

Freddy Kempf
plays
Schumann

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YAMAHA

SCHUMANN, Robert (1810-1856)**Carnaval****31'16****Scènes mignonnes sur quatre notes, Op. 9 (1834-35/36)**

[1]	Préambule	2'16
[2]	Pierrot	2'06
[3]	Arlequin	0'58
[4]	Valse noble	2'10
[5]	Eusebius	2'22
[6]	Florestan	0'58
[7]	Coquette	1'42
[8]	Réplique	0'57
[9]	Papillons	0'42
[10]	A.S.C.H.–S.C.H.A. (Lettres dansantes)	0'52
[11]	Chiarina	1'25
[12]	Chopin	1'29
[13]	Estrella	0'26
[14]	Reconnaissance	1'44
[15]	Pantalon et Colombine	0'58
[16]	Valse allemande	0'55
[17]	Paganini	1'17
[18]	Aveu	1'32
[19]	Promenade	2'29
[20]	Pause	0'18
[21]	Marche des „Davidsbündler“ contre les Philistins	3'34

[22]	Toccata in C major, Op. 7 (1830/33)	6'21
	<i>Allegro – Più mosso</i>	
[23]	Arabesque in C major, Op. 18 (1838)	6'07
	<i>Leicht und zart</i>	
	Minore I. <i>Etwas langsamer</i>	
	Minore II. <i>Etwas langsamer</i>	
	<i>Zum Schluß</i>	
	Humoresque in B flat major, Op. 20 (1839)	26'56
[24]	<i>Einfach</i>	5'45
[25]	<i>Hastig</i>	4'56
[26]	<i>Einfach und zart</i>	4'58
[27]	<i>Innig</i>	2'13
[28]	<i>Sehr lebhaft</i>	3'21
[29]	<i>Zum Beschluß</i>	5'37

Freddy Kempf, piano

INSTRUMENTARIUM

Grand piano: Yamaha

Piano technician: Masahiko Kataoka

We are indebted to Yamaha for generously lending
and preparing the piano used in this recording.



Hair by Ilium

Clothes from Harrods, London

Almost all the biographical literature about **Robert Schumann** includes a thorough chronicle of his illness. The most diverse theories have been propounded, and the descriptions only concur on a single point: the assertion that, in the last years of his life, Schumann was mentally ill. Specialist psychiatrists confirm that he must have been a manic-depressive. The Swedish scholar, former university rector and professor of medicine Philip Sandblom compared him to Vincent van Gogh, who was also manic-depressive; moreover, both Schumann and van Gogh suffered from the condition known as hypergraphia – an irrepressible creative frenzy which results in a scarcely believable degree of productivity and a richness of imagination that is likewise astonishing. In the case of van Gogh, Sandblom cites as an example the famous, almost frightening picture *Cornfields with Flight of Birds* – and Schumann's œuvre too contains works of similarly descriptive character.

The quality of restlessness became most pronounced towards the end of Schumann's life, but he displayed manic-depressive traits in earlier years too. The introduction of two *alter ego* figures into his works – the sprightly Florestan and the dreamy Eusebius, members of the so-called League of David (Davidsbund) – was just one of numerous 'symptoms' of this illness; others can be found simply by reading a summary of his biography, in which we find one extreme after another. He was a prodigy who studied music and law simultaneously; he sustained a severe hand injury (which ruled out a career as a piano virtuoso) from a piece of home-made training apparatus; he undertook half-hearted studies of composition and became editor of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*; he suffered from a split personality (and conducted conversations with himself in all seriousness); he married – without her father's permission – the pianist and composer Clara Wieck, daughter of his piano teacher; he achieved world renown as a composer and became Director of Music in Düsseldorf in 1850 despite his fully developed mental illness; he tried to drown himself in the Rhine in 1854, and was finally committed to an institution, where he died.

