

# Critical Perception and the Woman Composer: The Early Reception of Piano Concertos by Clara Wieck Schumann and Amy Beach\*

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In 1835–38 Clara Wieck played her Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 7 in all the major German-speaking music centers. In 1900–17 Amy Marcy Cheney (Mrs. H.H.A.) Beach played her Piano Concerto in C# minor, Op. 45 throughout Germany and the United States. Audience reaction to the early performances of both works was favorable, but the critics were not sympathetic. Each composer was keenly aware of the factors contributing to this dichotomy in reception and wrote or spoke revealingly about it. For each, her concerto was an important vehicle for performance: Wieck saw herself primarily as a performer; Beach, as both performer and composer. Clearly, the two works occupy different historical positions: Wieck's is decidedly avant-garde, particularly with regard to form and motivic development; Beach's, while using a modern harmonic language and piano technique, relies more heavily on received tradition. But they are alike in that each incorporates what I shall call performance-oriented gestures, a harmonic freedom and thematic richness that allow the soloist to project a sense of the improvisatory. Each composer was aware of the disfavor with which these gestures were viewed by critics, who, as we shall see, demanded in large genres a traditional sort of overarching, rational control. Nevertheless, the diffuseness that may result from such performance-engendered gestures is not a compositional weakness, but a potential strength that both Wieck and Beach exploited. Audiences responded favorably, yet plaudits from critics were forthcoming only when Wieck and Beach were considered primarily in their roles as performers, the more traditional vocation for women, rather than as composers.

Wieck and Beach were not alone in their exploitation of performance-oriented gestures. Such gestures abound in concertos by Liszt and Rachmaninov, to mention just one illustrious contemporary of Wieck and Beach, respectively. But even recent critics, while apparently accepting the aes-

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thetic validity of such gestures in concertos by these male counterparts,<sup>1</sup> as we shall see, tend to deny it in those by Wieck and Beach. Compositional decisions by male composers are for the most part accounted for as conscious intellectual decisions (despite whatever absolute worth is imputed to the particular work in question), whereas for Wieck or Beach, as is often the case with female composers of the nineteenth or early twentieth century, they are more often attributed to natural ability rather than developed skill. For illustrations of this point we need only turn to *The New Grove Dictionary*. Pamela Susskind characterizes Wieck's Concerto as "remarkably effective for a 15-year old," which suggests to me that the effectiveness is an anomaly rather than an expectation based on the girl's thorough musical training and broad exposure to the musical world. There is no reference to the work's remarkable novelty. On the other hand, Wieck's contemporary Henri Litolff (1818–91), who also performed his own concertos (works that, like hers, have long since fallen out of the repertory), is cited by Ted M. Blair for his "*concerto symphonique* conception," a "term [representing] a new attitude towards the broadening of the Classical keyboard concerto form." Blair emphasizes the novelty of Litolff's music rather than evaluating it, though to this listener his music seems rather pedestrian and at times, especially in the Third and Fourth Symphonic Concertos, even trivial. Beach's style is described by Judith Tick as "elaborate and inventive rather than concise, relying on a natural gift for melody," which suggests that Beach relies on a native inventiveness rather than any intellectual discipline that is, I believe, associated with the word "concise." By contrast, Margery Morgen Lowens claims that Beach's contemporary Edward MacDowell (1861–1908) "worked most comfortably with homophonic textures," not because of a natural gift but "in spite of his thorough schooling in counterpoint."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On Liszt, see György Kroó, "Gemeinsame Formprobleme in den Klavierkonzerten von Schumann und Liszt," in *Robert Schumann. Aus Anlass seines 100. Todestages*, ed. Hans Joachim Moser and Eberhard Rebling (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1956), 140–43; on Rachmaninov, David Brown, "The Concerto in Pre-Revolutionary Russia," in *A Companion to the Concerto*, ed. Robert Layton (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 197–201 ("Rachmaninov"). Kroó discusses only motivic variation in Liszt's concertos. Without exploring any other aspects of these works Kroó concludes they provided a solution to problems presented by new forms calling for a "new type of connection of the individual movements to each other." Brown, while admitting Rachmaninov's compositions are "bluntly sectional," argues on the basis of primarily one parameter, motivic content, that his finest works nevertheless display "an expressive totality."

<sup>2</sup> *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. "Schumann, Clara (Josephine)," by Pamela Susskind, vol. 16, 828; s.v. "Litolff, Henri (Charles)," by Ted M. Blair, vol. 11, 82; s.v. "Beach, Amy Marcy Cheney," by Judith Tick, vol. 2, 318; s.v. "MacDowell, Edward," by Margery Morgen Lowens, vol. 11, 420.

Within the discipline of its larger design the concerto admits a quasi-improvisatory freedom in the brilliant technical writing for the solo instrument. In this study I shall defend the performance-oriented gestures that embody this freedom as essential parts of the design in Wieck's and Beach's concertos, even though these gestures may well have been born of an instinctive sense gained through experience of what is effective before an audience. Both women pointed to the audience appeal of their pieces—due arguably to these performance-oriented gestures—whenever defending them. The socialization of Wieck and Beach as proper middle or upper-middle class (albeit professional) women of the last century seemed to have impressed upon them that their strengths lay not in the intellectual challenge of composition, but in the talent of performance. Wieck wrote in 1839, "A woman must not desire to compose. . . . It would be arrogance."<sup>3</sup> Three generations later, Beach was more secure than Wieck in her role as a composer. Still, when interviewed she usually spoke of her work not merely as a composer but also as a pianist. In her own words, "I am a dual personality and lead a double musical life."<sup>4</sup>

The concertos I have chosen for this study are among the best composed by women in the nineteenth century. I have excluded a *Concertstück* (1888) by Cécile Chaminade because its reception was primarily in France and hence involved a tradition different than the German or German-based one that Wieck and Beach faced. There are, however, a number of underlying similarities in the reception history of the three concertos. Chaminade had great success performing her *Concertstück* at the turn of the century in French-speaking Europe, England, then in America, even though today it is no longer heard on the concert stage. Initial critical reception was favorable overall, but reviewers from at least as early as 1908 to the present have contemptuously associated Chaminade's music with the drawing room. The matter of her sex was ever-present in evaluations of her music and at times related to a perception that her compositions were superficial, a prejudice she decried.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Susskind, "Schumann, Clara," 829. The citation is a diary entry from 1839.

<sup>4</sup> Harriette Brower, "A Personal Interview with Mrs. H.H.A. Beach, American Composer-Pianist," *The Musical Observer* 12 (May 1915), 273.

<sup>5</sup> See Marcia J. Citron, *Cécile Chaminade: A Bio-Bibliography* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 7–10, 21–25. In *New Grove* Chaminade's entire oeuvre is summed up in one sentence, "Notwithstanding the real charm and clever writing of many of Chaminade's pieces they do not rise above drawing-room music" (Gustave Ferrari and Jean Mongrédien, s.v. "Chaminade, Cécile [Louise Stéphanie]," vol. 4, 125).

Clara Wieck gave the first complete performance of her Concerto on 9 November 1835 in Leipzig.<sup>6</sup> Robert Schumann reported on the concert in one of his “*Schwärmbriefe*” [“Musing Letters”] that appeared in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. The letter begins with a poetic description of the first movement:

The first strains that we heard flew before us like a young phoenix fluttering upwards. Passionate white roses and pearl lily cups leaned down, orange blossoms and myrtle nodded above, and between them, alders and weeping willows threw their melancholy shadows. In their midst, however, a girl’s radiant face bobbed and searched for flowers to make a wreath.<sup>7</sup>

The movement transports Schumann to another world. He sees a girl, wandering in a dream landscape, plucking flowers to form a floral wreath. The flowers seem to represent individual musical ideas, perhaps the immediate products of the imagination, and the wreath the mastery of form necessary to weave these into a complete musical composition. Elsewhere, for example in the “*Musikalische Haus- und Lebensregeln*,” Schumann similarly distinguished between “poetic fancies” produced by a lively imagination alone, and “mastery of form” that must be acquired. He writes:

If heaven has conferred upon you a lively imagination, likely in solitary hours you will often sit at the piano as if spellbound. . . . Beware, though, lest you give yourself over too often to a talent that will tempt you to waste time and energy, as it were, on poetic fancies [*Schattenbilder*]. You will gain mastery of form [*Form*], force of clear formulation [*Gestaltung*] only through the permanent testimony of writing.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The closing movement, which was completed earlier, was performed by Wieck on 5 May and 11 September 1834 in Leipzig and on 26 November 1834 in Magdeburg. For a brief history of the Concerto, including Robert Schumann’s involvement in its composition, see Nancy B. Reich, *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 239–41.

