, if melancholy theme played first by the orchestra, then by the piano itself. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 54, movement 1, opening [1845].)

C. As this first movement develops, the music runs the expressive gamut from lyricism to passion to machismo. Indeed, the range of expressive moods in the first movement is almost reminiscent of such miniature works as *Carnaval* and *Kreisleriana*, although in the piano concerto, they are not presented as "discrete" movements but rather, are integrated into a single movement. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 54, movement 1.)

D. The second movement is a sweet and entirely unsentimental movement of chamber-music proportions, and the third is a rousing and virtuosic *Allegro Vivace* of great sweep and power.

V. As so often was the case with Schumann, the successful completion of one composition led to a manic creative phase that would see the rapid creation of a number of other like works. In December 1845, Schumann, elated over the completion of his piano concerto, immediately completed the sketch of his Symphony No. 2 in C Major, Op. 61.

A. Schumann's chronic ill health precluded him from completing the orchestration of his Second Symphony until October of 1846. It was premiered in Leipzig at the Gewandhaus, with Felix Mendelssohn at the podium.

B. Schumann's Second Symphony begins with a noble, quiet, fanfare-like introduction that sets the tone for the entire symphony. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, Symphony No. 2 in C Major, Op. 61, movement 1 [1846].)

C. Likewise, the symphony ends—in its fourth movement—with a jubilant and triumphant fanfare, an optimistic and in all ways brilliant manifestation of the symphony's opening. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, Symphony No. 2 in C Major, Op. 61, movement 4, conclusion.)

VI. Thirteen months after the premiere of the Second Symphony and just days after completing his Trio in F Major, Schumann learned of Felix Mendelssohn's death, on November 4, 1847. The news was a hammer blow; Schumann was devastated, shaken to the core.

A. Mendelssohn, without a doubt the most talented all-around musician of his time, was only thirty-eight years old when he died. He had championed Schumann's music and had been a good friend to Robert and Clara and their children. Schumann rushed to Leipzig for the funeral.

B. According to Clara, Schumann spoke "incessantly" about Mendelssohn for months after the funeral. Thoughts of his own mortality and fears of his own early death began to fill his conversations and letters.

VII. In reading the Schumann biographical literature, one is struck by two mutually exclusive lines of discussion. On the one hand, we meet a kind, sweet, and quietly thoughtful man in the throes of severe mental illness. On the other hand, we encounter a man more-or-less successfully negotiating the duties and responsibilities of husband and father, as well as composer, conductor, and teacher.

A. Some descriptions paint a picture of black depression, physical debilitation, and serious setbacks in composing for Robert. At the same time, however, he accompanied Clara on concert tours—with the children—and comforted her when things went badly.

B. Was Schumann, then, a physical and psychological invalid or a functioning member of his community?

1. Obviously, the answer is: both. He was a nice man with a strong and loving wife and supportive children. He did his best to control his mood swings and was, at least as far as the outside world was concerned, able to function.

2. Indeed, starting in mid-1847, the anxious, depressive state that he had fought so long and hard against, that had so colored his world since the Russian tour of 1844, began to lift. By mid-1848, his depression gone, Schumann's manic compositional engine was, once again, fully engaged. In 1849, Schumann composed forty works, including a full-scale, four-act opera, *Genoveva*, Op. 81.

C. During the midst of this compositional explosion, the city of Dresden, where the Schumanns had lived since 1844, exploded as well. Barricades were thrown up, followed by violence in the streets.

1. Robert evaded forced enlistment twice before he and Clara left for the small village of Kreischa. There, Robert was able to block out the events of the world, but his creativity had been stimulated by the chaos. Indeed, psychiatric professionals might diagnose Schumann's creative explosion of 1848–1849 as another symptom of his mental illness.

2. The only genre of music Schumann did not compose in 1848–1849 was symphonic music. Otherwise, he wrote instrumental chamber works; choral works; song cycles and individual songs; stage works; keyboard miniatures; works for chorus, vocal soloists, and orchestra; and concerto-like works for instrumental soloists and orchestra.

3. From this last group is the remarkable Concert Piece for Four Horns and Orchestra, Op. 86 (1849), a work almost unique in the repertoire. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, Concert Piece for Four Horns and Orchestra, Op. 86, movement 1, opening [1849].)

VIII. In the midst of this revolutionary uproar and compositional frenzy, Schumann received a letter from his old friend Ferdinand Hiller. Hiller, about to take an appointment in Cologne, offered Schumann the job he was vacating, that of music director for the city of Düsseldorf.

A. Clara was overjoyed; she had come to hate the city and citizens of Dresden, and she felt that finally, Robert was being offered a job commensurate with his talents. For his part, Schumann was a bit more reticent; he had bad feelings about Düsseldorf when he looked the city up in a geography book and found mention of a madhouse.

B. Schumann and family arrived in Düsseldorf in September of 1850. Düsseldorf was, at the time, an attractive and modern city of some 40,000 people. Located on the east bank of the Rhine River, north of Cologne, the city had been a haven for poets, painters, and sculptors since the seventeenth century.