A work in which Schumann's various personalities are very much to the fore is *Carnaval*, Op.9, with the French subtitle 'Scènes mignonnes sur quatre notes' ('Pretty scenes on four notes'). Work on the cycle began in 1834, and it was ready in time for Shrove Tuesday in 1835. It was originally more extensive, but Schumann excised some of the movements he had intended to include, and five of these pieces later appeared as No.3 of the *Bunte Blätter*, Op.99, and as Nos.4, 11, 15 and 17 of the *Albumblätter*, Op.124. In the late summer of 1834 Schumann had secretly become engaged to the young Baroness Ernestine von Fricken,

whose acquaintance he had made in the course of piano lessons in the Wieck household. She came from the town of Asch in Bohemia, and the letters of the town's name correspond to the four notes to which the subtitle alludes. In the course of the work, the letters appear in a wide variety of guises, such as A–Es–C–H (the German note names for A–E flat–C–B), As–C–H (A flat–C–B) and Es–C–H–A (E flat–C–B–A): the last of these could also refer to Schumann's own name: SCHumAnn. We should probably count ourselves fortunate that the name of this small town was then written in German: today its name – in Czech – is Aš, which would have reduced Schumann's possibilities either to two notes (A–Es [A–E flat]) or even to just one (As [A flat])...

Part of the fascination of *Carnaval* resides in its original movement titles, and it is surprising that the composer himself claimed to have added them retrospectively: 'only the various different mental states seemed to me to be of interest'. In any case, the majority of the titles are slightly enigmatic, and only two can be said to be self-evident: Chopin and Paganini. Familiarity with the story of Schumann's life reveals his wife-to-be, Clara Wieck, behind the Italian pet name 'Chiarina', and Ernestine von Fricken behind 'Estrella'. The colourful diversity and the character of *Carnaval* is completed by the presence of some classical figures from the *commedia dell'arte* – Pierrot, Arlequin, Pantalon und Colombine – and also of some members of the League of David – among them Florestan and Eusebius, in other words Schumann himself. A march of the League of David members rounds off the entire work – a cycle that has enjoyed enduring popularity with audiences and pianists alike.

The C major *Toccata*, Op. 7, enjoys – not without justification – a secure reputation as one of the most malicious 'pianist slaughterers' ever written. Schumann himself is said to have been firmly convinced that he had written the most difficult piece in the entire piano repertoire, and he dedicated it to his friend Ludwig Schunke, who succeeded in learning it more or less by watching Schumann play it. For a pianist with a good chord technique, however, the difficulties are not prohibitive; the problem lies rather with the gradual onset of fatigue and consequent tightening up. When playing the piece on the piano, one makes the interesting observation that it can be played without using the middle finger of the right hand – because this was the finger that Schumann had injured beyond repair with his training apparatus.

The *Toccata* was revised on several occasions – which is unusual for Schumann. The first version (1829-30) was in D major; the second, in C major, dates from 1832, and the piece

reached its final form the following year. The identity of Schumann's rôle-models here (except for the then ubiquitous Czerny) has been the cause of far-reaching speculation, in the course of which two composers with dual nationality occur especially frequently: Charles (Karl) Mayer, a Russian of German extraction whose works Schumann had studied in depth, and George(s) Onslow, the chromatically daring Frenchman with English roots. (A further source of inspiration was the rapid development of new pianos – the possibilities of which Schumann, like most composers of the period, was keen to exploit without delay.) In its turn this *Toccata* succeeded in spawning successors, and we can be certain that Prokofiev was inspired by its percussive nature...

'Leicht und zart' ('light and tender'), the indication found at the beginning of the *Arabesque* in C major, Op. 18, captures in just three words the character of this short, simple piece. In 1838 Schumann himself said that he had composed 'entsetzlich viel' ('terribly much'), and his tally of piano works in that year was remarkable even by his own standards, including the Op. 14 and Op. 22 sonatas, *Kreisleriana* and the *Kinderszenen* – piano pieces which would have been sufficient to guarantee him world fame even if he had written nothing else. 1839 was to be the last great 'piano year' before he devoted himself primarily to other musical media, and he celebrated the New Year in Vienna with the *Arabesque*, a rondo consisting of an attractive main theme with two trios.

