

The background of the cover is a detailed painting of a rocky coastline. The foreground is dominated by large, flat, light-colored rocks, many of which are filled with small, dark blue tide pools. The rocks are arranged in a way that leads the eye towards the background. In the distance, a calm sea meets a sky filled with large, billowing clouds in shades of grey, blue, and yellow, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall style is that of a classical or impressionistic painting.

The Drew Review

Drew University
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Artist Statement ~ Lydia Segal

“Ocean Meditations” is based off of a scenic hike my family went on in La Jolla, CA. Originally painted solely for its beauty, I have found new meaning in this piece during quarantine. I see the work as a way to transport the viewer outside of confinement, focusing on the calming waves and divine sunlight rather than the same, mundane rut we face nowadays. “Ocean Meditations” represents both the past and the future. It reflects on a time when we were allowed to embrace the outside world while looking towards a brighter future where we respect all that used to be taken for granted. Through this oil painting, I am able to feel freedom and tranquility in a time that necessitates restrictions and isolation. While it isn’t much, I hope that through art, we are all able to experience some shred of calmness amidst the chaos.”

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Drew University
The College of Liberal Arts
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Foreword

The Drew Review, Drew University's annual research journal for the undergraduates of the College of Liberal Arts (CLA), publishes undergraduate student research from the previous calendar year.

This year, we received a total of forty-one submissions and have published ten. Those interested in submitting their work in the future will require a faculty nomination, which must include the author's name and paper title. Alongside the paper, this nomination must be emailed to drewreview@drew.edu, with the author CC'ed on the email.

As we are a double-blind, peer-reviewed journal, all submissions must be emailed without any identifiable information, such as the student's name or the name of the professor for whom the paper was originally written. All images will be published in black and white, and that it is the author's responsibility to ensure that the images are permissible for reproduction under copyright law. All students who submit should expect requests for revisions prior to the board's final decisions for publication.

As always, we are beyond grateful for our faculty advisors, Dr. G. Scott Morgan of the Psychology Department and Dr. Jens Lloyd of the English Department. Their help and support is what ensures The Drew Review's success each year.

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The Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 54:
Robert Schumann's Conception of the Romantic Piano Concerto
Dillan Comtois (CLA 2020)

Origins and the Romantic Continuance of the Piano Concerto

The genre of the piano concerto, a form of composition that features a keyboard soloist with an accompanying orchestra, has its origins in the Classical era. It has been a fixture of the tradition of Western classical music since the late 18th century, when composers such as Johann Christian Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven first experimented with and established the general form. Since then, the piano concerto has evolved continuously up until the 20th century with the advent of Romanticism, Impressionism, and Modernism. Composers of every era have contributed to the genre, and oftentimes have incorporated their own innovations and ideas of what the concerto should be.

The Romantic era in particular was, in many ways, a period of great musical innovation for the concerto. Acknowledging the impact of Beethoven, Romantic composers were left with both the creative freedom to utilize his legacy of musical ingenuity and the fear of forever remaining inferior to him. Thus, new ideas on the purpose of music, the role of the composer, and how to reconcile these two concepts began to emerge. With these endeavors in mind, Romantic composers initiated the process of transforming music into what we call "Romantic music" today. The invention of new compositional forms, in addition to the development of existing ones, was one way in which Romantic composers ushered in this new period. Elements of supernaturalism, exoticism, and individualism often inspired these forms, and cemented one of the most important musical Romantic ideals: the composer as a supreme artist and creator.

As an already existing form, the piano concerto was further expanded upon during the Romantic era by composers such as Chopin, Mendelssohn, Liszt, and Schumann. Previously, Mozart and Beethoven firmly established a definitive, modern concerto form, consisting of orchestra and keyboard soloist. In fact, the concertos of both composers are still an important part of the piano repertoire and are frequently performed today. The general model they followed consisted of alternating orchestral tutti and solo sections, the presentation of thematic material, and the development of such material along the length of the work. It was this formulation of the concerto that was most familiar to the Romantics. But as much as the concertos of Mozart and Beethoven were admired and respected, they did not necessarily uphold the fashionable qualities of Romanticism. According to Claudia MacDonald, the composer Robert Schumann (b. 1810 - d. 1856) could only see in Beethoven's Fifth Concerto in E-flat Major, "...a fine but antiquated example of a bygone era" (MacDonald 14).

However, this is not to say that Schumann considered Beethoven's music to be insignificant or non-transformative. He merely believed that Beethoven's approach to the concerto form was outdated, and therefore could not be the type of music that represented the artistic values of the Romantic era. In this paper, I will address Schumann's philosophies on Romantic composition and the artist, and his application of these beliefs within the context of his Piano Concerto in A minor, op. 54. Through his experience as a pianist, composer, and music critic, Schumann was able to envision an ideal Romantic piano concerto. Accordingly, the A minor Concerto is an example of his own realization of the compositional and stylistic aspects such a work should encompass.