C. Robert and Clara were received with extraordinary enthusiasm from the start. During their first few days in Düsseldorf, they were celebrated; the musicians and citizens of Düsseldorf were thrilled to have the famous Clara and Robert Schumann in their midst. Schumann had what seemed to be a dream job—to conduct the public subscription concerts of the Düsseldorf orchestra (a professional ensemble) and chorus (an amateur ensemble).

D. Schumann's first concert took place on October 24, 1850. The program included Beethoven's *Consecration of the House* Overture and Mendelssohn's Piano Concerto in G Minor, with Clara as soloist. When Schumann mounted the podium the orchestra greeted him with a triple fanfare, and the concert was, by every surviving account, a great success. Within two seasons, however, the members of the orchestra would demand Schumann's resignation.

Lecture Eight

Madness

Scope: Before Schumann's decline and death, he and Clara experienced some happiness in Düsseldorf. Robert was inspired by the scenery and history of the Rhineland to write the Symphony No. 3 in Eb Major, along with a number of trios for violin, 'cello, and piano; sonatas for violin and piano; orchestral works; and pieces for chorus and voice and piano. Robert and Clara also met Johannes Brahms in Düsseldorf, who would become a lifelong friend and source of strength for Clara.

In 1852, Robert began to experience bouts of depression and various neurological symptoms. A year later, he was forced to resign his position as music director when he was unable to conduct a concert with the violinist Joseph Joachim. In February 1854, after months of torment by auditory hallucinations, Robert attempted to drown himself in the Rhine and was taken to an asylum. He died there two years later, almost certainly the result of syphilis. Clara managed to sustain the family through her concerts but was dealt even more pain by the early deaths of several of her children. She and Brahms maintained a close relationship and championed Robert's music for the remaining forty years of their lives.

Outline

I. Before we discuss Schumann's decline and death in Düsseldorf, we must celebrate the good times he and Clara had there, however brief they may have been. We must also take a little time to revel in an incredible testament to the inspiration Schumann felt that first autumn in Düsseldorf—the Third Symphony, subtitled "Rhenish," or the "Rhine Symphony."

A. Schumann had never spent any appreciable time in the Rhineland before 1850, but when he arrived in Düsseldorf, the Rhine River and its surrounding landscape captivated him. Schumann's Rhine Symphony reflects that Rhenish landscape, as well as the optimism he felt during those first heady months in Düsseldorf.

B. Composed between November 2 and December 9, 1850, the five movements of the Rhine Symphony were inspired by Schumann's impressions of the Rhineland: its scenery, atmosphere, legends, and the pageant of history that had been played out on it banks.

C. The first movement begins with one of Schumann's greatest themes; its breadth and magnificence describe the swirling grandeur of the Rhine itself. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, Symphony No. 3 in Eb Major, Op. 97, movement 1, theme 1 [1850].)

D. The second movement is an engaging, rough-hewn *landler* (a rustic German three-step) that, like the first movement, opens with the majestic sweep of rushing water. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, Symphony No. 3 in Eb Major, Op. 97, movement 2, opening.)

E. The third movement that follows is a charming, delicate intermezzo.

F. On September 30, 1850, four weeks after they had arrived in Düsseldorf, Robert and Clara took the thirty-mile trip on the new railway line to Cologne to attend the installation of Cardinal Archbishop von Geissel at the cathedral.

1. Schumann was absolutely stunned by the Cathedral of Cologne, the largest Gothic building in northern Europe, and was swept away by the ritual splendor of the Catholic ceremony.

2. The cathedral, the Catholic ritual, the majesty of the occasion, taken together, were the inspiration for the fourth movement of the Rhenish Symphony. Schumann indicated that the movement be played "in the character of an accompaniment to a solemn processional."

3. In this movement, the trombones enter for the first time in the symphony, heightening and intensifying the magisterial dignity of the music. Note as well the constant melodic counterpoint, reminiscent of the religious music of Schumann's great musical hero and fellow Lutheran, Johann Sebastian Bach. This movement has great religious power and expressive gravitas. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, Symphony No. 3 in Eb Major, Op. 97, movement 4, opening.)

G. The fifth movement constitutes a dancing and sweeping return to the sunshine and bustle of life on and by the Rhine River. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, Symphony No. 3 in Eb Major, Op. 97, movement 5, opening.)

H. Schumann's Third Symphony was premiered in Düsseldorf, on February 6, 1851, with Schumann himself conducting. The audience went wild; an encore performance took place on March 13.

1. Thrilled with the reception accorded his symphony, Schumann embarked on another of his manic creative jags.

2. Over the next sixteen months, he turned out a mass; a series of trios for violin, 'cello, and piano; various works for chorus and voice and piano; a number of sonatas for violin and piano; various orchestral works; and an entire reworking of the D Minor Symphony he had completed ten years before, now dubbed Symphony No. 4.

II. What, then, went wrong in Düsseldorf? As we mentioned earlier, Schumann was not a good conductor. He frequently dropped his baton during performances and took to tying it to his wrist with a piece of string. He was unable to express himself clearly in rehearsal, preferring to endlessly repeat certain passages without apparent reason or explanation.

A. Under such circumstances, it didn't take long for orchestral discipline to break down, and Schumann was unaware, unwilling, and unable to do anything about it. When Clara accompanied the choral rehearsals from the piano, Schumann would address the singers through her, whispering his instructions in her ear, which she would then pass along to the chorus.