<sup>7</sup> *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (hereafter *NZfM*) 3, no. 46 (8 December 1835): 182. All translations are my own.

<sup>8</sup> *Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Georg Wigand, 1854; rpt., Leipzig: Brietkopf & Härtel, 1985), IV, 302–03.

Schumann thereafter becomes more critical in his description of the first movement of the Concerto:

Often I saw skiffs floating boldly over the waves, and only a master hand at the tiller—a tautened sail was lacking that they might cut across the waves as quickly and victoriously as they did safely. Thus I heard here ideas that often had not chosen the proper interpreter [*Dolmetscher*] so as to shine in their complete splendor, but the fiery spirit that drove them on, and the longing that directed them, finally carried them securely towards their goal.

The individual musical ideas are no longer flowers but skiffs sailing toward a goal. The emphasis is no longer on the individual sounding of these ideas, but the directing of them. Musical ideas, even those that evoke pastoral scenes, cannot just exist; they must be purposefully pulled into place. Musical content needs to be shaped forcibly into proper form. Ideas or content needs, as Schumann writes when he drops the metaphors, a “proper interpreter,” or to express it more accurately in this context, an exegete. That Wieck did not propel her fiery musical inspiration toward a clearly discernable goal was, for Schumann, a shortcoming of her composition.

One feature that may account for Schumann’s discomfort is the harmonic flux of the passagework areas in the exposition. The modulation toward the key of the second subject is not prepared, but comes suddenly at the end of the transition; the closing group does not confirm the key of the second subject, but instead leaves it immediately and moves toward the key opening the development (see table 1). Both passages have a wonderfully improvisatory quality. Neither prepares the listener for the ultimate point of harmonic arrival until the very moment of that arrival. Though Schumann’s poetic review gives no technical details about the Concerto, it seems that his taste was too conservative to bear such uncertainty. The quality he seems to have missed in Wieck’s composition was the “beauty of form” that he found so “admirable” in the compositions of Mozart and Johann Nepomuk Hummel, and which only a few months after he heard Wieck’s Concerto he praised in the young E. Hermann Schornstein’s Concerto in F minor, Op. 1. Schornstein, he said, possessed a “native sense of proportion [*Verhältniß*] and unity.”<sup>9</sup>

When the Concerto appeared in print just over a year later, in January 1837, Schumann turned over the task of reviewing the publication to Carl

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<sup>9</sup> “*Pianoforte. Concerte*,” review of first Concerto, by E. Hermann Schornstein, *NZfM* 4, no. 17 (26 February 1836): 71. Schornstein (1811–82) was a pupil of Hummel.

**Table 1**  
Outline of Wieck, Piano Concerto, first movement

Tutti		principal theme twice (1–8, 9–16)	A minor
Solo	Introduction	free cadenza, with tutti interjections (17–37), derived from principal theme	A minor, cadence on V
	First group	<i>risoluto</i> , principal theme variant (38–45) second theme foreshadowed (46–57)	A minor, cadence on v A minor, cadence on V
	Transition	arpeggio passagework (57–65)	over V & I $\frac{5}{4}$ of A minor, ending on C major (64–65)
	Second group	second theme (66–74)	F major
	Closing group	scalar passagework (75–91)	F major, A minor (77), C major (80), E minor (82), G major (85), V of A $\flat$ (90)
Solo	Development	principal theme variants (92–111) retransition (112–29)	modulatory over V of E
Tutti	First group (truncated)	derived from principal theme (130–37, comparable to 28–31); principal theme variant (138–41)	E major
	Bridge	derived from principal theme, ending with piano solo (142–46)	modulation to V of A $\flat$

Ferdinand Becker, a regular contributor to the *Neue Zeitschrift* who was normally assigned to review organ music.<sup>10</sup> He explained to Becker that his own position in the matter was awkward, due to the violent opposition of Wieck's father, Friedrich, to the romantic attachment that had developed between Wieck and himself since late 1835.<sup>11</sup>

Becker's review was complimentary but superficial. He wrote that to his knowledge Wieck was the first young woman to have composed a piano concerto.<sup>12</sup> She acquitted herself well, for the Concerto entertains the music lover, satisfies the connoisseur, and displays the performer's virtuosity. "If the name of the female composer were not on the title," he continued, "one would never think that it was written by a woman." Curiously, however, his review emphasizes that it is by a woman, since the beginning expounds on recent attempts by women musicians to equal or surpass men. Asked by an imaginary reader whether astonishment at the sex of the composer is "really the way to judge a work," Becker responded "of course, since in this case there can be no question of a review [*Recension*, which is to say, critique]" because the composer is a woman, it is her first work in the genre, and it is excellent. Only within the nicety of quotation marks did Becker allow his imagined reader, not himself, to venture more specific criticism in the form of a query:

But will you . . . say nothing at all about the oft-used diminished seventh chords, about the finale—which, by its measure count, is longer than the two preceding movements—about the singular connection in writing the Allegro in A minor, the Romanze in A♭ major and the finale again in A minor?<sup>13</sup>

Becker assured his putative reader that there was nothing further on which to remark, adding only that "perhaps many people would like to know how fast the [long] last movement must be played."

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<sup>10</sup> On Becker, see Leon B. Plantinga, *Schumann as Critic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967, rpt. New York: Da Capo, 1976), 39n., 55, 58, 84.

<sup>11</sup> Letter of 10 February 1837. See *Robert Schumanns Briefe. Neue Folge*, ed. F. Gustav Jansen, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1904), 85.

<sup>12</sup> Among Wieck's predecessors is Joseph Czeny's student Léopoldine Blahetka (1811–87), who performed two piano concertos of her own composition in Vienna, one in B minor (first movement) on 6 March 1825, and another in E minor on 29 March 1829 (*Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 27, no. 15 [13 April 1825]: col. 240; and 31, no. 20 [20 May 1829]: col. 328). I have no information showing that either concerto was published, but she did publish a Concertstück for piano and orchestra, Op. 25 in about 1835.

<sup>13</sup> Carl Ferdinand Becker, "Concerte für das Pianoforte," review of first Concerto by Clara Wieck, *NZfM* 6, no. 14 (17 February 1837): 56–57.

Becker pointed out but did not evaluate Wieck's "singular" use of A♭ major for the second movement. In this he was not alone. A critic writing for the Viennese *Allgemeiner musikalische Anzeiger*, like Becker, noted that the key of the middle movement was "bound to cause surprise" [*befremden muß*]. But, he reasoned, "Women are moody." Further, "if in their cherished domestic and matrimonial circumstance the daughters of Eve would make no other, larger leaps [*Sprünge*], deviations or evasions [*Ab- oder Ausweichungen*] than such a teensy half step, then everything would be just fine."<sup>14</sup> Both Becker and the Viennese critic approached the score with the preconceptions of learned critics rather than with the ears of receptive listeners more attuned to the musical experience itself.<sup>15</sup> To register shock alone at the appearance of A♭ major within the context of A minor is to miss Wieck's point, which is in fact highly original in its exploitation of that very shock value.

Wieck uses A♭ major not only in the middle movement, but also at the beginning of the development section of the first movement (m. 92). Significantly, in both instances this unusual key signals the reappearance of thematic material derived from the principal theme of the first movement, given in example 1a. In the development an easily recognizable transformation of the principal theme in the tenor is accompanied in the discant by its own further transformation (example 1b); in turn, a transformation of the discant melody begins the second movement (example 1c). The principal theme of the finale, which was composed before the other two movements, is yet another transformation of the very same melody (example 1d). It is thus clear that neither the thematic connection between the first two movements, nor the unorthodox key used to highlight it, is the product of the young female composer's moods alone. The thematic connection is one that is certain to appeal to an audience and, therefore, help them register the formal significance of the unorthodox key, a key that the Viennese critic rejected out of hand. On this purely auditory basis, and not just in theory alone, the lengthy rondo, with no departure from A minor/major until the tutti beginning in m. 154 of a 356-measure movement, can be heard as rounding out the first movement, whose principal theme is never recapitulated in the tonic key. The

<sup>14</sup> Review of first Piano Concerto, by Clara Wieck, signed "0," *Allgemeiner musikalische Anzeiger* 10 (1838): 143. See also Janina Klassen, *Clara Wieck-Schumann. Die Virtuosin als Komponistin*, Kieler Schriften zu Musikwissenschaft 37 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1990), 114.