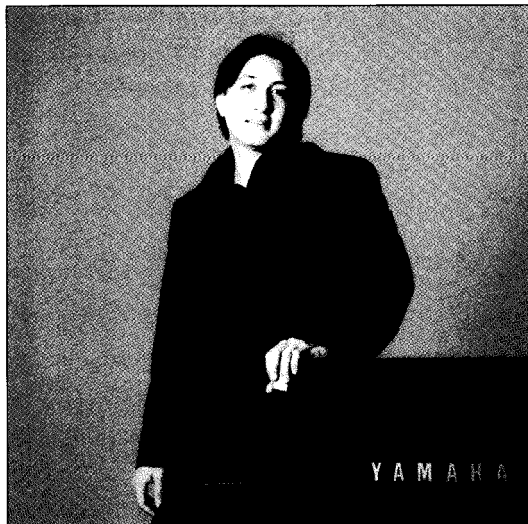
A little later, in mid-March 1839, Schumann could announce that, within the space of a week, he had composed the twelve-page-long *Große Humoreske* in B flat major, Op. 20 (normally called simply *Humoresque*). In formal terms this large-scale work is difficult to grasp, and it contains elements of almost all the forms that the composer – who was not yet 29 – had so far employed. The musicologist Harry Halbreich astutely described the work as: '...a suite of variations, expressive in mood – in *Stimmung*, as the Germans say – which are unified more by their poetic nature than by musical or even æsthetic features'. He went on to point out that the five sections of the piece are closely linked by key: almost without exception they circle around the main key of B flat major and its relative, G minor.

The relatively infrequency of performances of the *Humoresque*, however, cannot be ascribed exclusively to its formal problems: it suffers, especially on an international level, from its title. Schumann himself recognized that the German title 'Humoreske' tends to lose many of its nuances in translation – especially its overtones of 'raptures', of caprice and of cosiness. Puzzlingly, motivic fragments from the *Arabesque* are present in the *Humoresque* –

the result of more thorough reflection, or simply because this material from a piece composed just ten weeks previously was still very much in Schumann's thoughts? Or was Schumann here concerned with the characteristics of various keys: what did B flat major and G minor mean to him personally?

It is perhaps best to circumvent these questions simply by ignoring them. By devoting ourselves unconditionally to this music, we soon discover its beauty and magnificence – without any deliberation or guessing games.

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Freddy Kempf

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'My compositions are sometimes difficult to understand because they are connected with distant interests; and sometimes striking because everything extraordinary that happens impresses me and impels me to express it in music' – Robert to Clara, 13th April 1838.

Carnaval: Scènes mignonnes sur quatre notes, Op. 9

'A higher kind of *Papillons*', Schumann called his *Carnaval* (1834-35/36). Autobiographically potent, musically intricate, overwhelming in ardour and Romantic fantasy, written 'often with toil and effort', it's a work of heady intoxication. In its pages, its twenty-one frames, we meet the transient and lasting loves of Schumann's life – his then-betrothed, Ernestine von Fricken ('Estrella'), 'a wonderfully pure, childlike character, delicate and thoughtful'; and his wife-to-be, Clara Wieck ('Chiarina'), 'the most precious creature in the world' – who was to cherish *Carnaval* as 'a lovely, vivid painting in tones' (letter to Franz Grillparzer, 11th January 1838). (In the covert guise of a breathlessly flushed fragment from the same-key 'Clärchen' subject of Ludwig van Beethoven's *Egmont* overture [*dolce*, bars 125-29], she first takes the stage in 'Préambule' [*più moto*, bars 31-32 most obviously]. 'Clärchen was *Egmont's* beloved – the same... O the strange sweetness of the name. Clärchen... Schumann... I wonder whether an angel imagined the names together?' [Verses to Clara, 1838]) We find cameos of friends and contemporaries ('Chopin', *agitato* in expression; 'Paganini', a *presto* intermezzo within the 'Valse allemande', crowned by the most dramatic of pedal effects); and scenes peopled by characters from the *commedia dell'arte* ('Pierrot', mixing piano stealth and freakish *forte* laughter; 'Arlequin'; 'Pantalon et Colombine'). Hoffmannesque caprice and Callot engraving, 'fanfarons and gipsy princesses', colour its fairyland of dance and dream ('Reconnaissance').

