

University of Texas at El Paso

From the Selected Works of Dominic Dousa

September 30, 2006

A Quantitative Model of Key Distance, with an
Analysis and Performance of Schumann's
"Märchenbilder", Op. 113 (music theory
presentation, lecture-recital)

Dominic Dousa, *University of Texas at El Paso*

Renee Skerik, *Texas Tech University*



Available at: https://works.bepress.com/dominic_dousa/4/

ABSTRACTS

in alphabetical order of presenters' surnames

Schumann Perspectives A View Across the Disciplines

29-30 September 2006

A message from the dean:

Even in the vastness of West Texas, music is still music and scholarship is still scholarship.

I am honored to welcome you to Lubbock and the South Plains, and to this splendid festival and symposium. Indulge yourself in the glorious sounds to come, whet your intellect on the scholarly exchanges, and don't forget to go outside and look up; our scenery is all above.

This is bound to be a memorable week for this college and on this campus, as we are welcoming not only this distinguished assemblage but also Taylor 2, a constituent ensemble of the renowned Paul Taylor Dance Company. Even as you take a view across the disciplines at Schumann, we invite you to take a view across the arts and experience Taylor 2. We hope that this festival week will be as memorable for you as for us.

I want to thank you for joining us, and honoring us by your presence; and I want to thank the ambitious, judicious, and tireless organizers for bringing this international event and this remarkable group to the College of Visual & Performing Arts of Texas Tech University.

Our commonality is a devotion to the arts and the life of the mind. Let us celebrate these joys together this week, and in so doing we celebrate each other, the sounds and sights and insights we will share, and above all the genius of Robert Schumann.

Jonathan Marks, D.F.A., Interim Dean



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

College of Visual & Performing Arts

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series of essays entitled *Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft Der Oper* on the direction he expected German opera to take. Schumann's opera, consequently, appeared after the *NZfM* had already begun down a new path away from the ideas of its founder. Another critic, the conservative Ludwig Bischoff of the *Rheinische (Niederreheinische) Musikzeitung*, referred to *Genoveva* as a "total failure" because of Schumann's disregard for the public. Strangely enough, Bischoff named Schumann along with Berlioz and Wagner in his conception of a progressive *Neuedeutsche* movement in 1853—six years before the school Brendel named in 1859 that included Liszt and excluded Schumann. This essay examines the reception of Schumann's opera in the writings of several mid-century critics. I consider the work of Jürgen Thym and Robert Lee Curtis on Brendel and on critics Theodor Uhlig of the *NZfM* and Bischoff of the (*N*)*RMZ* to argue that the critical attitude toward Schumann and his opera reflects the new attention to Wagnerism and the *Neuedeutsche* movement these journals founded in mid-century.

Dickensheets, Janice (University of Northern Colorado), "Novelistic Analysis and the Sonata Cycle: The Emergence of the Musical Novel in the Nineteenth Century." Saturday, Session 6.

The defining literary genre of the 19th century—the *roman*—bequeathed more than just its name to the artistic period. In the hands of certain composers, large-scale musical genres become musical novels, complete with protagonists, musical events, and plots. While obviously useful with programmatic works, this analytical tool functions equally well with "absolute" music. The sonata cycle, with its inherent drama born of contrast and assimilation, reigned as the pre-eminent formal structure for non-programmatic multi-movement works and it is in these works that novelistic elements are most freely observed. In the hands of composers such as Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms, thematic development and transformation, key changes, and the use of Romantic *topoi* create fully developed characters and musical events that are deeply novelistic.

Exploration of these characters and musical events, using topical, thematic, and structural analyses, can reveal an internal "novel," which, in turn, provides an alternate explanation for certain "anomalies" found in many 19th-century works. Instead of eroding the sonata-cycle, a common interpretation of Romantic formal aesthetics, some composers seem to have been merely adapting it to a new medium—the musical novel. While it is not yet clear to what extent novelistic composition was practiced during the 19th century, it is clear that the novel exerted a strong influence on many large-scale Romantic compositions. Novelistic exploration of Schumann's compositions will provide insights into the musical aesthetics of a period defined by individualism and revolution.