<sup>15</sup> On "discrepancies between aural experience and analytical description," see Nicholas Cook, *Musical Analysis and the Listener* (New York and London: Garland, 1989), 4–13. Cook suggests that, "Even in the case of those popularizing analyses intended to reach a wider audience . . . the relationship between technical exposition and ordinary aesthetic response can seem strained" (p. 6).

**Example 1.** Wieck, Piano Concerto, solo-piano edition.**1a.** First movement: Principal theme, mm. 1–4.**Allegro maestoso.** (M.M. ♩ = 116)

**Tutti**  
*ff* Viol.

**1b.** First movement: Development, mm. 92–96, variant of principal theme.**a Tempo, ma un poco tenuto e grandioso.**

**Solo**  
*f*

unusual length of this last movement and its tonal stability are also heard as balancing the unorthodox turn to the key of  $A\flat$  major in the second movement.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> On the role of  $A\flat$  major in the finale, see Helen Walker-Hill, "Neglected Treasure: The Piano Concerto of Clara Wieck Schumann," *Women of Note Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (August 1993): 26.

1c. Second movement: mm. 1-6.

ROMANZE.

(♩ = 80)

Andante non troppo con grazia.

Solo

La melodia ben marcato e legato.

*p* *mf*

1d. Third movement: mm. 5-8.

Solo

Wieck was later to take Schumann to task for not writing the review of her Concerto himself. She held up Becker's carping over the diminished-seventh chords as an example of trivia in an article that did not give her Concerto the "critical examination" [*Beurtheilung*] it deserved.<sup>17</sup> Her annoyance seems justified, in that Becker's cursory viewing of the score applies mostly paper criteria. The thematic and harmonic interrelationships that are significant and, I believe, audible because of their double coding are passed over, perhaps not recognized as legitimate.

The thematic interrelationships mark Wieck's Concerto as part of the formal experimentation that emerged in the genre in the 1830s. One example, with which Wieck was probably familiar before beginning to compose the first movement of her Concerto in June 1834, is Mendelssohn's Piano Concerto in G minor, Op. 22 (published in London, 1832, by Mori and Lavenu, and in Leipzig, 1833, by Breitkopf & Härtel).<sup>18</sup> Two other examples are Moscheles's Piano Concerto no. 6 in B♭ major, *Fantastique*, Op. 90 (1833) and Piano Concerto no. 7 in C minor, *Pathétique*, Op. 96 (1835-36). On 9 October 1835 Moscheles performed the *Fantastique* and the first movement of the *Pathétique* in Leipzig. The Moscheles concertos do not completely reject the traditional outlines of concerto form, but they introduce certain departures from it, especially in their first movements. These two concertos also break down the usual divisions between movements by linking them, as does Wieck, through bridges and thematic recalls. As a result they sacrifice the autonomy of the individual movements or parts of the concerto for the greater integration of the whole. With respect to this type of construction Wieck's thinking is among the most advanced of her time.

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<sup>17</sup> Letter of 15 December 1837. See Clara and Robert Schumann, *Briefwechsel. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Eva Weissweiler, Vol. 1, 1832-38 (Frankfurt am Main: Sternfeld/Roter Stern, 1984), 57. Clara misquotes Becker as writing "Decimenacorde" rather than "verminderte Septimenaccorden." See also Berthold Litzmann, *Clara Schumann. Ein Künstlerleben nach Tagebüchern und Briefen*, Vol. 1, *Mädchenjahre, 1819-1840*, 8th ed. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1925; rpt., Hildesheim, New York: Georg Olms Verlag/Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1971), 113.

<sup>18</sup> Mendelssohn did not perform his Concerto in Leipzig until 29 October 1835, but a report by Schumann suggests that he and Wieck may have known the piece already from the published score. See Schumann, "Schwärmbriefe. An Chiara [Clara Wieck]," *NZfM* 3, no. 38 (10 November 1835): 151. It reads in part, "You remember that we never thought the mere piano part to be something unusually original [*etwas Selten-Originelles*]."

Two years after his initial review of the Concerto, Schumann remarked in a letter to Wieck on 29 November 1837:

Do you always play your Concerto of your own initiative? There are stellar ideas in the first movement—yet it did not make a complete impression [*keinen ganzen Eindruck*] on me.<sup>19</sup>

By this point Wieck had already performed the Concerto in Berlin (16 February 1837), Hamburg (1 April 1837), Leipzig (8 October 1837), and Prague (23 November 1837). She received the letter in Vienna, where ultimately she would play the Concerto three times (21 December 1837; 18 February and 5 April 1838). Forbidden by her father to have any contact with Schumann, she corresponded with him in secret. Believing that her father prevented their marriage for selfish, exploitative reasons, Schumann worried that under pressure she would not remain faithful to him. Under the circumstances, Schumann's question as to whether she continued to play the Concerto of her own initiative may reflect concern that her father was forcing her to exhibit it as a kind of curiosity piece—a young female performing a concerto of her own composition was precisely the unheard of *fête Becker* drew attention to in his review.<sup>20</sup>

Wieck's reply to Schumann's letter forcefully defended the decision to play the Concerto as her own, based on the enthusiastic response of the public to it:

Today was my second concert, and once again a triumph. Of the many things on the program my Concerto had the best reception. You ask if I play it of my own initiative—certainly! I play it because everywhere it has so pleased, and satisfied connoisseurs [*Kenner*] as well as the general public [*Nichtkenner*]. But, whether it satisfies me is still very much the [i.e., your] question. Do you think that I am so weak that I do not know exactly what the faults of the Concerto are? I know precisely, but the audience does not, and furthermore does not need to know.<sup>21</sup>

Wieck is reiterating a point made earlier in the same letter: even though she would compose the Concerto differently, she played it often because it satisfied her public.

<sup>19</sup> Clara and Robert Schumann, *Briefwechsel*, I, 53.

<sup>20</sup> Letters of 8, 29 November 1837. See Clara and Robert Schumann, *Briefwechsel*, I, 38–39, 52; Reich, *Clara Schumann*, 76–83.

<sup>21</sup> Letter of 21 December 1837. See Clara and Robert Schumann, *Briefwechsel*, I, 58.

The nature of Schumann's dissatisfaction may be surmised from his reviews of other piano concertos. He believed that each of the movements of a concerto should be complete. When writing of Moscheles's *Fantastique* Schumann warned of the "aesthetic peril" inherent in a concerto of four movements played without interruption, namely, that it will not result in a "satisfying whole." Like Wieck's Concerto, the *Fantastique* lacks a balancing return in the first movement. Schumann wrote, "We already declared ourselves against the form earlier. While it also does not seem impossible to create a pleasant whole from it, the aesthetic hazards are too great compared to what might be gained." Schumann commended, instead, the amateur composer Carl Kaskel (pseud. Lasekk) for composing a concertino in which each movement, though joined to the others, is a complete, closed unit. About this piece he remarked, "But therefore we must call it a concerto, because it consists of three movements separated by caesuras. If these are quite short, that is to their advantage. Indeed, it seems to me that this form is much more artful than the usual one for concertinos, which is concocted from various parts in changing tempos all running into each other, and which for the most part results in an aesthetic disaster."<sup>22</sup>

Schumann expected a concerto (or concertino) to adhere to a particular harmonic structure and formal pattern. His review and letter make clear that Wieck's Concerto did not fulfill his expectations regarding either matter, but they also show that he was struck by the work's beauty. Dissatisfied with the work's lack of formal control and unity, he nevertheless reacted favorably to its content. The same dichotomy is apparent in a review by a correspondent for the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* who heard Wieck play in Prague. He wrote, "The Concertino is somewhat lacking in unity, yet [it is] fashioned with imagination and spirit."<sup>23</sup>

Although Wieck was aware of the Concerto's faults, for her the central issue was its success with the public, which was unaware of the shortcomings. Her success with the public was indeed remarkable: the second of her three Vienna performances of the Concerto was advertised as by demand. At this point, as through most of her life, Wieck thought of herself

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<sup>22</sup> "Pianoforte. Concerte," review of a Concertino for Pianoforte by Carl Lasekk, and the fifth and Sixth Concertos of Ignaz Moscheles, *NZfM* 4, nos. 18 and 29 (1 March and 8 April 1836): 77 and 123. For Schumann's views on concerto form, see my "'Mit einer eignen außerordentlichen Composition': The Genesis of Schumann's *Phantasie* in A Minor," *Journal of Musicology* (forthcoming).