B. Clara's blind devotion to her husband made her constitutionally incapable of allowing anyone, including herself, to help him; therefore, he lurched from one crisis to another, with Clara weeping with frustration over his failures and placing blame everywhere but where it truly belonged.

C. In addition, Schumann's mental health was again beginning to deteriorate. In January of 1852, eleven months after the triumphant premiere of his Rhine Symphony, Schumann began suffering bouts of depression accompanied by various physical ailments. In November 1852, Schumann began hearing an incessant "A" in his ears that, according to Schumann himself, "Prevented me from talking or thinking."

D. Between January and November of 1853, Schumann experienced a series of increasingly worrisome neurological disorders, among them an inability to speak or write for days at a time and enlarged pupils in both eyes.

E. What's amazing isn't that Schumann was fired from his job as conductor after only three years; what's amazing is that given his incompetence and his deteriorating health, he managed to hold on to it for as long as he did!

F. The end of his career as a conductor came in October 1853, almost three years to the day after Schumann had made his Düsseldorf debut.

1. The great violin virtuoso Joseph Joachim was the visiting soloist. Schumann, on the podium in front of the orchestra, raised his arms to begin and just stood there, looking at no one in particular, waiting for the musicians to start.

2. Eventually, the musicians started to play, but they followed Joachim, who had begun conducting from his position on stage. Schumann, we are told, began waving his arms around spastically, trying to keep up.

3. It was the last concert Schumann would conduct in Düsseldorf; the Orchestra Committee, which had put Schumann on "artistic probation" earlier in the year, demanded and received his resignation. It was without a doubt the most humiliating episode of Schumann's musical career.

III. In September of 1853, just a few weeks before the disastrous concert with Joachim, Schumann received, unannounced, a visit from a small, young, blonde-haired composer and pianist from Hamburg named Johannes Brahms.

A. At Schumann's invitation, the twenty-year-old Brahms sat down at the piano and began to play his Sonata in C Major (1853). Brahms had gotten no further than a few measures when he felt Schumann's hand on his shoulder. Quietly, Schumann said, "Please wait a moment. I must call my wife."

B. Electrified, Schumann rushed out of the room, giving Brahms just enough time to realize that he was going to have to play piano in front of the great and famous Clara Wieck herself. Schumann returned with Clara

and said, “Here, dear Clara, you shall hear music such as you have never heard before; now begin your sonata again, young man” (Swafford). (**Musical selection**: Brahms, Piano Sonata in C Major, Op. 1, movement 1 [1853].)

C. Brahms’s appearance, as if out of nowhere, was a signal occurrence in the lives of all three of them: Robert, Clara, and Johannes.

1. Brahms stayed with the Schumann family through the month of October, becoming in the process one of Robert’s most devoted disciples.

2. Schumann referred to him as the “young eagle,” arranged for the publication of a number of Brahms’s works, and wrote an article for the *Neue Zeitschrift*—the first such article he had written in years—in which he praised Brahms as a genius.

3. Brahms, a twenty-year-old unknown, was suddenly famous, a mixed blessing, to be sure, given the pressures that were put on him to live up to Schumann’s appraisal. Nevertheless, Brahms was filled with gratitude, and he remained a loyal and selfless friend to both Robert and Clara during the terrible, dark time that was about to envelop them all.

IV. In February 1854, a little more than four months after meeting Brahms, Schumann’s mind gave way.

A. During the evening of February 10, he was tormented by what he called “very strong and painful aural disturbances.” Four days later, he was sitting in a restaurant with his friend, the violinist Rupert Becker, reading a newspaper. Schumann suddenly put down the paper and said to Becker, “I can’t read anymore. I keep hearing the note ‘A’” (Walker, 35).

1. Within a couple of days, the sounds in Schumann’s ears had taken shape; he reported hearing, “Magnificent music, with instruments of splendid resonance, the like of which has never been heard on earth before” (Walker, 35).

2. Clara, needless to say, was becoming more and more frightened. She wrote in her diary that he constantly heard music, one symphonic piece after another.

3. During the night of February 17, Schumann got out of bed and wrote down a melody in Eb Major, a melody that he said “the angels” had dictated to him. (**Musical selection**: R. Schumann, Theme in Eb Major [1854].)

4. In his few lucid moments during the following week, Schumann managed to write a set of five variations on his “angel’s” theme. The piece, known as the *Geistervariationen* (*Spirit Variations*), is Schumann’s last surviving piano work. It is dedicated to Clara.

5. On February 18, as if in some terrifying horror movie, the angels that had given Schumann his variations theme turned into devils that took the form of tigers and hyenas; he became hysterical. The next day, Sunday, February 19, was equally bad; Schumann claimed to be surrounded by evil spirits

6. On the following day, Schumann was overcome by feelings of self-loathing, guilt, and remorse. He kept repeating obsessively that he was a criminal, that he was going to go to hell, and that his only salvation was to never stop reading the Bible.

7. Six days later, he asked to be taken to an asylum. He was terrified that he might physically injure his wife and children. Clara and Robert’s doctor convinced him to settle down and go to bed.