'Florestan' (the quick man of passion and action, the confident, impulsive extrovert), 'Eusebius' (spiritually lonely, the shy, gentle dreamer, the insecure melancholic introvert) identify its composer's self-confessed 'double nature'. In a climactic march (perversely in 3/4 – *Egmont* 3/4?) rounded off by the high-flying heroism from the end of 'Préambule', his fictitious League of David – that 'spiritual and romantic' army of musicians and radicals novelised in the early 1830s out of the passions and turmoils of his mind – declare war on the Establishment, the Philistines, the ignorants and arrogants of his day, 'musical and otherwise'. Corresponding with Moscheles, 22nd September 1838, Schumann reminds that the titles only came after the work was completed. 'Is music not always gratifying and eloquent

enough on its own?' he asks. "“Estrella” is a name like those placed under portraits in order to commit them more lastingly to memory; “Reconnaissance” as scene of recognition, “Aveu” a confession of love, “Promenade” a march [again in 3/4] like those performed in German balls, the men in arm with their ladies. This definitely has no artistic value;... its only interest lies in the considerable amount of different emotional states.’

Dedicated to the Polish violinist Karol Lipiński, *Carnaval* was published in Leipzig in August 1837, in a shorter form than intended – five discarded movements resurfacing towards the end of Schumann’s life in the *Bunte Blätter*, Op. 99 (*Albumblatt* No. 3) and *Albumblätter*, Op. 124 (Nos. 4, *Walzer*; 11, *Romanze*; 15, *Walzer*; 17, *Elfe*). In the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 22nd April 1836, it’s announced (prematurely) as ‘Carnaval or Scenes of Drollery on Four Notes by Florestan’. Later, following its first printing, Schumann calls it *Maskentanz* (letter to Moscheles, 23rd August 1837). ‘A masked ball’, maintained his revered Jean Paul (*Flegeljahre* [1804-05], chapter 63 – the well-thumbed inspiration of *Papillons*), ‘is perhaps the most perfect medium through which poetry can interpret life... In the masquerade, everything is rounded into a buoyant, happy circle which is set in well-ordered motion as if in obedience to the laws of prosody. It moves, to wit, in the sphere of music – the region of the spiritual, as the mask is the region of the physical.’ ‘The secret soul of every age’, suggests Marcel Brion in his *Schumann and the Romantic Age* (1954, trans. Geoffrey Sainsbury), ‘is reflected in the mirror of its carnival... For the Romantics, heirs alike of the Baroque and the Rococo, the carnival became the prophetic voice of tortured humanity, seeking behind the mask its own essential nature. With its delight in doubles, the carnival is the supreme fête in which the harassed personality alienated or disintegrated, transforms and transfigures itself by the tricks of disguise...’ It was ‘to a carnival, sumptuous, voluptuous, yet full of satanic sadness’, he reminds us, ‘that Eichendorff invites the heroes of his *Marmorbild* [1818/1826]... In this dangerous game with shadows, in this labyrinth of reflections and phantoms, the individual, bereft of all certainty of his own reality, gropes and flounders in his own pursuit’. Such was the kindling of Schumann’s imagination.