<sup>23</sup> "Nachrichten. Prag," *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 39, no. 52 (27 December 1837): col. 858.

primarily as a performer not a composer. As Nancy B. Reich puts it, "she composed because all professional performers of her time did so."<sup>24</sup> Though her musical thinking was in the forefront of its time, apparently she was less than fully satisfied with her creative efforts. She may even have concurred with Schumann, for whom her radical experiment in the concerto genre did not have a completely satisfactory outcome. But she also knew that her Concerto was well received, even demanded by her public. It seems the public, unlike the critics, was not concerned with its logical structure, harmonic instability, or any supposed lack of formal balance. Instead, like Schumann and the correspondent from Prague, they were enthralled by its beauty and struck by its imagination and spirit. It is this immediate appeal on which Wieck placed such a high valuation in her letter to Schumann. A year after the Viennese tour of 1837–38 she wrote him from Paris, asking him to compose "just once something brilliant, easily understood and with no titles, but a completely continuous piece that is neither too long nor too short? I would like so much to have something by you to play publicly that is for the public."<sup>25</sup> This description—a continuous piece with no titles, neither too long nor too short, brilliant and, according to her own testimony, easily understood—fits Wieck's Concerto exactly.

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In the initial period of its reception history (1900–06), Beach's Concerto, like Wieck's, was favorably received by audiences but not by critics. In the case of Beach, though, circumstances did not conspire to remove her Concerto from the stage permanently soon after its premiere. The work instead became an important vehicle for her as both composer and performer when, after the loss of her husband in 1910 and her mother in 1911, she resumed the concert career she had abandoned upon her marriage in 1885. Three European performances of the Concerto in 1913 proved to be a turning point. By then the critics no longer condescended to Beach as a dilettante, but came to recognize her as a celebrity and respect her as the grande dame of American music. The Concerto benefited from the improved stature of its composer, with the strange result that when she returned home a new group of American critics praised some of the very features their predecessors had damned in 1900. Like the

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<sup>24</sup> Reich, *Clara Schumann*, 229.

<sup>25</sup> Letter of 4 April 1839. See Clara and Robert Schumann, *Briefwechsel. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Eva Weissweiler, Vol. 2, 1839 (Frankfurt am Main: Sternfeld/Roter Stern, 1987), 469.

more modest success of Wieck's Concerto, the Beach Concerto owed its considerable success to the exceptional ability of its performer who, as such, was able to exploit its performance-oriented gestures.

To understand fully the critics' reactions, it is first necessary to identify the various style traditions invoked in the first movement. The construction shares much with concertos dating from 1820–40 that Beach performed in her teens, by Moscheles, Mendelssohn and, in particular, Chopin.<sup>26</sup> The use of separate thematic content for the transitional passagework, the change to a new key for the close of the second group, the lengthy working out of the principal theme in the development, and the cursory treatment of that theme in the reprise all recall the Chopin F-minor Concerto, Op. 21, which Beach played at age eighteen (28 March 1885). Like Chopin's Concerto, Beach's draws on a tradition in which passagework (primarily the closing groups but also transitional sections) is not integral. In classical piano concertos (for example Beethoven's third, fourth and fifth concertos, and most of Mozart's concertos) the closing group and usually the transition sections may be said to be integral to the whole in two ways. First, the thematic material derives from motives and characteristic rhythmic figures of the principal themes. Second and more important, the construction of these sections takes the form of full phrases. However florid the figuration of these phrases, and however great their internal or cadential extensions, the classical closing group (or bridge, or other transitional passagework sections) carries the movement forward towards its various intermediate goals in much the same way as do the principal thematic sections, albeit at a different pace. In contrast, passagework areas and particularly closing groups in the Chopin Concerto, or in Moscheles's Concerto in G minor, Op. 60 (performed by Beach at her orchestral debut concert on 24 October 1883) tend to strike the listener as isolated moments. In the Moscheles the material is etude-like. In the Chopin, though the closing group takes a thematic shape, its material is unrelated to the preceding themes. In Mendelssohn's D-minor Concerto, Op. 40 (performed by Beach on 29 April 1885) the closing group consists of filigree passagework for the piano, with accompanying rhythmic motives in the orchestra that are derived from the first group. Yet in construction the closing group is like those of the Chopin and Moscheles concertos—a series of cadential extensions involving colorful sequential and modulatory units, all appended to the preceding thematic statement rather than to any full phrase within the closing group itself. All of these closing

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<sup>26</sup> Other piano concertos Beach performed before she composed her own were by Mozart, in D Minor, K. 466 (20 February 1886); Beethoven, in C Minor, Op. 37 (21 April 1888); and Saint-Saëns, in G Minor, Op. 22 (16 February 1895).

groups, as episodic and harmonically active, provide contrast to the lengthy full periods and harmonic stability of the thematic areas.

In Beach's Concerto this same kind of contrast is provided by the intriguing harmonic and melodic richness of both the long transition and the shorter closing group of the exposition (see table 2). The transition is first over the dominant of E major (mm. 93–100) but then continues with new, subsidiary motives in a series of short, sequentially shifting cadential gestures that lead to the dominant of A (mm. 101–20, example 2). The closing group (*Animato*, m. 166) incorporates familiar motives derived from the principal theme and subsidiary theme of the transition, all repeated in one-, two- and even half-bar units, and each part of a cadential gesture. Harmonic surprise, matching the unexpected shift from E major to A major in the transition, is produced by the sudden switch from the dominant of A major to a half-diminished seventh chord on the fourth degree of A major (mm. 165, 166), then move toward a long dominant preparation of G# minor (mm. 174–91).

**Example 2.** Beach, Piano Concerto, first movement exposition, two-piano edition. Transition, mm. 100–02, subsidiary theme.

The musical score for Example 2 is presented in two staves, treble and bass clef. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The tempo/mood is marked 'Tutti' and the dynamics are 'mf' and 'p'. The music features a series of chords and melodic lines, with a prominent eighth-note figure in the right hand. The score is marked with a 'Tutti' dynamic and a 'p' dynamic. The music is in a 2/4 time signature. The score is marked with a 'Tutti' dynamic and a 'p' dynamic. The music is in a 2/4 time signature.

While the structure of the first movement of Beach's Concerto relates to models from the earlier part of the nineteenth century, the piano writing is associated with a style that, though dating from mid-century, continued to be in use through the end of the century. Its double octaves, full chords, and expansive melodies sound somewhat like Liszt (see, for example, the opening measures of his First Concerto in E♭), even more like Anton Rubinstein (the opening octaves or the *con espressione* second theme statement of his Concerto No. 4 in D minor, Op. 70 [1864]), or Rachmaninov (Concerto No. 2 in C minor [1900–01]). And although the harmonic shifts described earlier owe a debt to Chopin, the manner of their execution brings to mind even more the practice of a younger composer, Brahms, for whom Beach's advocacy was still exceptional in Boston, even among musicians, as late as the 1880s.<sup>27</sup> The Concerto at times shows

<sup>27</sup> Burnet C. Tuthill, "Mrs. H.H.A. Beach," *Musical Quarterly* 26 (1940): 300–01.

**Table 2**  
Outline of Beach, Piano Concerto, first movement

Tutti		principal theme twice (1–20, 21–35)	C# minor
Solo	Introduction	free cadenza derived from principal theme (36–68)	C# minor, cadence on V
	First group	<i>Poco più tranquillo</i> , variant of principal theme in tutti, countertheme in solo (69–86)	C# minor
	Transition	variant of principal theme in solo then tutti (87–100); subsidiary theme in dotted rhythms, ending with allusions to principal theme (101–31)	V of E reached at 93; traversing B major (102), D major (104), F major (108), V of A (115)
	Second group	<i>espressivo</i> , second theme by piano solo (132–46); second theme by violin solo (147–54) then violins tutti (155–61); then again violin solo, accompanied by piano (162–65)	A major; beginning on C# minor, modulating to A major, ending on V of A
	Closing group	<i>Animato</i> , variant of principal theme with countertheme and subsidiary theme (166–92)	modulatory but centered around and ending in G# minor
Tutti		principal theme (192–200); second theme (201–15)	modulatory
Solo	Development	principal theme in tutti, accompanied by piano (215–66); second theme in piano, accompanied by tutti (267–73); principal theme in tutti (274–77) and retransition (278–85)	modulatory, leading at the end to F# minor
	First group	principal theme in tutti, accompanied by piano (286–303)	beginning in F# minor, ending with a modulation toward D# major
	Second group	second theme in piano, accompanied by tutti (304–20) second theme in tutti, accompanied by piano (321–49)	D# major beginning in F, modulating to C# minor
	Cadenza	(350–406)	
Tutti with solo		subsidiary theme and principal theme (407–39)	C# minor

Brahms's tendency to obscure lines of demarcation, apparent, for example, in the first movement of his Piano Sonata, Op. 5 (1853), where the theme and texture signaling the recapitulation are heard a full twelve measures before the tonic key is reached. In Beach's Concerto there is no textural separation between the end of the development and beginning of the recapitulation—both piano and orchestra play through the end of the development into the first theme area of the recapitulation. Nor is the recapitulation signaled by a clear arrival on the tonic—the dominant preparation of C# minor, begun in the retransition, turns to F# minor just as the recapitulation opens with the principal theme (m. 286). Thereafter the tonic key, C# minor, is touched on only briefly (and ambiguously) in the first group. It is this type of harmonic freedom that lends much of the movement an improvisatory aura.

