

Schumann 1840 – 1841

A few important things to remember about him at this point in his life. He's 31 years old in 1841. The previous year he has finally married Clara Wieck, and during the year 1840 he becomes obsessed with writing lieder. This is the year of the great lieder cycles such as *Liederkries* and *Dichterliebe*. Even Schubert is hard put to match such a fantastic output in such a short period.

The previous years of the late 1830s have seen the composition of most of the major piano works—at least the ones that are still performed. However, at this point (1841) we have no chamber music, no orchestral music, no oratorios, no opera. It's all piano music and lieder.

Clara and Robert settled in Leipzig in 1840. This was a happy choice for a composer who was about to become interested in writing symphonic works. Mendelssohn had taken the direction of the Gewandhaus orchestra and was turning it into one of the great ones in Europe. The existence of the orchestra, and Mendelssohn's indefatigable musical energy, had turned Leipzig into a major musical center. In 1843 Mendelssohn was to found the Leipzig Conservatory, with not only Schumann teaching, but also Moscheles on piano, David on violin, Hauptmann for theory, and of course Mendelssohn himself as director.

Mendelssohn became an admirer and friend of Schumann but not without some initial difficulty. They were exceedingly different people, after all. Mendelssohn had to deal with two primary objections he had to Schumann: the first was Schumann as a journalist and writer, and the second was against musical dilettanism. The first one is understandable: most musicians have a withering opinion of critics and journalists, generally with exceedingly good reason. The second one is less so and in fact didn't last long, once Mendelssohn came to know Schumann better. Unfortunately Schumann often gave the impression of being something of a dabbler in the arts in general and in music in particular; he was generally inarticulate verbally, had absolutely no conducting technique (and never had any piano technique, damage to hand notwithstanding). But it didn't take too long before they became close friends and colleagues.

In Leipzig during this same period was the English composer Sterndale Bennett, and the fine Danish composer Neils Gade. It was quite a place. Liszt popped in and out of town—to Clara's dismay. She never liked Liszt very much. He and Schumann/Mendelssohn had a kind of friendly rivalry as to Leipzig versus Weimar—Leipzig being seen as the home of the traditionalists and Weimar being the home of the futurists. This was probably the beginning of that fake 'war' that pops up so often in late 19th century literature between the Lisztianers and the Clara Schumannites. For what it's worth, the friendship with Liszt did not last and by 1850 he and Schumann barely on speaking terms.

Composition of Symphony No. 1

For a composer who is said to have no technique he sure could write beautifully and well in a big hurry. He sketched it out completely in four days, from January 23 to 26, 1841. By February 20 the full score was complete—meaning that he orchestrated it in about three weeks. It would be one thing if this were an awkward work or one with naïve problems in structure, but it isn't: it is tight, well-made, but devoid of slavish adherence to the textbook formulae.

The Spring wasn't the absolute *first* Schumann symphony; there was a prior work from many years earlier, when he was 22 years old. This was part of a G-minor symphony, first performed in his home town of Zwickau in November 1832, then revised and performed again in 1833. He kept working on it but he left the third and fourth movements only in sketches. Thus the "Zwickau" symphony is two movements only; it's an early work, derivative, defective. A student work—and the work of someone who had but recently begun to study music.

It took him a while to build up the head of steam to tackle another symphony, but there can be no question that the major influence on his decision to try it again was Schubert, in particular the great C Major symphony. Schumann had seen the manuscript of the work in Vienna 1838, during a visit to Schubert's brother Ferdinand. Fired with enthusiasm for the work, he sent it off to Mendelssohn in Leipzig and suggested a performance. Mendelssohn, no slouch in the recognizing-a-masterpiece department (the *St. Matthew Passion* revival is one of the great events of his late teens), went to work on the symphony with the Gewandhaus Orchestra. Schumann went to some of the rehearsals, and wrote about it to Clara:

Leipzig, December 11, 1839

...Oh, Clara, I have been in paradise today! They played at the rehearsal a symphony of Franz Schubert's. How I wish you had been there, for I cannot describe it to you. The instruments all sing like remarkably intelligent human voices, and the scoring is worthy of Beethoven. Then the length, the heavenly length of it! It is a whole four-volume novel, longer than the choral symphony. I was supremely happy, and had nothing left to wish for, except that you were my wife, and that I could write such symphonies myself.¹

Schumann had been a Schubert junkie from an early age. There is even an entry in his college-years diary about Schubert's death in 1829, how he cried all night. Schumann would have been 19 when Schubert died, and was possibly hoping that someday he could meet the great Viennese composer. (The fact that Schumann—practically a nonentity musically speaking in those days—would have known about Schubert and his work points to Schubert's being much less obscure than popular legend would make him out to be.)