‘Sphinxes’ – an associatively antique trinity of metreless, ‘bars’ of mensurally notated bass-clef breves in tonal limbo – entombs the musical seed of *Carnaval*. Not to be played, Clara warns (an instruction often ignored, however), these ‘bars’ take the form of three different orderings of a *Grundgestalt* or cipher incorporating the key letters of Schumann’s name and the Bohemian birthplace of Ernestine, Asch: ‘S [in German nomenclature, E flat]–C–H

[B natural]–A' / 'A–S [A flat combined]–C–H' / 'A–E flat–C–H'. In the spirit, as Schumann himself wrote publicly, of 'those musical diversions familiar at least since Bach's time', this motto is used variously, subtly and obscurely in all twenty movements, including those where its presence is habitually denied. The introductory 'Préambule', for example (retrieved from a set of *Sehnsuchtswalzer Variationen* after Schubert sketched in 1832–33, replete with well-known Schubert quote [bars 9–10: from the *Trauer Waltz* in A flat, D. 365 No. 2, published 29th November 1821]) – bars 92ff, left-hand *sforzandi*, A flat/C/B (replicated in the penultimate 'Pause'). The outcome is an innovative, cellular-intensive metamorphic cycle where the notes of the cipher, as Kathleen Dale says (1952), 'are arranged in a succession of patterns melodically and rhythmically so diverse as to exclude any sense of monotony, though subtle enough to impart a feeling of coherence to the whole series'. 'Not since the bass theme of the *Eroica* have four notes yielded such a vast canvas of ideas' (Bálint Vázsonyi, 1972). Other material comes from *Papillons*: principally, its closing 17th-century *Großvaterentanz*, used to characterise the Philistines in the march; and, in 'Florestan' (*adagio*-ed and question-marked), the rising octave motif of its first movement (Jean Paul's 'like a hero, thirsting for fame, who goes forth to his first battle'). Or is shared with Clara: specifically, the repeated and falling octaves of bars 7–10 of her contemporaneous *Valses romantiques*, Op. 4 (1835), shadowing/foreshadowing the 'Valse allemande'; possibly also the inner-voice descending five-note alto pattern of 'Chiarina' (a favourite 'Clara' motto with Schumann). Tonally, the work centres on A flat and B flat major; with E flat, G minor, C minor and solitary instances of B (the middle section of 'Reconnaissance') and D flat ('Promenade') in attendance.

'It is lovely – lovely because each time I play it, it conjures up your image so vividly in my mind; I see you as Eusebius, and feel the light pressure of your hand! I see you as Florestan, upset about a father's bad mood, but then conciliating anew – in a word, it always makes an indescribable impression on me, it makes me happy, pained, yearning' (Clara, 18th January 1838). At the Leipzig Gewandhaus, Monday 30th March 1840, Liszt, unwell and short on preparation, premièred a truncated version comprising ten numbers under the billing *Carnaval Scenes*: 'Préambule; *Andantino* (Eusebius); *Agitato* (Florestan); *Valse* (La coquette); *Réplique*; *Notturmo* (Chopin); *Scherzo* (Pantalon et Colombine); *Reconnaissance*; *Promenade*; *Finale*'. Unenraptured, Schumann reviewed the occasion in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 10th April 1840. 'As to my wariness about whether such rhapsodic carnival

activity could make any impression at all upon a large audience, [Liszt] responded with utter conviction that he indeed hoped so. And yet I feel he was wrong... it was carnival season in 1835 and piece after piece was completed – in a serious vein, however, and in an appropriately personal ambience... Although some of the pieces may interest certain people and others not, the musical moods alternate too quickly to be followed by an entire audience which does not wish to be startled every other minute ['In Carnival', he'd already told Clara, 29th January 1839, 'each piece always counterbalances the next, which some people cannot accept']. My well-meaning friend did not take this into account... and despite all his enthusiasm and brilliant playing, he [failed] in transporting the audience as a whole.' (To Clara only weeks previously, 18th March: 'I have at last had a chance of hearing Liszt's wonderful playing, which alternates between a fine frenzy and the utmost delicacy. But his world is not mine, Clärchen. Art, as we know it – you when you play, I when I compose – has an intimate charm that is worth more to me than all Liszt's splendour and tinsell!') Clara pioneered the uncut original at a concert in Vienna, 7th February 1856.