B. On February 27, a cold and rainy day in Düsseldorf, wearing only his slippers and dressing gown, Schumann slipped unnoticed out of the house. Sobbing and walking rather unsteadily, he headed for the Rhine River, only four blocks away.

1. His bizarre behavior caught the attention of the toll keeper, but not before Robert jumped into the Rhine. When he was rescued by some fishermen in a small boat, he tried to jump in again.

2. Ultimately, he was accompanied home, but because it was carnival season, the streets were filled with people, some of whom jeered at Robert as he passed.

C. Clara, pregnant and herself on the verge of a breakdown, had to be physically restrained to be kept from seeing her husband. For reasons quite impossible to fathom today, she was never informed of his suicide attempt; she would learn about it two years after Robert’s death.

D. Hustled off to his doctors’ office, Schumann again demanded he be institutionalized and this time, his doctors agreed. He was admitted to a private sanitarium run by an old acquaintance, located in Endenich, a suburb of Bonn.

E. Schumann's doctors, fearing that any sight of his wife and children would agitate their patient, forbade Clara from seeing or saying goodbye to him.

F. The only bright spot—if it can be called such—to come out of this terrible time was the action of the twenty-year-old Johannes Brahms.

1. Brahms, who had been in Hanover when he heard about Schumann's suicide attempt, rushed to Düsseldorf and stayed at Clara's side for the better part of two years.

2. He rapidly assumed many of the duties of the "head-of-household" and undoubtedly fell in love with Clara. Whether they were ever lovers is still a matter of speculation, as it was at the time. What is certain is that Clara and her children survived these times largely because of Brahms's selflessness and loyalty. (For a more detailed discussion of the ongoing relationship between Clara and Brahms, I direct you to my Teaching Company biography *Great Masters: Johannes Brahms: His Life and Music*.)

V. Schumann spent two years in the asylum at Endenich. Because he had not been institutionalized against his will, he was free to come and go as he wished. He took trips to the Beethoven monument in nearby Bonn, and in his room, he had a piano, paper, and pens should he want to compose.

A. At first it seemed as if Schumann was getting better. On June 6, 1854, two days before his forty-fourth birthday and three months after he was institutionalized, Clara received wonderful news from Dr. Richarz that seemed to indicate that the worst was over and that her husband might soon come home.

B. Five days later, on June 11, Clara gave birth to a son, Felix Schumann, named for Felix Mendelssohn.

1. She postponed his christening, with the hopes that Robert would be able to attend, but those hopes were dashed. Schumann was "calmer" but still delusional, and Brahms, Felix's godfather, stood in for the absent Schumann at the christening.

2. Clara's hopes and emotions rose and fell by the day. The physical and emotional strain Robert's illness and absence placed on her are almost impossible to imagine.

3. Perhaps most difficult for Clara was the fact that for the first six months of his hospitalization, Robert made no attempt to contact her at all; he reportedly did not even mention her name. Finally, after nearly seven months, on his wedding anniversary, he asked about her. Clara was informed and she wrote him immediately. Schumann wrote back in a dazed but affectionate tone.

C. Despite early hopes that he was improving, Schumann's madness progressed slowly but inexorably. We are told that he would pace back and forth incessantly, frequently kneeling down and wringing his hands in despair. He held conversations with voices that accused him of plagiarism; he would scream and become hysterical.

D. Schumann's friend and "host" at Endenich, Dr. Franz Richarz, kept a detailed log of Schumann's condition. Many of the entries are frankly painful to read, and they show us a man in the throes of what was certainly, at that time, incurable madness.

E. Schumann periodically stopped eating and drinking, claiming that he was being poisoned. Indeed, according to Peter Ostwald, the immediate cause of Schumann's death was suicide by starvation. However, although malnutrition might have contributed to his death, it is unlikely that Schumann "committed suicide" through starvation.

1. We need look no further than Dr. Richarz's medical log, which reported that on some days, Robert ate well but on other days, claimed his food had been poisoned.

2. The irony here is that if indeed Schumann starved himself to death, it wasn't because he wanted to kill himself; it was because he wanted to survive his imagined "poisoning," a different proposition than committing suicide through purposeful starvation.

F. Sometime around July 15, 1856, his immune system shattered, Schumann fell ill with a respiratory infection. His weakened body could not fight off the infection, which rapidly turned into full-blown pneumonia.

1. On July 23, 1856, Clara received a telegram from Dr. Richarz telling her to come to the hospital if she wanted to see her husband before he died.

2. Four days later, on Sunday evening, July 27, 1856, Clara saw Robert for the first time in more than two years. He must have been almost unrecognizable—emaciated, aged beyond his years, and bedridden.

3. Throughout the next day, Schumann's arms and legs convulsed almost continuously. He died on July 29, 1856, in the afternoon. He was alone; Clara had gone with Brahms to pick up their friend, the violinist Joseph Joachim, at the train station. Clara arrived back at the hospital only to find that Robert was dead.

G. Two days after his death, on July 31, Schumann was buried in Bonn. Brahms and Joachim were among the honorary pallbearers. The Viennese poet Grillparzer, who had written Beethoven's funeral oration nineteen years before, delivered an oration at Robert's graveside.

