

## *The Manuscript of the Schumann Piano Concerto*

*Malcolm Frager*

Of what benefit is musicological research to the performer? In my own experience I have often found that musicological methods have helped me to better realize the original intent of a composer. Has anyone ever noticed, for instance, the unusual metronome marking in the A $\flat$  major section of the Schumann Piano Concerto: *Andante espressivo* ( $\text{♩} = 72$ )? This metronome marking is precisely the same as the metronome indication of the finale: *Allegro vivace* ( $\text{♩} = 72$ ). For years I wondered if these markings were authentic. It seemed logical that, whatever the speed of Schumann's metronome, if the markings were authentic, he intended these two passages to be played at the same tempo. One day about six years ago I decided that the only way to ascertain the authenticity of these markings was to take a look at the manuscript, but I had no idea where it was, nor had I ever met anyone who knew of its existence. Oddly enough, it was a photograph in Georg Eismann's Schumann biography<sup>1</sup> which led me to the manuscript. This photograph had a caption, "Schumann Haus, Zwickau," and I decided to write to the director of this landmark, the house in which Schumann was born, and ask if he knew where I could find the manuscript of the A Minor Piano Concerto. A few months later I received a reply saying that I should get in touch with the owners of the Wiede Collection. Until recently, this collection, which contains over seventy Schumann manuscripts, was in the possession of Mr. Alfred Ancot in Aigenstadl, near Passau, Germany.

My only reason for wanting to see the manuscript of the concerto was to verify the authenticity of the metronome indications. I was not really expecting anything unusual and was therefore very much surprised when Mr. Ancot handed me the manuscript in Aigenstadl. I saw, first of all, that I was looking at two orchestrations of the first movement, one superimposed upon the other. What I had before me was not only the manuscript of the concerto but also the manuscript of what once was the *Fantasia for Piano and Orchestra*, a one-movement work which Schumann had written in 1841 but never published. I had always assumed that this *Fantasia* later became the first movement of the concerto without any alteration. But here I saw that the orchestration of the *Fantasia* was more symphonic and in many ways more imaginative than the orchestration of the first movement of the concerto. The *Fantasia*, i.e., the first movement of the concerto, is in Robert Schumann's hand with the exception of the solo part, which is extremely neat and may have been written out by Clara Schumann. The second and third movements are entirely in Robert's hand. In all three movements there are a few pencil markings, which appear to be a third party's emendations. Clara may have used this manuscript when she played through the *Fantasia* at an informal orchestral rehearsal in Leipzig in 1841; the piece was never performed in public during Schumann's lifetime. By studying a fac-

simile of the manuscript, which Mr. Ancot later sent me, I was able not only to reconstruct the original orchestration of the *Fantasia*, which I have since performed in a number of countries, but also to correct several misprints which appear in almost every edition of the concerto. These include the following:\*

First movement (*Allegro affettuoso*)

Mm. 3 and 4: The last two chords in the right hand of the piano should be (Ex. 1):

EXAMPLE 1

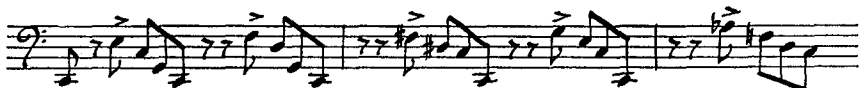


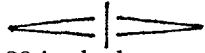
The chords printed in all scores are written in the manuscript in very small notes and appear to be merely an indication to the soloist of what the orchestra is playing.

Third measure before A: fourth beat is *ff* (see parallel passage in recapitulation).

*Animato*: Accents in the left hand are missing in all editions. In the MS. the left hand reads (Ex. 2):

EXAMPLE 2



Mm. 26–28 of the *Animato*: the original *diminuendo* has been scratched out in pencil,  added in mm. 26 and 27, and *fp* penciled in at m. 28 in the horns and strings.

M. 29 of the *Animato*: *p* scratched out in pencil.

8 mm. before B: *p* missing in all editions.

Mm. 14–17 of B: accents in the right hand are missing in all editions. In the MS. the right hand reads (Ex. 3):

EXAMPLE 3



*Andante espressivo*: Strings are marked *sempre p*, not *sempre pp*.

Fifteenth measure of D: 4th beat in the right hand should be DFB, not BFB as in most editions.



Mm. 5 and 93 of the coda: mordent on first note in right hand.

M. 144 of the coda: the solo part is marked *cresc.*

The metronome markings which appear in the first edition of the concerto and in almost all subsequent editions are substantiated in the manuscript. In her later years Clara Schumann appears to have felt no compunction in changing her husband's metronome markings. In her edition of, among other works, the *Scenes from Childhood* and the *Davidsbündler Dances*, she alters almost every one of the metronome markings printed during Schumann's lifetime. In the second of the *Davidsbündler*, for instance, she changes the marking from ♩=138 to ♩=96, and she slows down the "Träumerei" in the *Scenes from Childhood* from ♩=100 to ♩=80. She does this time and again and in almost every case radically alters the mood of the music. And yet even Clara, in her edition of the A Minor Piano Concerto, does not change the metronome indications which we find in the manuscript and the first edition! In spite of years of differing tradition, I believe that these original metronome markings have validity. The opening *Allegro affettuoso* is marked ♩=84, which is very fast. The A $\flat$  major section in the first movement and the opening of the last movement are both marked ♩=72. I have come to believe that Schumann did not originally intend the *Andante espressivo* to be played too slowly nor the finale too fast. The intermezzo, which is marked *Andantino grazioso*, ♩=120, should not be too slow. I know that a musical passage can be played at many different speeds and still sound convincing, and I realize that the matter of tempo is a very personal one. But I believe that the metronome markings which Schumann gave indicate the tempos he originally intended. Even if he later changed his mind (although there is no evidence to this effect), I think we should at any rate take his original ideas into consideration. In his *Denk- und Dichtbüchlein* Schumann wrote: "Die erste Konzeption ist immer die natürlichste und beste. Der Verstand irrt, das Gefühl nicht." ("The first conception is always the most natural and the best. The intellect errs, feeling does not.") And three pages later we find this little dialogue between Eusebius and Master Raro:

Eusebius: Oft können zwei Lesarten von gleichem Wert sein.

(Two versions can often be of equal value.)

Raro: Die ursprüngliche ist meist die bessere.

(The original is usually the better.)<sup>2</sup>

True enough, Master Raro, but how can the performer tell what the original reading is if he has never seen it? Here may I make a plea to anyone who has the time and resources at his disposal to do for Schumann what Köchel did for Mozart or Jähns for Weber: to compile a catalogue of all Schumann's works and list the whereabouts of all extant manuscripts and the facts concerning early printed editions. The Schumann catalogues now available are woefully incomplete and inaccurate. For the benefit of both

performer and musicologist, the compilation of a new catalogue is indispensable.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Robert Schumann: Eine Biographie in Wort und Bild* (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1964).

<sup>2</sup> See Schumann's *Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1914), Vol. 1, p. 25. See also Georg von Dadelsen's article, "Die 'Fassung letzter Hand' in der Musik," *Acta Musicologica* 33 (January-March 1961): 1-14.

\* Measure numbers and letters conform to those found in the third volume of the complete works, edited by Clara Schumann (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1883).