'There is hardly a musician', considered Louis Kentner (*Piano*, 1976), 'who has not had, at some period of his early life, a passionate infatuation with Schumann's music – and there is hardly one who succeeded in prolonging this love affair into later life. Perhaps because Schumann was a young man's composer *par excellence*, an embodiment of romantic art, of romantic emotion... the Schumann fever of the young is quickly burnt out. But it is ecstatic while it lasts'. In its starry entwinement of lover and loved one, *Carnaval*, avowedly, is young man's music.

Toccata in C major, Op. 7

Inscribed 'à son ami, Louis Schunke' and conceived originally (in 1829) as an even more difficult *Étude fantastique en doubles-sons* in D, the C major *Toccata* (1830, rev 1833) is a brilliant, physically thrilling fusion of classical sonata and romantic bravura, owing as much to Schumann's own individual understanding of the pre-iron frame Viennese piano as to the possibilities of rapid repetition opened up by Sébastien Érard's double-escapement action patented in 1821 (further explored in right-hand thumb patterns of the 'Reconnaissance' movement from *Carnaval*). The paired-note patterns, the double-thirds (which von Sauer used to recommend playing 'nearly *staccato*' with locked fingering), the muscular-leaping cadential rhetoric of the final pages, the progressive displacement and replacement of the

rhythmic structure from on the beat to across it to caesura, may be staggering (and spectacular) enough, but are as nothing compared with the middle section's famously dazzling wrist octave repetitions, among the enduringly great and testing early glories of the virtuoso age. Architecturally, Schumann's layout is a model of clarity, with a repeated exposition closing in the dominant, followed by a development largely in A minor, reprise, and coda, the *Allegro* pace quickening to *Più mosso* for the last page. That the summary two-bar call-to-arms opening the piece acts as a signpost signalling the development and reprise; that the initial four-part texture with its forward-impelling short-long-short bass line borders on the quartet medium; that the quadripartite melodic address of the exposition and recapitulation differs in the second and fourth statements; that the second subject group is first presented in the lower voice before being more brightly 'scored' in the treble, are readily audible features. A note at the beginning advises that 'in order to leave the pianist the greatest liberty in delivering this piece, those passages only have been more minutely marked which might be wrongly interpreted'. One consequence of this is the minimum of dynamic indications: five *sforzandi* aside, there's nothing, remarkably, until the *fortissimo* preceding the reprise. (The piano of the closing four chords is authentic.)

Writing of the music and its tubercular young dedicatee in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (1836), Schumann related: 'For many reasons, I had dedicated one of my most difficult piano-forte pieces, a toccata, to [Schunke]; and when we dedicate something to any one, we generally wish that person especially to perform it. As I lost not a tone that he played, I was slightly angry that he did not set to work at the toccata, and, to excite him to study, played it at him, in my own room, adjoining his. But all remained still in that chamber. Some time after, a stranger came to pay us a visit and to hear Schunke. What was my astonishment at hearing him play my toccata perfectly! He told me afterwards, that, while listening to my playing of it two or three times, he had studied and worked at it in his mind, without using the piano-forte.' On 11th September 1834, at the Leipzig Gewandhaus, Clara, not yet fifteen, introduced it to the public for the first time, scoring a personal triumph. All the great pianists since have made it their own. Like the Chopin and Liszt études with which it was contemporary, there is no finer display of technique turned art.