While certain expected tonal goals and formal divisions are obscured in the first movement of Beach's Concerto, an important aspect of its accessibility, especially for a general audience, is the repetition and transformation of the well-profiled and easily remembered principal theme. The movement opens with a threefold presentation of the principal theme, first in a series of exchanges between the piano and orchestra in mm. 1–68 (example 3a); second, in a varied form in the orchestra to a new countertheme in the piano at mm. 69–86 (example 3b); then third, again varied, in the piano at mm. 87–93 (example 3c). Other allusions to this theme appear in the transition at mm. 93–100, 115–18, and 127–31 (example 3d), in the closing passagework in mm. 166–92 (example 3e), then considerably worked over in the development.

\* \* \*

**Example 3.** Beach, Piano Concerto, first movement exposition, two-piano edition.  
**3a.** Tutti, mm. 1–5, principal theme.

**Allegro moderato.** (♩ = 112)  
 Tutti

*pp legatissimo*

Ped.

3b. First group, mm. 69-72, principal theme (tutti) with solo countertheme.

**Poco più tranquillo.**  
Tutti

*sempre pp*

**Poco più tranquillo.**  
Solo

*p*

*Red.*

Detailed description: This section contains two systems of musical notation. The first system is for measures 69-70, marked 'Tutti' and 'Poco più tranquillo.' It features a principal theme in the right hand and a countertheme in the left hand. The dynamic is 'sempre pp'. The second system is for measures 71-72, also marked 'Poco più tranquillo.' and 'Solo'. It features a more active countertheme in the right hand and a principal theme in the left hand. The dynamic is 'p'. There are trill ornaments in the left hand at the end of measures 71 and 72, marked 'Red.'. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

3c. Transition, mm. 87-93, variant of principal theme.

Solo

*legatissimo*

90

*Red.* \* *Red.* \*

**Tempo I.**

*p*

*cresc.*

*Red.*

**Tempo I.**

*cresc.*

*sempre cresc.*

*Red.* \* *Red.* \*

Detailed description: This section contains three systems of musical notation. The first system is for measures 87-90, marked 'Solo' and 'legatissimo'. It features a variant of the principal theme in the right hand and a countertheme in the left hand. The dynamic is 'p'. There are trill ornaments in the left hand at the end of measures 87 and 89, marked 'Red.'. The second system is for measures 91-92, marked 'Tempo I.'. It features a variant of the principal theme in the right hand and a countertheme in the left hand. The dynamic is 'p'. There are trill ornaments in the left hand at the end of measures 91 and 92, marked 'Red.'. The third system is for measures 93-94, marked 'Tempo I.'. It features a variant of the principal theme in the right hand and a countertheme in the left hand. The dynamic is 'sempre cresc.'. There are trill ornaments in the left hand at the end of measures 93 and 94, marked 'Red.'. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

## 3d. Mm. 127–31, allusion to principal theme.

Clarinetti *a tempo* *pp* *rit.* Corni.

## 3e. Closing group, mm. 174–75, variant of principal theme.

Tutti *mf* *ff*

\* \* \*

After the first performance of her Concerto on 7 April 1900 Beach saved eight reviews in a scrapbook of clippings.<sup>28</sup> Only one of these, by Howard M. Ticknor, offered unmixed (if somewhat routine) praise in an article that is primarily a neutral description of the Concerto derived from program notes for the concert.<sup>29</sup> None of the other seven critics warmed to the Concerto. Their attitudes ranged from undisguised disappointment (Louis C. Elson, *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 9 April; *Boston Globe*, 8 April, unsigned; *Boston Gazette*, 8 April, unsigned) and condescension (*Boston Transcript*, 10 April, unsigned) to condemnation (*Boston Herald*, 8 April, unsigned; W.D. Quint, *Boston Traveller*, 9 April) and even thorough nastiness (Philip Hale, *Boston Journal*, [15 April?]).

<sup>28</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all ensuing reviews are cited from clippings in the Amy Beach Scrapbooks, Special Collections, University of New Hampshire Library, Durham.

<sup>29</sup> Ticknor introduces the description by noting, "This composition displays in dignified, scholarly[,] impressive and gratifying ways that advance upon herself and that perfecting in art of which Mrs. Beach's later writings have given proof." Ticknor's review may be based on the open rehearsal on 6 April, as the article appeared in the *Boston Courier* on 7 April, the same day as the performance.

All seven critics were dissatisfied with the balance between the orchestra and soloist. According to the *Herald*, "The orchestration is steadily thick and noisy, and too frequently so massive that the solo instrument does not and cannot loom through it." The *Transcript* called the orchestral writing "heavily laden"; the *Gazette* said "the instruments . . . are not combined in the most effective manner;" and Quint described a "storm of instruments" overwhelming the piano. The *Globe* judged that Beach, "like nearly all her sex, lacked the power of coping with an orchestra like the Boston symphony, especially where so many fortissimo passages occur, and the consequence was an obscuration of some of the piano score." Elson expressed surprise that unlike Chopin, Rubinstein and Liszt, who "all put their especial instrument too much in the foreground when combining it with the orchestra . . . the fault of [this] concerto [is] in exactly the opposite direction." He then ascribed an obbligato character to the solo, a criticism he could also have leveled at Brahms's two piano concertos: "The orchestration swallows up the piano in many passages and the solo instrument is not employed in sounding forth bold themes in its own definite style, but in giving constant fioriture, scales and ornate passages against rather vague themes in the orchestra."<sup>30</sup>

The other main complaint was the lack of clarity, sometimes specified as thematic clarity. The critics wrote, for example, that the Concerto "is not always clear [in its] passage work" (*Herald*); that it is "seemingly not very clear in some of the theme developments" (*Globe*); and that it lacks "grace, fascination and clearness" (Quint). More extensive comments by Hale and Elson, both well-known and respected critics,<sup>31</sup> suggest that thematic clarity was not judged solely on the basis of the orchestra/solo balance, but also according to the critics' expectations of an orderly display of successive themes and orthodox resolution of harmonies. Hale writes, "The first movement was long drawn out, and when there was the thought of the end [i.e., when the movement seemed to draw to its con-

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<sup>30</sup> It is possible that after playing the Concerto, Beach also heard an imbalance between the orchestra and solo and made some changes to the score to correct it. Two rehearsals (one private, and the other on 6 April, public) and the performance with the Boston Symphony were apparently the first opportunities she had to hear it with an orchestra. Brian Mann reports that a copy of the piece sent to its dedicatee Teresa Carreño shows paste-overs in both the full score and parts, but gives no indication of what or how extensive these changes were ("The Carreño Collection at Vassar College," *Notes: Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* 47 [1991]: 1081). It is unknown whether Beach sent the score before or after the premiere; Carreño received it before 25 May 1900. See letters in the Amy Beach Correspondence Collection, Special Collections, University of New Hampshire, Durham.

<sup>31</sup> On the reputations of Hale and Elson, see *New Grove*, s.v. "Hale, Philip," vol. 8, 43, by Wayne D. Shirley, and "Elson, Louis Charles," vol. 6, 145, by Karl Kroeger.

clusion], there was a curiously unexpected and meaningless appendix." The appendix is "unexpected" because it comes after the orchestral coda following the cadenza, and turns the piece away from a cadence on C# minor (in the type of harmonic surprise already discussed in connection with the transition and close of the exposition). "Meaningless" it may be to a guardian of traditional form in the concerto, but not for a listener who appreciates the return of the soloist to complete the movement *forte* (and louder) with the orchestra. Elson writes, "The whole first movement seemed rather indefinite, at a first hearing; although there were many individual passages of much charm, there did not seem to be that coherency and clear scheme that one finds in the masterpieces." Elson seems to reject the aesthetic framework that I have associated with Brahms, that is, Beach's obscuring of expected formal divisions between large sections of the Concerto, for example, between the development and recapitulation. That at the same time he heard "many passages of individual charm" suggests Elson may have considered the separate, episodic areas of the movement—for example, the long transition with its own motives and surprising change of harmonic direction—as failing to form a "clear scheme."