Dousa, Dominic (University of Texas at El Paso) and Renee Skerik (Texas Tech University), "A Quantitative Model of Key Distance, with an Analysis and Performance of Schumann's *Märchenbilder*, op. 113." Saturday, Session 7.

Musicians are familiar with the traditional categorizations of key relationships: closely related, parallel, relative, and foreign. While these terms describe the relatedness of keys in a general manner, they do not provide a precise means of comparing the relative remoteness of all keys from a particular reference key. For example, how much "more distant" is E-flat major from C major than is G major or D minor?

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The model presented in this lecture both includes a number of important factors that may affect the perception of key relationships and assigns numerical measures to those factors. These measures are then used in a formula that provides a relative scale of key distance from one reference key to all other twenty-three major and minor keys. The model incorporates the idea of key-distance asymmetry — that the distance from key 'A' to key 'B' is not the same as the distance from key 'B' to key 'A'. This concept reflects the notion that the order in which two keys occur affects a listener's perception of their relatedness.

After an outline of the model and a brief summary of its notable features, this model will be used to analyze key relationships in Schumann's *Märchenbilder*, op. 113, a four-movement suite for viola and piano. This analysis will draw attention to the different types of key relationships that Schumann employs and their relative aural effect. A performance of the entire suite concludes the presentation.

Downes, Stephen (University of Surrey), "Nietzsche contra Schumann." Saturday, Session 5b.

Nietzsche's youthful enthusiasm for Schumann was something that he declared he had to overcome. *Manfred-Meditation* (1872) was, he stated, a creative act of furious vengeance, composed as a counter to Schumann's *Manfred* (1848), which he (Nietzsche) deemed a fundamental misunderstanding of Byron. This paper offers an analysis of Nietzsche's music as a reaction against the self-reflective unity of Schumann's overture, the themes of incestuous narcissism and solipsism, and the narrative of romantic pessimism moving to other-worldly redemption. Nietzsche experiments with a double tonality which is strikingly unmediated — an opening melancholic E minor versus a heroically tragic C minor, the key in which the piece ends. Nietzsche may have been spurred to this strategy by the mediated doubleness of Schumann's slow introduction, a duality later associated both with illusion or mendacity and with the call for Astarte's shadow to speak but which is ultimately resolved by the Eb of the final requiem. Nietzsche's tonal scheme is a gesture of willed incoherence, and, in the context of his thinking in the early 1870s, this striking musical device has wider resonances. The composition not only foreshadows the denunciation of Schumann in *Beyond Good and Evil*, but also marks the transformation of *Manfred* into an early version of Nietzsche's Dionysian, one that adumbrates the notions of 'Dionysian pessimism' and 'forgetfulness' which were to be set up in Nietzsche's later writings in opposition to the romantic pessimism and nostalgia of which Schumann, amongst others, was accused.

Gonzales, Cynthia I., Lynn Ledbetter, and Owen Lovell (Texas State University), "Schumann's *First Violin Sonata*, Op. 105: Viewpoints of a Violinist, a Pianist, and a Theorist." Friday, Session 2a.

Following a performance of Schumann's *First Violin Sonata*, op. 105, the two performers and a music theorist will discuss three compositional features in the music: the duet character of the work; the metric complexities; and the principle of developing variation as applied to themes and motives. The relationship between performance and analysis, as well as how analysis can influence analytical choices, will be considered.

Schumann's first reference to this work in his *Haushaltbuch* lists "Duo for Pfte and Vn" on 12 September 1851. Even though subsequent entries a few days later re-name

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LECTURE-RECITAL

A Quantitative Model of Key Distance

Dominic Dousa

The University of Texas at El Paso

Renée Skerik

Texas Tech University

RECITAL PROGRAM

Märchenbilder, Op. 113

Robert Schumann

- I. Nicht schnell
- II. Lebhaft
- III. Rasch
- IV. Langsam, mit melancholischem Ausdruck

Renée Skerik, viola
Dominic Dousa, piano