¹ Quoted in *Robert Schumann: The Man and His Music*, page 278

The Spring Symphony shows the influence of the Schubert C Major symphony throughout, from the opening to the closing. In some ways it bears the same relationship to Schubert's C Major as Schubert's 5th Symphony bears to the Mozart G Minor.

Clara Schumann's Influence

Has been overrated. It is true that she was interested in the idea of Robert's writing symphonic works. We have a diary entry of 1839 that says as much:

I believe it would be best if he composed for orchestra; his imagination cannot expand sufficiently on the keyboard...His compositions are all orchestrally conceived, and I believe incomprehensible to the public for this reason, for the melodies and figuration are so intermingled that it is very difficult to hear the beauties of the work...My highest wish is that he should compose for orchestra—that is his field! May I succeed in persuading him to enter it.²

On the fact of it this sounds like much of the standard knowledge about Clara—that she was classically trained, a highly sophisticated musician who valued the classical forms above all others, who used her high musical intelligence to urge her wayward, Romantically-obsessed husband into writing sonata-form works.

It sounds great, but it doesn't jibe with reality. In 1840 Clara Schumann was still the empty-minded piano trash that she had been raised to be. Her father Wieck did not raise her on a solid diet of fine music and classical composers. He raised her to be a performing seal pianistically: she was trained on Herz, Thalberg, Hummel, and other salon writers of the period. Her concerts were probably entertaining but they were not of a particularly high order musically. She liked to include things like special instruments which could play trumpets and drums simultaneously. Her repertoire consisted almost exclusively of meretricious show pieces, opera potpourri, that sort of stuff.

She was unaware of the structure of nature of a fugue, for example: Robert sat her down and taught her some of the Well-Tempered (which she had never studied or probably never even heard of). We then have a letter from her telling a friend how interesting it is that the subject actually comes back throughout the thing, and so forth.

She thought string quartets were boring.

She attempted to write a piano concerto that was so bad that Robert hired a third party to write the review for his Leipzig musical journal, just so he didn't have to write the bad review. She wrote some songs which are more or less copies of Bob's style, but not as good.

It is Clara also who is the source of not only the statement that Robert's piano works are orchestral, but that his orchestral writing was pianistic. (Both statements are balderdash.) She was trying to come to grips with music that she really didn't understand, but figured she had to understand because after all this was her darling Bobby and not some nameless third party. If you read the diary entry above with a slightly different bent, you realize

² Quoted in *ibid.*, page 279

that she is saying *I don't get his piano music, and if he isn't writing the sort of stuff I can play and that my public wants to hear, why doesn't he write other stuff*. In fact she even asked him for some such pieces, which to his credit he never wrote. We don't have a *Grande Galop Chromatique* from Schumann, thank God, scrivined out to satisfy Clara's busy, brainless little fingers.

I don't think Clara ever became all that much more sophisticated. It's hard to rake through the myth that has accumulated, and especially so nowadays with gender musicology having elevated her to near-sainthood. But as far as I can tell she was a mediocre musician at best and a lot of her 'classicism' and much-vaunted anti-Romantic reserve was really nothing more than a deplorable lack of imagination. It's clear enough that she condemned most of Liszt's music without actually having gotten to know it, for example: she often comes across as a narrow-minded bigot more than a great bastion of classicism. Her primary influence on Robert in terms of his writing symphonic and chamber works was keeping the house quiet enough so he could work, providing emotional support. One gets a whiff of relief from her that he wasn't writing a bunch more incomprehensible piano cycles that she would have to try to understand well enough to learn to play.

Orchestration Issues

Schumann is often said to be a bad orchestrator. That is a bit of an overstatement. The “Spring” symphony is beautifully orchestrated; he made one goof right at the opening which was subsequently fixed (that’s discussed in the appropriate section) but otherwise the orchestration is interesting, colorful, and certainly works well enough.