H. As per Clara's wishes, the funeral was a simple one. Among the few mourners in attendance were Ferdinand Hiller and members of the *Concordiagesellschaft*, who had serenaded the Schumanns' arrival in Düsseldorf six years earlier.

VI. Schumann's death was almost certainly a result of syphilis, which entered its final stages in February of 1854. His syphilis-induced "madness" was exacerbated by his mental illness, which plagued him his entire life.

A. According to Peter Ostwald, M.D. and psychiatrist, the most comprehensive diagnosis for Schumann's psychiatric illness would be a "major, bi-polar [manic-depressive] affective disorder" (Ostwald, 303).

B. As Schumann lay dying outside Bonn, the critic Henry Fothergill Chorley wrote a harsh musical evaluation of his work, which appeared in the magazine *Atheneum* in London.

1. Mr. Chorley's opinion was that Schumann's music represented nothing more than the art of "covering pages with thoughts little worth noting and hiding an intrinsic poverty of invention by grim and monotonous eccentricity" (Slonimsky, *Lexicon*).
2. Sadly, this was not an isolated opinion at the time. Clara and Brahms were left to carry the torch for Schumann's music, which they did ably, for the remaining forty years of their lives.
3. Clara wore the black of mourning until the day she died. She became a tireless exponent of her husband's music; she performed it across Europe, helped prepare the complete edition of his music for publication (1881–1893), and edited and published his letters and diaries.

C. Clara's life after Robert was not an easy or painless one. She was always worried about money, and as the sole breadwinner for a family of eight (nine with Brahms's frequent stays), she concertized constantly to make ends meet.

1. She was deeply conflicted about her profession versus her perceived "duties" as a mother. Although her profession almost always won out, the guilt she felt about leaving her children for long periods of time with nannies, maids, and other domestics (including Brahms) was extremely debilitating, both psychologically and physically.
2. Her children, particularly her boys, were an ongoing source of grief. Her son Emil, born in 1846, died after sixteen months. Ludwig, born in 1848, manifested symptoms of mental illness from a young age; at the age of twenty-two, he was diagnosed as having a spinal disease that may have affected his brain.
3. Clara, on the advice of doctors, had Ludwig committed to an asylum outside of Leipzig in 1871. She visited him there only twice, and he begged her to take him home. Clara could not face her son and never saw him again, even though she lived for another twenty years. (Ludwig died three years after his mother, in 1899, at age fifty-one, after spending twenty-eight uninterrupted years in the asylum at Colditz.)
4. Clara's son Ferdinand, born in 1849, became a morphine addict and predeceased her by five years, dying at age forty-two. Felix, born in 1854—the youngest of the children and everyone's favorite—died slowly and painfully of tuberculosis at twenty-four, predeceasing his mother by almost eighteen years.
5. Daughters Marie (born 1841) and Eugenie (born 1851) both became music teachers and lived long and healthy lives, as did daughter Elise (born 1843), who was the only Schumann daughter to have children and who lived for a time in the United States.
6. Clara's daughter Julie, born in 1845, was a radiant beauty of delicate health; she died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-seven, predeceasing her mother by twenty-four years.

D. Clara never stopped grieving. Proud; dignified; forced to bear extraordinary pain throughout her adult life; suffering, in her last years, from debilitating joint and shoulder problems that forced her to retire from the stage, photos of the elderly Clara reveal a face and a spirit where the cliché truly applies: battered but unbowed.

E. She died on May 20, 1896, at the age of seventy-five. Johannes Brahms walked directly behind her coffin at her funeral. Brahms died a little more than ten months later, on April 3, 1897, just a few days shy of his sixty-fourth birthday.

1. He is recorded as having said that once Clara had died, there was no reason for him to go on living.

2. Despite the questions still surrounding their relationship, they clearly cared for each other deeply.

3. As for Schumann, his mentor and friend, Brahms wrote in 1873:
"The remembrance of Schumann is sacred to me. I will always take this noble, pure artist as my model" (Daverio, 489).

Vocal Texts

From Lecture One, R. Schumann, *An Anna* (*To Anna*):

Lange harrt'ich: aber endlich breiten	Long did I wait, but finally
Auseinander sich des Fensters Flügel,	The windows are opened wide,
Und an seinem weissen Kreuze stehest du,	And at their white cross you stand,
Berg und Tal ein stiller Friedensengel.	Over mountain and valley, a still angel of peace.
Vöglein ziehen nah an dir vorüber,	Little birds fly past close to you,
Täublein sitzen auf dem nahen Dache;	Little doves sit on the roof nearby;
Kommt der Mond und kommen alle Sterne,	The moon and all the stars come out,
Blicken all'dir keck ins blaue Auge.	And they look boldly into your blue eyes.
Steh' ich einsam in der Ferne;	Far away I stand and am alone;
Habe keine Flügel hinzufliegen,	I've got no wings to fly to you,
Habe keine Strahlen hinzusenden,	And I've no fair rays to send you from on high,
Steh' ich einsam in der ferne.	Far away I stand and am alone.
Gehst du, sprech ich mit verhaltnen Tränen;	If you go, then I'll speak with my tears held back;
Ruhest süss, ihr lieben Augen,	Sleep well, you eyes most dear,
Ruhest süss, ihr weissen Lilien,	Sleep well, you lilies most white,
Ruhest süss, ihr lieben Hände.	Sleep well, you hands most dear.
Sprechen's nach die Stern' am Himmel,	The stars in the heavens echo my words,
Sprechen nach des Tales Blumen;	The flowers in the valley echo them too;
Weh! O weh!	But woe! And alas!
Du hast est nicht vernommen!	You didn't hear them!