Arabesque in C major, Op. 18

Schumann's first twenty-three published works, spanning the decade from 1829 to 1839, were all for piano – white-hot music from 'the Spring of life' of an intensity and ecstasy, a storm, a tenderness captured but once. '...So your father calls me phlegmatic? Phlegmatic, and write *Carnaval*, the *F sharp minor Sonata*! Phlegmatic, and your lover!...' (to Clara, 10th May 1838). The *Arabesque*, a *poésie* of hope and absence, composed in Vienna at Schön Laternengasse 679, comes from towards the end of this period: it was written in December 1838. Schumann's immediate letters and verses to Clara – their wished-for union persistently opposed by her father Friedrich, her emotional loyalties torn, her moods constantly wavering – are the window on its genesis. Similarly, Clara's correspondence: 'For your sake I will give up my father, whom I love more than anyone except for you. I will follow you without my father's consent... That is a great deal for a feeling heart to do, difficult, but I trust you, my life will lie in your hands and you will make me happy' (25th November 1838). Robert: 'Parted we are, even as in the heavens star and star, one following the other on its way, night and day.' 'If angrily Florestan scolds you, Eusebius's arms shall enfold you. In Florestan are jealousies, Eusebius loves you truthfully – So who shall have your bridal kiss? The truest to himself and you.' (autumn 1838). 'My festival [Christmas] will be a sad one this year. I shall hum many a melody, and go to the window every now and then to look up at the glittering stars. In spirit I shall spend the whole evening with you... my strength always fails me when I am left long without a sign from you. Depression sets in, and I feel as if I were being swathed in endless black fabrics and garments, and stowed away – an indescribable sensation...' (18th December 1838).

Structurally, the piece is the form of a simple five-part ABACA rondo – with a C major anacrusistic Eusebius refrain (a flowing, rhythmically-dotted idea against an evenly-rippling middleground accompaniment above a delicate but pointed bass line; *Leicht und zart* (light and delicate), crotchet 152 [Clara (Instructive Edition, 1887): 126]) offset by two Florestan episodes: the first in E minor (soprano and tenor registered quavers, down-beat; *Etwas langsamer* (somewhat more slowly), crotchet 152 [Clara: 112]), the second in A minor (clipped figures in vintage Schumann manner, anacrusistic; *Etwas langsamer*, crotchet 144 [Clara: 120]). These refrains and episodes each begin on the fifth degree of the scale, with a common 5-6-5 or 5-7-6-5 opening motif generating a unifying link across the totality.

A coda is provided by an extraordinary *Zum Schluß* – a reflectively drawn-out paragraph

on the downbeat distantly born of 'The Poet Speaks' from *Kinderszenen* (*Langsam* [slow], minim 58), in the course of which the home anchorage is prepared and confirmed by interplays of dissonance and concord touching the senses in dimensions of the most exquisitely private nuance. When, in the penultimate bar, the E of C major (Clara's cipher key of the Op. 17 *Fantasy*) is sounded, it is like witnessing the violet bloom of some exotically fragrant flower caught in shafts of sunlight from beneath dark rain clouds. Divining its essence, John Ogdon remembered Lamb's 'Dream Children' (*Elia*, 1823/1833). 'We are nothing; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait... before we have existence, and a name.'

Clara refrained from programming the *Arabesque* in concert until 1867 (London, St James's Hall 'Popular Concerts', 18th February) – just as likewise she had delayed *Carnaval* and the *Humoresque* (Vienna, 9th February 1866). Years earlier she'd noted in her Diary (September 1839): 'I am often pained that Robert's compositions are not recognized as they deserve to be. I would play them gladly, but the public doesn't understand them... If Beethoven and Mozart were alive today, he would be the third in that trinity. The time will come... but it will come late.'

Humoresque in B flat, Op. 20

The *Humoresque* – prolonged, variously repetitious, multi-divisional – was completed in Vienna in March 1839. To Clara, Schumann wrote: 'all week I've been sitting at the piano and composing and writing and laughing and crying, all at the same time. You will find this state of affairs nicely illustrated in my Op. 20, the *Große Humoreske* – twelve sheets composed in a week' (11th March 1839).