Schumann and the Genre

In his younger years, Schumann had tried and failed on a few occasions to write a full piano concerto. There is evidence in his writings of various attempts at composing a few concertos, but there are no surviving manuscripts or even musical sketches to show for them. There was a more serious effort made towards a Concerto in F major, but this project was eventually abandoned (Earle 8). As someone who worked towards becoming a piano virtuoso and who aspired to be a the genius composer, Schumann recognized the necessity of producing a piano concerto. But he did not want to just contribute to the genre; he wished to transform it, in the way that Beethoven did with the Classical legacy that Mozart and Haydn had established.

It was his work as a journalist and critic that gave Schumann ideas of where to start. Schumann was editor and co-founder of *Die Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, a magazine that gave reviews of the music and performances of the time (Geck 42-43). As both editor of the journal and budding composer, Schumann often took the opportunity to criticize contemporary concertos, remarking negatively on the supposedly empty virtuosity and mechanical displays of piano pyrotechnics that composers often employed (Earle 7). By listening to and analyzing the concertos written at the time, he was able to determine what he liked and disliked, what was being produced, and what had yet to be written. He especially criticized the pieces of the composer Henri Herz, considering them, "... no more than vehicles for technical display" (MacDonald 137). In his reviews, Schumann seems to have appreciated the concertos that were overall less technically exhilarating, but still demanded a necessity for grandeur and a balanced form. He therefore made a distinction between "transcendent" and "shallow" virtuosity, and ultimately viewed true Romantic

music as a proponent of the sublime (Stefaniak 437).

The concertos written by contemporaries such as Herz and others such as Thalberg and Moscheles, were just a few examples of what Schumann considered virtuosity for the sake of virtuosity. However, as a piano virtuoso himself, Schumann was certainly aware of the impact great keyboard technique had on the success of past compositions by Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven. But he disapproved of using virtuosity as a function of true expression within the concerto and other compositional genres, and did not see this practice as a feasible artistic endeavor (MacDonald 135-136).

In addition to his avoidance of excessive virtuosity, Schumann also desired to reach past the traditional application of the concerto form. In fact, the original draft of the first movement of his A minor concerto, entitled *Phantasie*, was meant to stand alone as a single work for piano and orchestra. Schumann himself described the piece as, "...more an instrumental fantasia with piano in concerto form than an actual piano concerto" (Earle 7). Furthermore, he maintained a strong belief that a concerto should meet two important standards: each movement should be well-rounded, and the orchestral-piano relationship should be equal. It was through these convictions that Schumann was able to compositionally express some of his ideas on Romanticism (MacDonald 166).

Beyond the compositional techniques he was developing, Schumann also had more abstract ideas about music. He certainly considered himself an artist and a virtuoso, and even aspired to be a genius, so he therefore endeavored in every way to produce music of the highest emotional and spiritual caliber. Schumann, along with contemporaries such as Liszt and Wagner, worked towards the lofty goal of "...ensuring that the grand idea of a universal art might acquire a physical, tangible form" (Geck 22). As if this was not ambitious enough, he also felt it was his duty as a composer to establish

a connection between himself, the music, and the audience. In a letter to his mother regarding the piano work *Papillons*, he stated, “Now I’m starting to understand my existence,” and later noted that, “There are secret states of mind in which a word from the composer can lead more specifically to a better understanding and for which the listener is bound to be grateful” (Geck 65).

Thanks to many of Schumann’s writings, modern-day performers and listeners have a relatively good idea of what the word “Romantic” meant to Schumann. Regarding a pair of concertos by Moscheles, who was not as harshly criticized as Herz, Schumann attempted to put into words what made the pieces romantic:

If we call these two romantic, then by this we mean the faint, enchanted illumination that hovers over them; we do not know whether it originates from the objects themselves or from somewhere else. One cannot grasp with one’s hands particular places where the romantic, luminous fragrance comes out most strongly; but one feels everywhere that it is there. (Schumann qtd. in MacDonald 147)

Of course, musicians and scholars can eternally debate what exactly this “enchanted illumination” or “luminous fragrance” is. But Schumann had his own personal understanding of these words, and undoubtedly worked to capture this otherworldliness within his own compositions. The piano concerto is no exception.

The A minor Concerto: Poor Reception and Unorthodox Structure

Schumann’s only piano concerto has a long and interesting compositional history that provides important context for analyzing its unorthodox structure. The first movement, *Phantasie*, was written for Clara Wieck in 1841. In her analysis of the piece, Earle comments that it was “...intended to be an independent fantasia for piano and orchestra” and that, “[a]lthough it contains characteristics of a large first movement in sonata form, it was not originally meant to be the first movement of a concerto” (Earle 9). It premiered in Leipzig with the Gewandhaus Orchestra and Wieck at the piano, but was not received with great enthusiasm, and was therefore stored away in favor of other compositions.