From Lecture Three, C. Schumann, *Walzer* (*Waltz*):

Horch! Welch' ein süsses harmonisches Klingen:
Flüstern erhebt sich zum jubelnden Laut.
Lass mich dich, reinendes Mädchen, umschlingen,
Wie ein Geleibter die liebende Braut.

Komm! lass mit den wagenden Tönen uns schweben,
Die uns wie Stimmen der Liebe umwehn:
So uns der seligsten Täuschung ergeben,
Glücklich es wähnen, was nie kann geschehn.

Aude in Auge mit glühenden Wangen,
Bebende Seufzer verlangender Lust!
Ach! Wenn die Stunden der Freude vergangen,
Füllet nur travernde Sehnsucht die Brust.

Nimmer erblüht, was einmal verblüht,
Nie wird die rosige Jugend uns neu,
O drum, eh das Feuer der Herzen verglüht,
Liebe um Liebe, noch lächelt der Mai.

Horch! Welch' ein süsses harmonisches Klingen:
Flüstern erhebt sich zum jubelnden Laut.
Lass mich dich, reinendes Mädchen, umschlingen,
Wie ein Geleibter die liebende Braut.

Hark! What a sweet, harmonious sound,
Whispers growing to jubilant sounds.
Let me embrace you, charming girl,
Like a groom embracing his loving bride.

Come! Let's rise with the surging sounds,
Floating around us like love's own voices.
Let's surrender to blissful delusion,
And think what never can be is true.

Eye to eye, cheeks afire,
Heaving sighs of lustful yearning!
Alas! When joy's hours are gone,
Pining is the heart's only pursuit.

Flowers bloom and wilt,
And so it is too with rosy youth.
So before love's fires turn to embers,
Love for love's sake in May's smiling month.

Hark! What a sweet, harmonious sound,
Whispers growing to jubilant sounds.
Let me embrace you, charming girl,
Like a groom embracing his loving bride.

From Lecture Five, R. Schumann, *Frauenliebe und Leben* (*Woman's Love and Life*), No. 1, "Since first I saw him":

Seit ich ihn gesehen,	Since I first saw him,
Glaub' ich blind zu sein;	I think I must be blind;
Wo ich hin nur blicke,	Wherever I look,
See' ich ihn allein.	I see only him.
Wie im wachen Träume,	As if in a trance,
Schwebt sein Bild mir vor,	His image floats before me,
Taucht aus tiefstem Dunkel	Emerging from the darkness
Heller nur empor.	Ever brighter.

Sonst ist lichst- und farblos	All else is dark and colorless
Alles um mich her.	In my surroundings.
Nach der Schwestern Spiele	My sisters' games
Nicht begahr' ich mehr;	No longer interest me;
Möchte lieber weinen	I would rather weep
Still im Kämmerlein.	Quietly in my room.
Seit ich ihn gesehen,	Since I first saw him,
Glaub' ich blind zu sein.	I think I must be blind.

From Lecture Five, R. Schumann, *Frauenliebe und Leben* (*Woman's Love and Life*), No. 4, "You, Ring on my finger":

Du Ring an meinem Finger,	You, Ring on my finger,
Mein goldenes Ringelein,	My little golden ring,
Ich drücke dich fromm an die Lippen,	I press you devoutly to my lips,
An das Herze mein.	And to my heart.
Ich hätt' ihn ausgeträumet	I had reached the end of
Der Kindheit friedlich schönen Traum;	Childhood's lovely, peaceful dream;
Ich fand allein mich, verloren	I found myself alone and lost
Im öden, unendlichen Raum.	In an endless wasteland.
Du Ring an meinem Finger,	You, Ring on my finger,
Da hast du mich erst belehrt,	You taught me then,
Hast meinem Blick erschlossen	Opened my eyes
Des Lebens unendlichen, tiefen Wert.	To life's infinite worth.

Ich will ihm dienen, ihm leben, Ihm angehören ganz; Hin selber mich geben und finden Verklärt mich in seinem Glanz.	I will serve him, live for him, Belong to him totally; I will give myself to him And find myself transformed in his radiance.
Du Ring an meinem Finger, Mein goldenes Ringelein, Ich drücke dich fromm an die Lippen, An das Herze mein.	You, Ring on my finger, My little golden ring, I press you devoutly to my lips, And to my heart.