It’s true that a few of the later works of the Düsseldorf period have some bad flaws. Mostly the problems stem from too many doublings—everything is doubled in fact, and the resulting texture is horribly thick and gluey. Some have speculated that, given the poor quality of the orchestra in Düsseldorf, Schumann wrote in a lot of doublings in the hope that at least some of them would make their entries correctly. There’s really no way of knowing.

There are two versions of the 4th Symphony, ten years apart. The earlier version is orchestrated much like the Spring—nicely. Later on he revised it considerably and added all of the doublings and the like. Clara in particular did not like the original version which she considered too daring (there she is again), and so it was suppressed. It’s possibly the 4th Symphony in this later form which has cemented Schumann’s reputation as being a poor orchestrator, ‘pianistic’ in style.

Conductors have generally gone through the later scores and mopped up the orchestration. Mahler put out an edition with ‘corrections’. Hans von Bülow was another one who snapped at the bad orchestration and made corrections—but that’s von Bülow, a notorious emitter of ill-conceived, snap judgements.

He does have some faults, nonetheless. The thickness and tendency to double too much has been noted. He has a tendency to write awkwardly for the strings in forcing them to play in unusual reaches on the fingerboard which tends to kill off the upper partials. He is leery to use anything but the safest ranges of his instruments and so sometimes you miss out on the brilliance of the upper and lower registers.

But for the most part there’s really nothing wrong with any of it. The recent set of recordings by John Eliot Gardiner which use the same orchestral forces as would have been found in 1840s Gewandhaus concerts reveal that the writing is just as transparent as it needs to be. And where there might be some light retouching, it can be made without any problems. Tovey writes:

The few outstanding defects in the published score are ridiculously easy to correct, and it is mistaken piety to leave them uncorrected. When a redistribution of the mass of woodwind is advisable in order to bring the main theme out, we need not worry about the changes in tone-colour that may result. Unlike Beethoven, Schumann has not in such cases closely imagined a definite tone-colour that would be soiled by any change. When obstacles to clearness have been removed, the resulting purity of tone is indeed rather new to listeners who have hitherto tried to hear Schumann’s orchestra in its native fog; but the revelation is nevertheless that of Schumann’s real intention.

In fact, such retouching might be even less necessary in the light of returning to original performing forces. I may not be an expert on orchestration—hell, I would have to work to achieve amateur status—but I can recognize decent writing when I hear it, and the orchestration of the Spring symphony is most definitely decent, and then some.

Just as a final note, my solfège teacher at Peabody, Ascher Zlotnik, had gotten his doctorate by working up a two-volume study of corrections in Schumann's orchestrations: one volume consisted of his correspondence with conductors on the issue, and the other contained his suggested corrections. Fun and games with another man's music.

It's perfectly possible that Schumann wanted it back the way it was originally but just never made the change; he had a tendency to forget about details. It's also possible he didn't want to bother the publishers, Breitkopf & Härtel, with whom he had a somewhat deferential relationship. So the issue remains moot. However, it must be said that even with valved brass instruments the printed, higher version is much more effective: brass instruments always sound their best when playing a natural note rather than something which has been valved.

One advantage to playing the notes as written is that the almost copycat resemblance to the Schubert C Major Symphony is somewhat ameliorated:



Note: I've shown the Schubert in B-flat major just to make the similarity clear enough between Schubert's melody and Schumann's original version.

By the way, the Schubert melody is also for horns—also valveless—but it is pianissimo, which means that the muting effect of 'cupping' the 6th and 7th scale degrees is ameliorated to the point of being fully acceptable.

5 – 6: This sudden transition to iii is highly Schubertian—just one of the very, very many similarities between Schubert's overall practices and the C Major Symphony in particular.

6 – 13: The rhythm of 5 – 6, which is an elongated version of the main theme rhythm, is developed quite a bit in this passage. There are some very interesting aftershocks in the winds and brass; these must be placed perfectly in performance otherwise they will sound as though the orchestra isn't playing together. *I hate it when composers write things like that.* It's quite effective when it's done properly, but oh the trouble this must cause.