Elson's judgment sounds much like Schumann's criticism of Wieck's Concerto: the content (individual passages of much charm) is fine; the form (coherency and clear scheme) is weak. Such opposed assessments of details and form also appear with critics who appraise Beach's music from broader aesthetic and historical perspectives. In his 1906 book on Beach, Percy Goetschius wrote, "In the 'Pianoforte Concerto' [Beach] has produced a highly interesting work—possibly weakened slightly by its length and technical exertions, but full of brilliant and impressive details."<sup>32</sup> Goetschius does not specify how length weakens the piece, but one can only surmise that it does so by attenuating the form, despite (or perhaps because of the distraction of) the "brilliant and impressive details" or content. More recently, Peter Dickinson has written of the Concerto:

The music is full-blooded virile . . . the passagework is sometimes merely conventional rather than integral. But this does not detract from the accumulating power of the long first movement that, although diffuse, eventually reaches a higher level. Greater concentration throughout would have been an advantage.<sup>33</sup>

Dickinson values concentration above so-called diffuseness, such as in, presumably, the non-integral passagework.

<sup>32</sup> Percy Goetschius, *Mrs. H.H.A. Beach* (Boston: Arthur P. Schmidt), 13.

<sup>33</sup> Peter Dickinson, "The American Concerto," in *A Companion to the Concerto*, 307.

The fact that Beach's loosening of received form worked in conjunction with multifarious thematic connections was apparently lost on the critics at the premiere, just as it was on Becker when he reviewed Wieck's Concerto. They failed to consider that thematic repetition and transformation are the principal means of tying together the various parts of the long first movement. Typical in this respect is the critic for the *Gazette* who charged Beach with repeating her ideas "to the point of monotony." Not until four years later, in 1904, did a critic—who not coincidentally was a woman—come to Beach's defense in this matter. In a series of three articles in the *Washington Post*, Bernice Thompson gave an overview of Beach's works. Thompson's main purpose was to illustrate the great and undervalued contributions of women musicians in order to counter what she considered the "absurd" opinion of the critics George Upton, Henry Finck, James Huneker and others, that women lack creative ability. Her brief comments on the Concerto point to the merit of Beach's strategy: "One of the favorable features of this work is the richness and variety in the treatment of its principal theme. Every time this theme appears it has an entirely different harmonic setting from that in any of its previous announcements." Thompson attributed much of the divergence in listeners' viewpoints to gender. Concerning Beach's songs she wrote, "If [they] do not find more men admirers it is not the fault of the music but of the men themselves." It was among women that Thompson expected to find admirers for the music of Beach and other women, music that she conjectured may be "vastly different from the accustomed style" because of the difference in "thoughts and feelings" of women from men.<sup>34</sup> Thus, thematic and motive repetition, even if condemned by the *Gazette* critic, had an appeal to certain members of Beach's audience.

The appeal of Beach's Concerto to her audience at the premiere is undeniable. The Boston critics reported a "large audience" (*Gazette*) and "three to four stormy recalls" (*Herald*), an enthusiastic reception at odds with their own evaluation (the very situation that Wieck perceived in the reception of her own Concerto). Not one of Beach's critics seemed to have found this fact curious. They may have felt that her audience was roused solely by the familiarity of the composer in her home town; that the audience was uncritical in its judgment; or that it was simply carried away by Beach's accomplished playing, which seven of the eight Boston reviewers noted. They took this talent as a matter of course. In Europe

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<sup>34</sup> *Music and Musicians: Quotations from The Washington Post for January 10th, 17th, and 24th, 1904* (published separately), 6, 8, 10. Thompson claimed in January 1904 that the Concerto received "a number of notable performances," but I have as yet found no record of any early performances other than the Boston premiere.

women had been playing the piano in public since at least the 1820s, and by the end of the century their American sisters were, not unnaturally, following their lead.<sup>35</sup> Mention of Beach's talent as a performer was, invariably, *pro forma* at the end of the review.

It cannot be overlooked that the early critics of Beach's Concerto may have sharpened their barbs or, as with Becker reviewing Wieck's Concerto, adopted a patronizing stance because the composition in question was by a woman, and one they considered an amateur composer as well. The writer for the *Transcript* compared Beach to a "beginner" in that she had a "tendency . . . to do all she can at once," then gave her some fatherly advice. "What Mrs. Beach most needs is experience in listening to her own works; and while occasionally producing compositions of such extravagant dimensions, instead of frequently producing shorter things, she has thus remained longer at the tentative stage than she ought; she ought by this time to have acquired more maturity of conception, a more trustworthy skill in execution." The patronizing tone of the critic for the *Transcript* was echoed in other reviews. Elson wrote, "This lady has no desire to shine in the smaller forms of music, but constantly essays the highest flights; she has composed some excellent songs and piano works, but her vaulting ambition has recently led her to create a large mass, a long symphony, and now a four-movement piano concerto." Hale stated flatly, "It is a pity she has never had a thorough, severe drill in theory and orchestration." She had in fact studied orchestration extensively from the age of fifteen.<sup>36</sup>

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In September 1911 Beach left for Europe. A letter to her publisher Arthur P. Schmidt reveals a plan, according to Adrienne Fried Block, "to rest and then embark on a European concert tour in which her works could be played, with herself at the piano wherever possible. The purpose was to establish a European reputation that would help her build up her public in the United States."<sup>37</sup> Essentially the European tour signaled the

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<sup>35</sup> Nancy Reich, "European Composers and Musicians, 1800-1900," in *Women and Music: A History*, ed. Karin Pendle (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 116-17; Adrienne Fried Block, "Women in American Music, 1800-1918," in *Women and Music*, 153-54.

<sup>36</sup> Block, "Women in American Music," 167-68.

<sup>37</sup> Adrienne Fried Block, "Arthur P. Schmidt, Music Publisher and Champion of American Women Composers," in *The Musical Woman: An International Perspective*, Vol. 2. 1984-85, ed. Judith Lang Zaimont (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 162-63.

<sup>38</sup> It should be noted, though, that Beach had a considerable reputation as a composer, and to some extent as a performer, before she went to Europe. See Adrienne Fried Block, "Why Amy Beach Succeeded as a Composer: The Early Years," *Current Musicology* 36 (1983): 54.

beginning of a new life for Beach.<sup>38</sup> In 1929 John Tasker Howard recalled, "She once wrote me that it seems as if a century must separate the present from her earlier life, devoted mostly to composition in her own home, with only occasional concert appearances. In recent years she has been much 'on the road,' with only brief periods for writing."<sup>39</sup> Not until she was past sixty did Beach give up performing to turn exclusively to composing. "I am . . . too fond of my audiences to give them up," she told an interviewer at age fifty.<sup>40</sup>

The Concerto was central to Beach's repertory in Europe and later when she began her tours of the United States. In 1913 she played it in Leipzig on 22 November, Hamburg on 2 December, and Berlin on 18 December, each time with the American conductor Theodore Spiering.<sup>41</sup> Five critics in Leipzig praised Beach's work and her performance.<sup>42</sup> In Hamburg the instrumentation, the very feature the Boston critics condemned, was commended by Ferdinand Pfohl (*Hamburger Nachrichten*, 3 December 1913): "This work finds its highest point in the opening allegro—a surpassing movement, rich in ideas, in the romantic element, and marked by its refined treatment not only of the solo instrument, but of the orchestra."<sup>43</sup> As seen in the following excerpts from the Berlin reviews, even the construction and thematic structure of the Concerto were applauded:

The concerto is very cleverly written, and most effective in its musical construction. . . . The themes are worked out in a most artistic style.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>39</sup> John Tasker Howard, *Our American Music* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1929), 346.

<sup>40</sup> H.F.P., "Believes Women Composers Will Rise to Greater Heights in World Democracy," *Musical America* 25, no. 25 (21 April 1917): 3.

<sup>41</sup> Concerning these concerts I have consulted only the translated excerpts of German reviews that were sent to the *Musical Courier*, along with those reviews that were either written or translated for *The Berlin Continental Times* or *Musical America*. As these excerpts were used as publicity, they are more favorable than the complete reviews that I examined in connection with the Boston premiere. Nevertheless, the consensus among historians is that the German critics were indeed more positive than their Boston contemporaries. See, for example, Howard, *American Music*, 346; Block, "Amy Beach," 54.