From Lecture Five, R. Schumann, *Frauenliebe und Leben* (*Woman's Love and Life*), No. 8, "Now you have hurt me for the first time":

Nun hast du mir den ersten Schmerz getan, Der aber traf. Du schläfst, du harter Unbarmherz'ger Mann, Den Todesschlaf.	Now you have hurt me for the first time, But deeply. You sleep, you hard And pitiless man, The sleep of death.
Es blicket die Verlassne vor sich hin, Die Welt ist leer. Geliebet hab' ich und gelebt; ich bin Nicht lebend mehr.	Forsaken, I look around me, The world is empty. My love and life are past; I am No longer living.
Ich zieh' mich mein Innres still zurück; Der Schleier fällt. Da hab ich dich und mein verlornes Glück, Du meine Welt!	I withdraw quietly into myself; The veil falls. There I have you and my lost happiness, You, my entire world!

From Lecture Six, C. Schumann, *Am Strand* ("Musing on the Roaring Ocean"):

Traurig schau ich von der Klippe, Auf die Flut, die uns getrennt, Und mit Inbrunst fleht die Lippe, Schöne seiner, Element!	Musing on the roaring ocean, Which divides my love and me, Wearying heaven in warm devotion, For his weal, where'er he be!
Furcht ist meiner Seele Meister, Ach, und Hoffnung schwindet schier; Nur im Träume bringen Geister Vom Geliebten Kunde mir.	Hope and Fear's alternate billow, Yielding, late to nature's law; Whisp'ring spirits round my pillow Talk of him that's far away.
Die ihr, fröhliche Genossen, Gold'ner Tag' in Lust und Schmerz, Kummertränen nie vergossen, Ach, ihr kennt nicht meinen Schmerz!	Ye whom Sorrow never wounded, Ye who never shed a tear, Care-untroubled, joy surrounded, Gaudy Day to you is dear!
Sei mir mild, o nächt'ge Stunde; Auf das Auge senke Ruh; Holde Geister, flüstert Kunde, Vom Geliebten dann mir zu.	Gentle Night, do thou befriend me; Downy sleep, the curtain draw; Spirits kind, again offend me, Talk of him that's far away!

From Lecture Seven, R. Schumann, *Paradise and the Peri* No. 17, "Schlaf' nun und ruhe":

Schlaf nun und ruhe in Träumen voll Duft,	Sleep on in visions of odour rest,
Balsam'scher umweh dich die Luft,	In balmier airs than ever yet stirr'd
Als dem magischen Brand des Phonix entsteigt	Th' enchanted pile of that lonely bird
Wenn er sein eigenes Grablied singt.	Who sings at the last his own death-lay.
Schlaf nun und ruhe in Träumen voll Lust,	Sleep on in pleasing dreams now rest,
Du, die treueste, libendste Brust!	Thou the truest, most beloved breast!

From Lecture Seven, R. Schumann, *Paradise and the Peri* No.26, Part III Finale:

The Peri	
Freud', ew'ge Freude, mein Werke ist getan—	Joy, joy forever! My task is done—
Die Pforte geöffnet zum Himmel hinan!	The gates are pass'd, and Heaven is won!
Wie selig, o Wonne, wie selig bin ich!	Oh, am I not happy? I am! I am!
Chorus of Blessed Spirits	
Du hast gerungen und nicht gerüht;	Without cease thou hast striven and strained;
Nun hast du's errungen, das kostliche Gut!	Now thou hast the precious boon attained!
Aufgenommen	Accepted at last
In Edens Garten,	In Eden's garden,
Wo liebende Seelen deiner warten,	Where loving souls extend a pardon,
Dich ew'ge Wonne umfliesst,	And eternal bliss awaits thee,
Sei uns willkommen,	Be welcome among us,
Sei uns gegrüsst!	And receive our greeting!

Timeline

1810 ..... Robert Schumann born in Zwickau, Saxony, on June 8.

1816 ..... Robert begins piano lessons.

1819 ..... Clara Wieck born in Leipzig, September 13.

1824 ..... Clara begins piano lessons.

1825 ..... Robert's sister Emilie commits suicide.

1826 ..... Robert's father, August Schumann, dies.

1827 ..... Robert composes his first songs.

1828 ..... Robert matriculates as a law student at the University of Leipzig and begins studying piano with Friedrich Wieck; Clara performs at the Gewandhaus for the first time.

1830 ..... Robert moves in to the Wieck house; Clara gives her first Gewandhaus concert as a solo pianist.

1831 ..... *Papillons*.

1832 ..... Robert's debilitating hand problems preclude his career as a pianist.

1834 ..... Robert founds and becomes editor and publisher of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*; falls in love with Ernestine von Fricken.

1835 ..... *Carnaval*; Robert falls in love with and begins courting Clara.

1837 ..... Robert and Clara become secretly engaged; Friedrich Wieck rejects Robert's marriage request.

1838 ..... *Arabesque* and *Kreisleriana* for piano.

1839 ..... Clara petitions the courts for permission to marry without her father's consent.

1840 ..... Robert and Clara are married on September 12, one day before her twenty-first birthday; *Frauenliebe und Leben*.

1841 ..... Birth of Marie Schumann; Symphony No. 1, "Spring."

1842 ..... String Quintet in Eb.

1843 ..... Birth of Elise Schumann; the cantata *Paradise and the Peri*.

1844 ..... The Schumann family resettles in Dresden to be nearer Robert's doctors; Russian concert tour.

1845 ..... Birth of Julie Schumann.

1846 ..... Birth of Emil Schumann; Piano Concerto and Symphony No. 2.