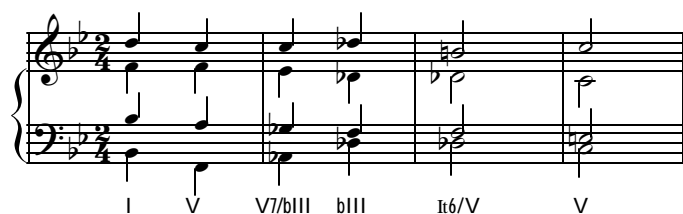
14 – 20: The ♩ . ♩ ♩ rhythm continues but without the scalar elements in the previous passage—as though we're preparing all the more for the fast dotted rhythm that is coming.

21 – 38: Build-up to the Allegro. It sounds as though we're going to go into G Minor (iii becomes III which is of course V/vi). However, we move to V7 at measure 31 – essentially unprepared – very Schubertian.

1.2 Exposition (39 – 133)

1.2.1 Primary Group (39 – 54)

The main theme itself is a balanced 16-bar phrase, actually a kind of period although not the 'normal' one. In a 'normal' period, the consequent begins as a copy of the antecedent. Here it has been transposed to IV—which provides plenty of vitality. Note that this creates an interesting harmonic effect; the antecedent ended on V as it should, but then



This is a highly Schubertian practice: the thirds-related motion (from I to bIII) is then followed by an augmented sixth chord into V/V.

1.2.3 Secondary Group (81 – 133)

1.2.3.1 Second Theme (81 – 96)

The slight oddity here—perfectly all right, just a bit different—is the fact that the second theme is in A minor instead of the expected F Major. Schumann’s technique here is quite similar to something Schubert might have done—he gets himself to F Major just fine, but then hangs on to the 5th scale degree (c natural) and then ignores it as the 5th and treats it as the 3rd degree instead. This kind of sudden, plop modulation is typical of both Beethoven and Schubert—so we can add Schumann to the list as well.

On the nature of the theme itself, Mosco Carner has this to say:

The theme itself might have come from a Schumann song. Its square build would fit to perfection a four-line stanza, such as the composer delighted in setting. Also the melodic line and intimacy of expression suggest the atmosphere of the romantic *Lied*. The impression of a parenthesis or unrelated episode, already created by the manner of its introduction, is further strengthened by the fact that Schumann makes no use of it in the development. In other words, it is a *tune* rather than a second *subject* and thus has no real symphonic significance, charming though it is. It is quickly submerged in the bustle of the development-like codetta, not to reappear again until the recapitulation.⁵

This sounds just a tad snotty and in fact Carner is rarely free of wisecracks and digs at the Schumann works. One gets the distinct impression that he is very much of the school of thought which considers Schumann a massively inferior symphonic composer, and no amount of evidence to the contrary is going to sway him.

Personally I think the little theme is a delightful *foille* to the main melody. It is also treated properly in that it isn’t stated in the dominant key and therefore has a little less of the second subject feel about it. Schumann is playing here with some of the expectations of sonata form, quite successfully. To use sonata form as it had been handed down from on high from the pen of Marx (who was the primary writer who established the

⁵ Carner, *The Orchestral Music* in “A Schumann Symposium”, ed. by Gerald Abrams, page 194.

Beethovenian sonata form) was the hallmark of the second-rater composer by the mid-nineteenth century, and not the fine writer. The *kleinmeister* were busy writing textbook sonata forms—using a textbook form which never really existed in the first place. Sonata form as practiced by master composers was flexible and supple, not the clear-cut affair the textbooks would have it be.

In other words, a second theme in the ‘wrong’ key that is then not developed is just fine. Especially such a nice theme as this.

1.2.3.2 Transition (96 – 117)

The second theme modulates itself into F Major and cadences in that key. Thus this passage isn’t really a ‘transition’ in a harmonic sense, but it is certainly transitional in a melodic sense, being a continuation of the kinds of busy filler-music writing that characterizes a lot of classical symphonic writing.

However, this ‘filler’ contains a tremendous amount of good material and material which has not just been drawn out of a hat. There are definite references to the second theme in the strong two-note suspensions that characterize much of the passage.

The chord progression is quite interesting in and of itself. It bears some similarity to that of the transition from primary to secondary groups, but has its own shape and style. It’s worth giving in a chorale form just to show how certain kinds of key centers can be used to effect interesting harmonic motions:

F: V/bII bII₆ vii⁷/V V I

Just a reminder of the way that the lowered sixth scale degree—in this case creating a modally mixed VI—works incestuously with the Phrygian II (a lowered second scale degree) in a V-I relationship. (VI-ii works that way without lowering the roots, but the mixture isn’t particularly successful in making vi into a major VI.)