<sup>42</sup> "Mrs. H.H.A. Beach's Leipsic Tributes," *Musical Courier* 68, no. 5 (4 February 1914): 38.

<sup>43</sup> Quoted in "Amy Beach (Mrs. H.H.A. Beach) in Hamburg," advertisement in *The Musical Courier* 67, no. 27 (31 December 1913): 50. A reviewer for the *Berlin Continental Times* attributed to Spiering's "reliable guiding-hand . . . the splendid balance maintained between soloist and orchestra" (undated clipping).

<sup>44</sup> From the *Berlin Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, [no date]. Quoted in "Berlin's Praise of Mrs. Beach," *Musical Courier* 68, no. 13 (25 February 1914): 13.

While exhibiting extraordinary melodic fertility, the author here [in the first movement] spins her themes to happy, logical and well-tempered issues.<sup>45</sup>

Particularly noteworthy were the skilfully [*sic*] wrought technical figures and the general thematic structure of the first two movements (*Continental Times*, [n.d.]).

Critics at the European premiere of the Concerto were won over by Beach's performance. A review in the *Neue Hamburger Zeitung* (3 December 1913) reads, "she had a decided success with her concerto—a success largely due to the composer's presentation."<sup>46</sup> According to Beach, too, it was personal presentation that swung the critics in favor of the Concerto. In 1917 she told *Musical America* about the Hamburg performance:

I was summarily warned of the fate that awaited me when my 'Gaelic' Symphony and my piano concerto were played in Hamburg. The audience would be cold, the critics hostile. At best I could anticipate nothing better than a show of politeness. And when Theodore Spiering, who conducted, came to me after the performance, he was not in a cheerful frame of mind. Immediately thereafter, I was to play the piano part of my Concerto. But I rejected the invitation to discouragement, 'got my mad up,' as we put it in New England, and determined to force the audience to like it. My resolve won the victory and a considerable one. The critics wrote well, and even the worst bear of them, Dr. Ferdinand Pfohl, was eulogistic.<sup>47</sup>

It is not surprising that European critics reacted favorably when Beach began to perform the Concerto in Germany in 1913: their attention was directed away from her as the work's composer to her as its performer, the more usual role for a woman. She seems to have had full confidence in her own supreme qualifications for this role. A remark made at a later date, namely that "the concerto requires tremendous aptitude, I might say genius, to give the right meaning to all its phrases," appears to summarize fairly Beach's beliefs in her own abilities.<sup>48</sup> As the success in Germany shows,

<sup>45</sup> O.P. Jacob, "Mrs. Beach's New Concerto Played: Berlin Audience Hears Ambitious Work by American Woman Who Appears a Pianist," *European Bureau*, 20 December 1913, *Musical America* 19, no. 10 (10 January 1914): 35.

<sup>46</sup> Quoted in "Amy Beach in Hamburg," 50.

<sup>47</sup> H.F.P., "Women Composers," 3.

<sup>48</sup> Mrs. Crosby Adams, "An American Genius of World Renown: Mrs. H.H.A. Beach," *Etude* 46, no. 1 (January 1928): 34, 61. The comment was made with reference to a performance of the Concerto by the seventeen-year-old Helen Pugh. Beach loaned out the orches-

the part of the strategy she outlined to Schmidt that cast her into the role of performer was working well. The other part, concerning the help she would derive from her established European reputation in building a similar one in the United States, seems also to have been successful. On her return to the United States, detailed discussion of either the Concerto or her performances of it, whether positive or negative, took second place to unquestioned promotion of her as the greatest American woman musician.

When Beach returned from Europe she began a cross-country tour that took her as far as the West Coast. She played the Concerto in Los Angeles for the National Federation of Musical Clubs Festival of American Music on 26 June 1915 and in San Francisco for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition on 1 August. During successive seasons she played it in Chicago on 4 February 1916, St. Louis on 12 and 13 January 1917, Boston on 2 and 3 March 1917, and Minneapolis in late 1917. Reviews of these concerts reveal Beach as a special presence—the foremost woman composer of her day. The reviews from Los Angeles are representative. The *Musical Courier* reported, “Much applause followed the close of each movement and at the close of the entire concerto there were several prolonged recalls and cries of ‘bravo!’ with waving of handkerchiefs.” The next paragraph notes that “Monday, June 28, was named ‘The Mrs. H.H.A. Beach Day’ by the officials of the Panama-California Exposition at San Diego, and Mrs. Beach was the guest on the grounds all day.” The *Courier* also printed excerpts from a report of the concert in the *Los Angeles Examiner* (27 June 1915) that began, “Mrs. H.H.A. Beach, one of America’s leading women composers,” and from an unidentified Los Angeles paper that similarly introduced Beach as “one of America’s greatest women composers.”<sup>49</sup> Another paper summed up her Los Angeles appearance on a program that included works by her American contemporaries, Arne Oldberg, Arthur Foote, and Arthur Farwell, “Needless to say that she received the ovation of the evening” (unidentified clipping).

The Chicago reviews were less favorable. Karleton Hackett, for example, felt that both the structure and instrumentation of the Concerto were weak: “It was not apparently conceived as an organic whole in which the piano formed but one of the essential elements, but it took form rather as a series of soli for the piano about which the orchestra was written [*sic*]. This gave it a somewhat disjointed effect, with the orchestra appearing

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tral score for Pugh’s performance under the direction of Henry Hadley at the 1923 Biennial of the National Federation of Music Clubs in Asheville, North Carolina. According to Adams, Beach read the tributes from the press and then heard Pugh play the Concerto (privately?) in April 1926.

<sup>49</sup> “Californians Fête Mrs. H.H.A. Beach,” *Musical Courier* 71, no. 2 (14 July 1915): 7.

and disappearing in a rather confusing manner" (*Evening Post*, 5 February 1916). This perception would suggest that in Chicago Beach may have tried out some cuts that she had been contemplating in the first movement.<sup>50</sup> But Edward C. Moore disagreed with Hackett:

The composer evidently gave much care and thought to the construction of the work. Its working out is painstaking, its balance between solo instrument and orchestra is excellent; it is not too long, it is perfectly clear. From a structural point of view it is entirely praiseworthy (*Chicago Journal*, 5 February 1916).

All the Chicago reviews (Hackett's included) nevertheless stressed the importance of Beach's presence as a woman composer in America. Her reputation clearly preceded her. Eric de Lamarter (*Chicago Tribune*, 5 February 1916) introduced Beach as "the foremost feminist composer of the country." In St. Louis the interest also centered on Beach's reputation as the "World's Most Noted Woman Composer," to quote the headline of a pre-concert interview with Richard L. Stokes (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 9 January 1917). There is little variation in the opening words of the reviews of her 12 January 1917 concert. They herald Beach as "America's most distinguished woman composer and pianist" (Richard Spamer, *St. Louis Daily Globe-Democrat*, 13 January); "the most notable woman composer in musical history" (Stokes); and the "leading American woman composer" (Homer Moore). There were nonetheless differences in opinion as to the merit of the Concerto. Stokes, for example, viewed Beach's brilliant playing as an integral part of the Concerto's admirable design: "One's first impression was that here was one of the most amazing bravura displays ever conceived. . . . But soon it was borne in upon the mind that every one of these dazzling notes had its inevitable place and meaning; that not one of them was introduced for mere ornament or parade." But in Homer Moore's opinion, the Concerto "demanded great digital dexterity and exhibited more of that than of musical euphony" (*St. Louis Republic*, 13 January).

When Beach returned to Boston for performances of the Concerto on 2 and 3 March 1917 the headlines of her concert reviews were given over to the Boston premiere of a symphony by Charles Loeffler. Her contribution to the program received more cursory treatment, even though the Concerto had not been heard in Boston with an orchestra since 1900. Attention was directed toward her return to the city where she had long resided (she was then living in New York) and her performance. It was

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<sup>50</sup> See the report in *The Musical Courier* 71, no. 1 (7 July 1915): 24.

widely held that since her return from Europe in 1914, Beach had matured and gained greater command of her instrument than in her pre-war appearances. For example, one critic wrote about a recital Beach gave in December 1914 in Boston: "Her playing now, after appearances with orchestra and in recital in Berlin, Leipsic and Dresden, has more emotional variety, more authority. There is unquestionably a gain in fluency of technic."<sup>51</sup> This enthusiasm for Beach's playing is reflected in the reviews of her performance of the Concerto in Boston three years later:

Mrs. Beach played the piano part of her concerto with astonishing authority and virtuosity (Olin Downes, *Boston Post*, 3 March).