1847 ..... Death of Emil.

1848 ..... Birth of Ludwig Schumann.

1849 ..... May Revolution in Dresden; birth of Ferdinand Schumann; opera *Genoveva* completed; *Concertstück forFour Horns and Orchestra*.

1850 ..... Robert is appointed music director in Düsseldorf; the family arrives in September; Symphony No. 3, "Rhenish."

1851 ..... Birth of Eugenie Schumann; Symphony No. 4.

1853 ..... Brahms arrives in Düsseldorf.

1854 ..... Robert attempts suicide and is hospitalized; birth of Felix Schumann.

1856 ..... Robert dies in Endenich on July 29.

1857 ..... The Schumann family resettles in Berlin.

1896 ..... Clara dies in Frankfurt an Main, on May 20.

Glossary

Atonality: The absence of an established tonality, or identifiable key.

Cadenza: Virtuoso music designed to show off a singer's or an instrumental soloist's technical ability.

Classical musical style: Designation given to works of the later eighteenth century, characterized by clear melodic lines, balanced form, and emotional restraint. The style is brilliantly exemplified by the music of Franz Joseph Haydn.

Concerto: Musical composition for orchestra and soloist(s) typically in three movements.

Consonance: Two or more notes sounded together that do not require resolution.

Crescendo: Gradually increasing volume.

Dissonance: Two or more notes sounded together that require resolution.

Exposition: Opening section of a fugue or sonata-form movement in which the main theme(s) are introduced.

Movement: Independent, self-standing piece of music within a larger work.

Musical form: Overall formulaic structure of a composition, such as sonata form; also the smaller divisions of the overall structure, such as the development section.

Overture: Music that precedes an opera or play, often played as an independent concert piece.

Pedal note: Pitch sustained for a long period of time against which other changing material is played. A pedal harmony is a sustained chord serving the same purpose.

Polyrhythm: The simultaneous use of contrasting rhythms.

Polytonality: The simultaneous use of two or more different keys (major and/or minor) or modes.

Requiem: Mass for the dead, traditionally in nine specific sections.

Rhythmic asymmetry: Rhythms that do not use regular accents.

Short score: Two- or three-staff score that can be played on the piano and serves as the basis for a full orchestral score.

Sonata: Piece of music typically in three or four movements, composed for a piano (piano sonata) or a piano plus one instrument (violin sonata, for example).

Sonata form: Structural formula characterized by thematic development; usually used for the first movement of a sonata, symphony, or concerto.

String quartet: (1) Ensemble of four stringed instruments: two violins, viola and cello; (2) Composition for such an ensemble.

Symphony: Large-scale instrumental composition for orchestra, containing several movements. The Viennese classical symphony typically had four movements.

Voice: A range or register, commonly used to refer to the four melodic ranges: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass.

Biographical Notes

Bargiel, Marianne Tromlitz Wieck (1797–1872). Clara's mother. She was divorced from Clara's father, Friedrich Wieck, when Clara was five and reunited with her daughter when Clara was twenty.

Brahms, Johannes (1833–1897). German composer and pianist. Schumann declared the twenty-year-old Brahms "the Messiah" of German music. Brahms lived with Clara and her children during the terrible years of Schumann's hospitalization; the two were undoubtedly in love with each other and remained close friends for the rest of their lives.

Chopin, Fryderyk (1810–1849). Polish-born composer and pianist. It was Schumann's rave review of Chopin's Variations of Mozart's "*La ci darem la mano*" that first brought Chopin to the attention of the German musical public.

Flechsig, Emil. Childhood friend of Schumann; later roomed with him in Leipzig; left first-hand accounts of Schumann as both boy and young man.

Fricken, Ernestine von (1816–1844). A fellow piano student of Friedrich Wieck, Schumann fell in love with Ernestine and was briefly engaged to her in 1835. She was Schumann's essential musical inspiration for *Carnaval*.

Hiller, Ferdinand (1811–1855). German conductor, composer, and teacher. A friend of Schumann's, whom Schumann succeeded as music director in Düsseldorf.

Hoffman, E. T. A. (Ernst Theodor Amadeus) (1776–1822). German essayist, critic, novelist, philosopher, and lawyer. His writing—particularly his character Kreisler—profoundly influenced Schumann and Schumann's music.

Liszt, Franz (1811–1886). Hungarian composer and pianist. Schumann and Liszt counted each other as friends; Clara came to detest him as a composer.

Mendelssohn, Felix (1809–1847). German composer, pianist, and conductor and the godfather of musical life in Vienna; Schumann worshipped Mendelssohn, and Mendelssohn became a good friend to Clara, Robert, and their family.

Paul, Jean (Richter, Johann Paul Friedrich) (1763–1825). German novelist, who exercised a decisive influence on Schumann's music and literary leanings.

Schumann, August (1873–1826). Schumann's father.

Schumann, Emilie (1796–1825). Schumann's sister; she was both physically and emotionally ill, and it is likely she committed suicide by drowning.

Schumann, Johanna Christiana (1771–1836). Schumann's mother.

Wieck, Friedrich (1785–1873). Pedant, curmudgeon, Clara's father, and Robert's piano teacher.

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