Schumann did try to have the work published on two separate occasions, but it was rejected. Not only did the piece lack the unrestrained virtuosity that was desirable with audiences, but its symphonic-like style and strange form influenced the publisher’s belief that it would not sell. One nineteenth-century writer commented on the reasoning behind the lackluster reception of the work:

Schumann, in fact, was at that time regarded as dangerously modern and often unintelligible. Since he was so cavalier with the old forms - which were sometimes regarded as an end in themselves - and since he discouraged musical pyrotechnics, one can understand suspicion with which he was regarded. (Earle 9)

After moving to Dresden in 1845, Schumann revised the first movement and added the second and third movements, officially making the piece a true piano concerto. Al-

though it was performed by Clara Wieck multiple times over the next few years (even after Schumann's death in 1856), the concerto was still not well received. It was only Liszt, along with his reputation and influence, who could help sway public opinion in favor of the piece. He remarked, "The repeated failures of my performances of Schumann's compositions both in private and in public discouraged me from entering them on the programs for my concert.... [T]his was an error which I afterwards recognized, and I indeed regretted" (Liszt qtd. in Earle 11). In fact, the concerto was not truly accepted into regular piano concert repertoire until around the 1960s (Piano Concerto in A minor 35).

The concerto's complicated history can be explained through an analysis of its structure. Its overall structure follows a more Mendelssonian approach, deviating from the more common double exposition form by introducing the piano and orchestra together in an abrupt but brief cacophony of sound. Themes and harmonies throughout the first movement, *Allegro affettuoso*, are shared and developed between both soloist and accompaniment in order to create a balanced, well-rounded sound. The cadenza, written by Schumann himself, flows directly out of the first movement and continues to develop previously heard material, rather than introduce new ideas. Furthermore, the cadenza functions to complement and enhance the movement, rather than serve as an independent structure meant to display performance technique.

The second movement, *Intermezzo*, is both lovely and intimate. It features a slightly different type of dynamic between soloist and accompaniment, where instead of the equal sharing of all thematic material as seen in the first movement, the piano appears to embrace the first theme, while the orchestra takes charge of the second theme. The two themes interact and intertwine to produce a relatively simple piece, but the themes are still able to musically complement each other.

The completion of the second movement surprisingly brings back the first theme of the *Allegro affettuoso*, which harkens the beginning of the joyous final movement, *Allegro vivace*. The final two movements are also joined together, without the traditional pause of silence that usually separates the movements of a concerto or large work. All of these compositional decisions help fulfill Schumann's grand ideas on a unified piano-orchestral work, and result in a piece that is technically impressive (but not excessively flamboyant), beautifully lyrical, and pleasantly robust in orchestration (Earle 12-13, 37).

Figure I: The ending of the second movement and transition into the third. The lower woodwinds reintroduce the first theme of the first movement in m. 103, while the piano responds with short, improvisatory phrases. The orchestra proceeds to immediately jump into the third movement through m. 108 with a fast, ascending scale played by the strings.

A Musical Legacy Lives On: Schumann's Impact on Western Art Music

Schumann's contribution to the piano concerto genre, though low in quantity, was certainly not lacking in quality nor innovation. As a composer, he had a very defined set of ideas on the subject of Romantic music, and through analysis of his music and writings we can see the application of those ideas in the A minor concerto. His philosophies on musical

unity and continuity, non-virtuosic expression, and the piano-orchestral dynamic not only produced a unique piece of music but also elevated the entire genre to a new level. Because of its unconventionality at the time, the concerto was not fully accepted as a valid piece of music. As it was, Schumann was writing music for the artist in the era where the virtuoso reigned among the public. In commenting on the Romantic era of music, contemporary scholars usually endorse the nineteenth-century view of the composer or musician as a creator of masterpieces. This is certainly not wrong, but it is noteworthy that despite Schumann being a well-established composer, and likely a genius, he may not have been viewed as such by the general public. His creative output, especially with regards to the concerto, was altogether misunderstood and, occasionally, rejected. One can even make the argument that he never had any true musical successors due to the distinctive quality of his music. This situates Schumann as a singularly unique Romantic composer, and his musical peculiarities are heard consistently throughout all his compositions.

But if Schumann was peculiar, he was just as, if not more, brilliant. While his ideas were unorthodox and his willingness to stretch musical boundaries made many uncomfortable, he contributed to the tradition of Western music enormously, in terms of both artistic expression and technical alterations to genre. Numerous composers and musicians throughout the 20th century have admired Schumann for challenging the limitations of music and musical genre, perhaps appreciating his seemingly unregulated compositional style and his ability to take listeners to unknown realms of feeling. Indeed, the structural changes to the piano concerto alone opened up new compositional doors for future composers, which is arguably one of the most important things any artist

can do for his or her field. In an 1839 essay written for *Die Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Schumann expressed his ambitions for the concerto by stating, “And so we must await the genius who will show us in a newer and more brilliant way how orchestra and piano may be combined, how the soloist, dominant at the keyboard, may unfold the wealth of his instrument and his art, while the orchestra, no longer a mere spectator, may interweave its manifold facets into the scene” (Schumann qtd. in *Piano Concerto in A minor* 36). It is ultimately unknown if Schumann himself believed that he was the “genius” that accomplished this feat. But contemporary recognition of Schumann’s unique voice, as well as an analysis and understanding of the A minor concerto, makes a strong case that he at the very least contributed to the manifestation of the above passage, if not really was that genius who elevated both the genre and Western music to its next level.

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