Since her residence abroad, and appearances in German cities, Mrs. Beach has grown in breadth and authority as a pianist, and played yesterday with fine command, at times with brilliancy (*Boston Globe*, 3 March 1917).

Its spirit, its clean-cut harmonies and delightfully open orchestration, are still refreshing and Mrs. Beach herself never played more brilliantly, or with more command (F. Esposito, *Boston Journal*, 3 March 1917).

To some extent change in opinion in 1917 about Beach's orchestration reflects a new perspective on what the relationship between orchestra and soloist ought to be and what constitutes clarity of formal structure. The *Boston Daily Advertiser* (no date) reported, "Mrs. Beach has seen to it that the orchestra properly occupies the foreground," and "Mrs. Beach's piano concerto is what a concerto ought to be, an orchestral work with solo work interwoven."<sup>52</sup> The *Christian Science Monitor* (3 March) called the Concerto "a piano piece set in an orchestral background, rather than a work in which themes are developed on a scheme of conversational exchange between solo instrument and orchestra." The *Boston Transcript* (3 March) placed it "at the golden mean that treats a concerto neither as a virtuoso piece for the solo instrument with accompanying band or as a symphonic piece that happens to add a piano to the other instrumental voices." Only Esposito offered a dissenting opinion. What he heard was exactly the opposite of what the critics reported in 1900: "The regard for the piano as a solo instrument subdues the orchestra so that the beautiful cantilene [*sic*] melody which it sings against the piano accompaniment is hardly to be heard at all." But ultimately, concentration on Beach's presence in the

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<sup>51</sup> *Boston Globe* (17 December 1919); quoted in "Mrs. H.H.A. Beach in Boston," advertisement in *The Musical Courier* 69, no. 26 (30 December 1914), 9.

<sup>52</sup> Quoted from a clipping in the Amy Beach file, New York Public Library.

city, her "splendid" reputation (Fred J. McIsaac, *Boston American*, 3 March) and "warm" reception (Hale, *Boston Herald*, 3 March) meant that the balance of piano and orchestra and the formal structure were no longer pressing issues for critics.

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If the concertos by Wieck and Beach were so appealing to audiences and even came to be accepted by some critics, why haven't they survived in the repertory? In the case of Wieck's Concerto, that an early work by a woman who never became a career composer is absent from the repertory is hardly surprising. But this explanation does not hold for Beach's Concerto. In her case an explanation can be provided only on the basis of a surmise. It seems, paradoxically, that it was Beach's unique position as America's foremost woman musician that caused the later neglect of her Concerto. The piece became so closely associated with Beach's composer-cum-performer persona that other established pianists shied away from taking it up immediately.<sup>53</sup> That is perhaps also why a full score and parts were never printed. Subsequently, performers' interest gravitated to more recent works written in the idiom of the 1920s, leaving Rachmaninov's piano concertos as the sole survivors of Beach's generation. Thus the future of both Beach's and Wieck's concertos has depended on the interests of recent performers with an antiquarian interest.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Beach dedicated the Concerto to Teresa Carreño and hoped she would perform it in Europe. Carreño never played it in public, but she was excited about the piece. See her letters to Beach from Berlin, 16 March and 17 December 1899, 25 May 1900, in the Amy Beach Correspondence Collection, Special Collections, University of New Hampshire Library, Durham; and Mann, "The Carreño Collection," 1073-75. Shortly after she performed the Concerto in Boston on 17 February 1909 with Carl Faelton playing a second piano (*Boston Globe*, 18 February), Beach sent a copy to the pianist Ernesto Consolo who, although he was impressed, apparently never played the piece in public (letter from Consolo to Beach, Lugano, Switzerland, 23 May 1909, in the Amy Beach Correspondence Collection).

<sup>54</sup> Mary Louis Boehm brought attention to Beach's Concerto through her recording of May 1976 (Vox, Turnabout, QTV-S 344665) and performances (the first on 4 April 1976 in Hempstead, L.I.), but no one else seems to have taken up the work. See Dean Elder, "Where Was Amy Beach All These Years? An Interview with Mary Louise Boehm," *Clavier* 15 (December 1976): 16. The Wieck Concerto has received much attention recently. The solo piano edition was first reprinted by A.J. Heuwkemeijer in 1970; a manuscript copy of the full score was produced by Ries and Erlcr, c. 1987; and a new edition of the full score, edited by Janina Klassen, was issued by Breitkopf & Härtel in 1990. Recent recordings have been made by Susanne Launhardt (1990, Bayer Records, 100 096) and Angela Cheng (1992, Koch International Classics, 3-7169-2 H1). The Concerto is one of several choices listed for entrants in the First International Clara Schumann Piano Competition, held on 23-30 May 1994 in Düsseldorf.

I have suggested that the dual roles of Wieck and Beach as performers and composers influenced how they fashioned their concertos. That the intertwining of the roles of composer and performer affects a concerto comes as no surprise, whether the composers are women or men. Yet the interplay of the two roles seems to surface more prominently in these two concertos by women composers than in similar works by their male counterparts. Women musicians who entered the public arena in the nineteenth century were categorized as performers. That they could also compose astonished their public, and among this public particularly the critics, who seemed less inclined than audiences to warm to women's achievements as creators of music.

As the judgments of critics rather than audiences have come down to us today, those who study the works of women musicians often find themselves, of necessity, writing a revisionist history. We know that Wieck and Beach were seen by others as performers and considered themselves as such. We must also be aware of the consequences thereof, namely, that their concerns as performers came more to the fore when they wrote and spoke of their compositions than in any discussions I have read by or about their male counterparts who, like them, were composing serious works for their own performance (as opposed to more ephemeral ones solely intended for virtuosic display). I believe that underlying this disparity is a societal perception—perhaps internalized by nineteenth-century male composers—that great music by male composers, the music about which history is primarily written, bends little toward the tastes of the general public. Significantly, in his excellent biography of Franz Liszt, Alan Walker expends considerable energy justifying Liszt's decision to compose twenty-eight transcriptions of Schubert's songs, works that became successes overnight. Walker writes that these transcriptions served a triple purpose: to promote the name of Schubert, advance the field of piano technique, and widen Liszt's repertory. In his discussion of the compositions, Walker omits any reference to the fact that the transcriptions were clearly crowd-pleasers. Further, in answering the question, "Was Liszt to blame for the unrestrained conduct of his audiences?" Walker concentrates on Liszt's appearance and manner of playing. Yet clearly Liszt would not have had the same effect on his audiences had he chosen to play a different, more staid repertory.<sup>55</sup>

An inquiry free from this double standard might show that serious male composers like Liszt also gave knowing consideration to popular taste

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<sup>55</sup> Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt*, Vol. 1, *The Virtuoso Years, 1811–1847*, rev. ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 257–58, 289–90.

when they wrote music for their own performance. We would then have one more reason for no longer considering works by women at a disadvantage because they make happy use of this necessity.

#### ABSTRACT

Though lauded by contemporaneous audiences, neither Clara Wieck Schumann's Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 7 (1833–35), nor Amy Beach's Piano Concerto in C# Minor, Op. 45 (1900) is among the standard repertory today. Both pieces were closely associated with the women who composed and performed them; and, while women then enjoyed acceptance as performers, critics tended to view women composers with reservations and judged their work accordingly.

In 1835–38 Wieck performed her Concerto to enthusiastic audiences in Germany and Austria. Reviewers, by contrast, criticized the work's design, blaming its unusual harmonic movement on the capriciousness of the female sex. Although elements of its experimental design lend the Concerto an improvisatory quality, closer examination shows that it is tightly structured harmonically, thematically, and formally. Its innovations, far from being dictated by Wieck's gender, are found in concertos by Mendelssohn and Moscheles. Wieck defended her Concerto saying that it appealed to her audiences, who well may have warmed to the very improvisatory quality the critics condemned.

Audience reception of Beach's Concerto was also favorable when she gave its premiere in 1900, but reviewers were patronizing, suggesting she had overreached the bounds of her sex and needed tutoring in her craft. On grounds that later became irrelevant, they faulted the form and the balance between soloist and orchestra, and passed over the thematic cohesiveness and harmonic richness that likely attracted her audiences. Critical opinion changed when Beach played the Concerto in Germany and throughout the United States in 1913–17, but this was more an acknowledgment of her growing fame than a reappraisal of the work itself.