Note also that the second and third measures of the above example explain the respelling of the bass notes in the symphony—in measures 111 & 113 the bass is spelled with C-flats (that being V42 of V/bII), but in measure 115 a b-natural is required to show the spelling of the chord as the diminished seventh on the leading tone to V.

1.2.3.3 Closing Theme (118 – 133)

The closing theme brings back the dotted rhythm of the main theme, which has been conspicuous in its absence since measure 81. The actual thematic material is of less

importance than this rhythm. Harmonically F Major is rammed home, constantly, with an unvarying pedal point.

1.3 *Development (134 – 291)*

This is a purely classical development in most ways except for its ending and subsequent merging into the recapitulation, which is handled in a rather unusual manner.

It starts out in the usual Beethovenian manner—the primary theme is tossed around from instrument to instrument, within a sequential progression. However, one slightly unusual aspect is that it begins in the tonic key—most developments do not do this.

At 151 a new theme appears, a counterpoint to the dotted rhythm. It's an interesting bit of thematic material, one that will be echoed (after a fashion) in the coda.

At 167 we have a rising stepwise sequence, primarily in the root-position B-flat major key chords of ii-V-iii-vi. This is motion by fifths, although the sequence itself is stepwise. A marvelous sight and sound along the way is measure 174: the bass is playing F#, the leading tone to G minor, while the upper winds and violin 2 are honking away on F-naturals. On paper it looks impossible, but it sounds just fine.

At 179 a longer, larger sequence appears, this one a standard descending fifths progression: G Major at 187, C Major at 199, then F Major at 202.

Measures 207 – 246 are repeats of 134 – 181, but this time beginning in the dominant. That's a more 'normal' way to begin a development. So in a way we have here a double development—one that first begins on the tonic, and then a second one that begins on the dominant. That is more a Beethovenian practice than a Schubertian one.

Beginning with 247, and extending through 282 the material begins to concentrate on the *second* secondary theme rather than the first one—the real secondary theme (the one that is heard in the oddball key) is never used in the development.

At 285 the dotted rhythm returns in full force; at this point we can consider the classical retransition to be in effect.

At about 291 – 295 we have a question: is this the end of the development or the beginning of the recapitulation? I think the answer is 'yes'.

1.4 *Recapitulation (295 – 383)*

The recapitulation harks back to the introduction rather than the beginning of the exposition proper. This kind of masking of exposition with introduction is *definitely* a Schubertian practice. We saw it in embryo with Symphony No. 4; it blossoms in full bloom with the C-Major. By stating his main theme in its slow, introduction version, Schumann is definitely following a Schubertian practice here, carrying a step further.

At 318 the allegro resumes with a textbook recapitulation; no surprises, not even anything much in the way of reorchestration.

1.5 Coda (385–517)

The coda begins in the typically Beethovenian manner, as another development section. For a while there it sounds as though that's what we're going to get.

But at 439 there is a sudden and extremely dramatic surprise: a new chorale-like theme. This isn't absolutely, totally new: there is some intimation of this idea in the development with the new counter-theme that appears at measure 151. But still one has not been prepared for this sudden dramatic change in mood, not especially within the listening habits of the classical.

Schumann will be doing this throughout the symphony—mood changes at the end of movements will presage the coming movement. It's a way of fastening the movements together, a technique he would bring to its fullest in the Fourth Symphony.

One writer—I think out of academic desperation—has discovered a connection between this melody and Schumann's song *Myrthen*, which she has attributed to being a reference to his love for Clara as well as a reference to spring, by the quotation in this symphony. The big problem with her reference is that it is an isolated bit out of the piano part, in the middle of the piece. Paper reference, not musical. Unsupported and in my opinion unsupportable. You'll find it in *The Nineteenth Century Symphony*, a collection of essays edited by D. Kern Holoman, an essay on the Schumann first by Linda Corell Roesner. One of the weakest printed analyses of a composition I've ever read, topped off by this ridiculous assertion.

From 489 onwards we are at the final cadences, which are really strongly Beethovenian, including a bunch of those typical horn licks that take full advantage of the notes of the overtone series.

Second Movement

Schumann is almost always at his best when he is out on his own—that is, not consciously or unconsciously using older role models, but writing in his own unique, inimical manner. Likely as not this kind of writing will occur in the slow movements, which offer the least constriction of formal expectations.

The slow movement is, after all, the one movement of the symphony which never arrived at a set, expected formal plan. Haydn's slow movements run from very simplistic two-part song forms of the AA¹ variety, into the classic aria form, into variations, even into sonata forms. Mozart wound up writing sonata forms for most of his slow movements in the later symphonies, but earlier he tends to use song forms and aria forms much as does Haydn in his earlier symphonies. Beethoven's slow movements are easily as eclectic as are his predecessors—consider the sonata-form style of many of the symphonies, compared with theme and variations of the Fifth.

Schumann was, I think, a bit uncomfortable working within the constraints of Classical form. He wrote well within these forms, certainly, but somehow he isn't fully characteristic. One of his favorite techniques for constructing a composition was a loosely-knit rondo with episodic sections that had emotional links to the rondo theme, but not developmental links as one might find in Haydn.

How many of Schumann's piano works are structured in this manner, anyway? I can think right off the bat of some like the Arabesque, most of the larger pieces in the *Fantasiestücke*, the first and third Romances, without opening any scores and peering around inside. I haven't looked at the Davidsbündler March that ends *Carnaval* but I'm pretty sure it's also a Schumannesque rondo. Without a doubt, the last movement of the C Major Fantasy is another such construction.

These rondo-ish works are often distinguished by subtle but important changes between one statement of the rondo theme and another. It is overall rare for him to make any structural or fundamentally melodic changes to the rondo theme, although he may transpose one of the statements.

With that in mind, it shouldn't be surprising that this movement is absolutely the most characteristically *Schumann* of the four. It's possible that the first movement could be thought of as very, very good Mendelssohn in some ways, ditto the last movement—although of course there are distinctly Schumann elements such as the second theme in the first movement, and the less-than-subtle fact that the second theme of the last movement is a direct quote from *Kreisleriana*. Still, it is the slow movement that is unmistakably Schumann, that could be no composer but Schumann.

As such, it's the heart of the work, the distinguishing element that makes this a *great* symphony, as merely opposed to a *good* one. This might be one of those key works that you can use to describe Romanticism, which is almost impossible to put into words. Just play this. The quintessence of Romanticism—its ties to the past, its intimations of the future, its sensuality, its intense personal lyricism.

As such you can't really pin it down with words. I can make a few observations about some of the elements that impress me as being characteristically Schumanesque, however.

- The theme is essentially a standard 16 bar phrase that is set up as two 8-bar paired phrases (not period structure, but the second phrase as an intensification of the first.) However, the theme is extended out another six measures, in a highly intensified manner—the characteristic leap of a third is finally stretched all the way out to an octave. Plenty of composers write extended phrases, of course—but this kind of treatment, this reluctance to relinquish the preparation for the final cadence, is distinctly Schumanesque in character. It never lapses into mannerism or bad taste (later on sometimes that happened) while pushing the envelope of opulent melodic flow.
- The triple meter is continually challenged in various subtle ways. It is quintessentially Schumanesque for the barline to be treated almost as a formality. The real barlines occur at the phrase points and not the metrical ones. There is really very little sense of triple meter in this theme—instead, the meter is irregular, flowing, highly flexible. This theme is perhaps more wed to the barline than are some other typically Schumanesque themes (consider the *Traumerei* as the ultimate non-metric Schumann theme) but nonetheless a strictly metric performance would ruin it.
- The theme is quite chordal in nature—it plays very nicely on the piano as we all know—but at the same time it isn't block-chordal like a Bach chorale or a hymn. Schumann is one of the most homophonic of composers, but his approach to harmony is fundamentally sensual and not structural. The chords are drawn from the Classical repertory, but they are used primarily for their emotional and coloristic effects, less for their harmonic grammar. For example, the d-flat in measure 11 creates a V65/IV; the dissonance at that point is, I think, more for color (reinforced by the d-flat in the bassoon on the second beat), rather than for strengthening the dominant.

Rather than the usual précis, which I don't think would illuminate a thing about this movement, just a few of the important points along the way.

22 – 24: the sudden key change, dropping down a third, is Schubertian in some ways but really I think this is also highly Schumanesque as well. The d-flat in measure 23 keeps the movement from being too much of a blow; it isn't meant to shock as it is to create a sensual thrill. The same motion takes place from 30 – 32, from C major to A Major. Both of these key changes have in common a dramatic confutation as to the root of the first key and the third of the other—those being the two most important notes in determining the overall modality. At 22, the E-flat root becomes the E-natural third of measure 24, just as the C-natural root of measure 30 becomes the C-sharp third of measure 32.

28 – 29: this is a particularly Romantic re-interpretation of the Classical cadential-64. The double-suspension characteristic of the figure is rethought into a III63—which then acts

just as though it remained the double-suspension requiring downwards resolution. The reason is pure sensual effect; the rather matter-of-fact nature of the 4-3 suspension that provides most of the real 'meat' of a cadential-64 is ameliorated into 3-2; softening the contour of the figure while nonetheless retaining its fundamental character. I can't imagine a Classical composer writing this; it strikes my ear as a real hallmark of early Romanticism.

First episode as a whole (24 – 39): the theme that is stated in the flute and oboe beginning this passage contains a marvelous melodic premonition, a ghost if you will. (I could point out that it is in a sense an inversion of the main melody, but I won't.) The seed is made manifest at the end of the *second* episode—stated in flute and violin 1, from 69 – 73. I suppose it's just coincidence, but this is *Schumann* and the ghost in the woodwork is *Brahms*—because this is the opening theme of the Third Symphony. Maybe a subconscious influence, maybe just one of those little looks-like-sounds-like similarities.

Third thematic statement (77 – 100): the orchestration impresses me as being almost Impressionistic in a way. Experiment: use the same basic figurations but place more of the fluttery, vague figures in the woodwinds, add a harp or two, give the melody to violin 1 and maybe something slightly offbeat like the bassoon. Just how much would it wind up sounding like Ravel?

Coda (100 – 122): Schumann was definitely working on a cyclical structure for a symphony, and here he works the issue in two different ways. The first issue is that the theme of this movement has at least an opening interval in common with that of the next movement. To make the similarity clear to the listener, from measure 111 we are treated to a hybrid theme that contains elements of this movement as well as elements of the next.

117 – 118: A hardcore structuralist of the Schenkerian variety could probably have an absolute field day with these ascending fifths, coming right on the heels of the descending fifths of 111 – 112, working them into a grand theory on structural uses of intervals, what with the emphasis on the rising fourth in this movement and the next.

Third Movement

Structurally the scherzo plays around a bit with some of the expectations of symphonic form. The usual formal arrangement is expanded a bit, with two Trios instead of one. Furthermore, the first of the trio sections is written in a different meter—duple rather than triple—yet another departure from the ‘standard’.

One must keep in mind that the ink was barely dry on the ‘standard’ scherzo form, so I’m not all that comfortable with calling this any kind of departure or radical change. I might prefer to think of it as a continuation of a line of development.

The main Scherzo proper is surprisingly grim, coming immediately on the heels of such a rapturous slow movement and an almost randy adolescent bounce in the first movement.

Minuet-type movements tend to be fairly simple in their treatments of their forms, but this one really takes the cake. I’m not sure how deliberate this is; perhaps we’re dealing with textbook intimidation here in which he knows the proper form for writing the Minuet-Scherzo and is loathe to depart from it. It is perfectly effective, but formally it strikes me as having a certain earnestness about it.

The Scherzo proper is written in the Classical |: A :|: B A¹ :| form. There’s something just a tad funny about how utterly conservative the phrase structure and the formal structure are. Section A is 16 measures long, two 8-bar phrases in ‘aa’ form. The repeat of the first phrase is reorchestrated, but nothing else.

Section ‘B’ is distinctly gentler in character—a dizzy little waltz in fact—that never moves far away from V of the relative major, moving back to the original dominant only with a certain reluctance.

The return to ‘A’ isn’t really an A¹ at all; it’s really just A all over again. However, there is some light reorchestration in the first statement of the theme, so I guess we can stretch it a bit and call it A¹.

The first Trio impresses me like nothing else than a change from one dance type to another, such as at a fancy ball. We had the waltz-feel of the opening Scherzo (despite the protestations of grimness), and here we are in the world of the Ecossaise. Particularly enjoyable is the ping-pong game between the strings and winds throughout, almost like a good-nature dance competition between men and women or groups of dancers.

Linda Correll Roenser—she of the *Myrthen* similarity in the first movement that doesn’t appear to really be there—sees in this first Trio a definite, overt reference to the theme of the first movement. Well, maybe. I think she’s reacting to the repeated notes—but I think the quintessence of that theme is rhythmic, and not really the repetition of the pitches. Maybe I’ve just decided to take issue with anything she has to say and have therefore become a thoroughgoing schmuck. Nonetheless, I think she suffers from an overactive imagination, at the very least.

The second Trio seems to play a bit with our Beethovenian expectations of a Scherzo—this one has that canonic feel that Beethoven is so fond of injecting into the trio sections of his scherzi, while at the same time retaining a connection with the first trio—note the strings and wind figures beginning with the sixteenth measure of the passage, which have more than a passing resemblance—metric difference or not—with the dancy rhythms of the first Trio.

The Coda allows the sunshine through to end the piece in a happy glory. I love the way that the Viennese *kitsch* wins out—Schubert usually liked a happy ending, too.

Fourth Movement

Formally the fourth movement presents no challenges or surprises except for one little fun bit in the recap that's worth mentioning. It makes a very solid demonstration piece for classical sonata form, in a piece that is unusually entertaining.

In fact I think of the last movement as being primarily concerned with entertainment value, happiness, pizzazz-and-wow. Nothing wrong with that. This symphony is perhaps in some ways three very jovial, audience-directed movements surrounding an inner heart of a slow movement.

Not only that, but the last movement contains more than just a little bit of horseplay and fun. Consider the sheer vitality and bumptious nature of the main theme, which sounds rather like something from a glittering piece of piano show music. Not only that, but things get downright silly beginning slightly after rehearsal letter 'H', in which the basses are expected to match the fleetness of the violins and high woodwinds. They can't do it, of course, but a lot of the fun is in the trying. The violins in this same passage are given some extremely high notes to play—which may well have gone wildly out of tune in the early performances. There is a story that Mendelssohn started laughing when his violinists in the Gewandhaus kept sounding like mice on those high notes and suggested the guys might want to put some chalk on their fingerboards to mark the position of the notes.

Schumann gives everybody a chance to be either the target or source of some broad humor. The winds—clarinets in particular—in the Coda are given deliberately awkward figures which come out as disgraceful honks—they remind me of those wonderfully comic images of albatrosses attempting to become airborne. Schumann even takes some pot shots at himself—the second theme not only quotes from his own *Kreisleriana* but turns a slightly sinister melody into a figure of fun as it is smoothed out rhythmically and followed by a beer-hall rhythm as a countermelody.

Another rather broad splash has to do with key centers in general and the recap in particular. First of all, the secondary theme isn't in the dominant as one might expect, but is instead in the key of the mediant (G minor.) He follows this with another secondary theme which *is* in the dominant so once again we have the three-key exposition as we did in the first movement. That's no great big deal, although it's a lot of fun.

It's in the recap that he has his fun. Normally the recap would restate the primary theme verbatim and follow that with a transitional passage which is similar to the transition in the exposition, but which masks the lack of modulation from tonic to dominant. Well, in the exposition we didn't modulate from tonic to dominant—we modulated from tonic to submediant which then moves down a step to the dominant. But Schumann isn't going to bother with trying to turn this transitional passage into a modulation from tonic to supertonic (which would then move down a step to the tonic). He repeats the transitional passage verbatim as well, and then right before having to commit to what one might think a repeat of the exposition (and an infinite loop, trapped forever trying to seek a resolving tonic), he just whaps out V7 of the supertonic as loudly as he can and proceeds on with a

transposed remainder of the recapitulation. It has the cheerful, carefree sound of somebody in a tremendously good mood, faced with some trifling, persnicketty detail of protocol or formality, and just waving the hands and saying *aw fuck it* with malice-free jovial cheer.

If I absolutely must quote a model for this movement, it seems to be more Beethovenian than Schubert—it has that same big-happy-slob feel about it as does the last movement of the Beethoven Seventh, although being Schumann is a bit more polished about it all, while at the same time noticeably more youthful and hormonally-charged.