Psychologically complex (hence its interpretative challenge), the kaleidoscopic structure of the whole is outwardly obscure. Half a century ago Kathleen Dale (who'd studied with the Clara disciple, Fanny Davies) believed it to defy 'exact formal nomenclature' – 'an anthology', she describes it, 'of nearly all the distinctive lineaments of Schumann's first period style', rondo-esque in places but otherwise neither sonata nor fantasy, variation set nor cyclic suite, in shape. 'Playing the work', she wrote, 'gives one the sensation of looking through a whole portfolio of coloured prints depicting a varied landscape, and of turning back every now and again to refresh one's memory of some particularly striking scene.' A design nevertheless can be found – in the guise of five basic, albeit discursive chapters ranging from an

opening ABCDCBA chiasmic tapestry to a closing peroration-coda. Of these, the G minor second is unique for its inclusion of an enigmatic 'inner voice' (so marked) on a third (unplayed) stave. The origin of this imagined, hallucinatory (Clara?) tone, ghosted in the semiquaver figurations of the right hand, is unclear: notwithstanding familiar transmuted incarnations from Handel onwards, Schumann claimed it for his own. The famous passage of the fourth chapter linked with the *Allegro passionato* middle section (bars 51-84) of an earlier G minor *Romance* by Clara – her Op. 11 No. 2 composed in Dresden, November 1838: the work mistakenly assumed by the late Peter F. Oswald (*Schumann: Music and Madness*, 1985) to have sourced the 'inner voice' – was apparently conceived independently of that piece. Robert only received it from her ('I was thinking of you continually throughout its creation', she says) on 2nd July 1839. 'Your Romance confirms that we must be man and wife. Each of your ideas comes from my own soul, just as I must thank you for all the music I write... our mutual sympathy is absolutely remarkable.' Strikingly similar though the rhythm, contour and mood of the passage may be, its harmonic horizon, it has to be said, is very different – with Clara the calmer, less volatile poet of the two.

What lies behind the façade, the title? In a letter to his Belgian friend and admirer Simonin de Sire (15th March 1839), Schumann was of the opinion that the German term '*Humoreske* conveys nothing in French [nor for that matter in English]. It is a pity that no good and apt words exist in the French language for those two most characteristic and deeply rooted of German conceptions, *das Gemütliche* (*Schwärmerische*) and *Humor*, the latter of which is a happy combination of *Gemütlichkeit* and wit [consider *Grillen* from the *Fantasiestücke*, Op. 12].' Is the *Humoresque* – the 'substantial' masculine side of Schumann to the *Arabesque's* 'fragile' feminine (his adjectives, 15th August 1839) – about humour singular, that 'felicitous blend of rapture and wit' of Jean Paul's definition? The 'perfect musical equivalent to what the most eccentric English have dubbed humour' (Liszt, 1855)? Is it, Dvořák-style, about comfortable middle-European story-telling, cheerful and unfrighting? Or does it run deeper? 'In the *Humoreske* the great variety of content and form, the continual and quick, although always natural and unforced succession of the most varied images, imaginary ideas and sentiments, fantastic and dreamlike phenomena swell and fade into one another ... from beginning to end' (Carl Koßmaly, 'On Robert Schumann's Piano Compositions', Leipzig *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, January 1844, trans. Susan Gillespie). 'A kaleidoscope of joy and suffering, hope and desolation. He who hears it aright hears the palpitations

of Schumann's soul... a heart torn by conflicting forces. All the characters of *Carnaval* are there, flung into the wild delirious dance in which they throw themselves to the last fibre of their beings' (Brion).

Could humours plural – the literary humours (Jonson), the four temperaments of the old world (Galen) – be the explanation perhaps? Humöresques rather than Humoresque (as Harold Bauer liked to fancy)? The sanguine/buoyant; the phlegmatic/sluggish; the choleric/quick-tempered; the melancholic/dejected. Acknowledging these states of being, these fluctuating currents of mood, of 'laughter and tears', occasioned by the regularity or irregularity of one's condition, Freddy Kempf associates the first four sections with: I, sentiment, reflection and memories (*Einfach* – simply); II, anger, private sorrow (*Hastig* – hurried, precipitate, passionate); III, the imbalance of the soul (*Einfach und zart* – simple and fragile); and IV, love and passion (*Innig* – intimate, ardent); with the fifth, *Zum Beschluß* (In Conclusion), closing the story, a familiar Schumann device. Evidentially, he observes, only the last of these divisions, befitting its function, is without emotive label.

Given Schumann's obsession with the coded and the hieroglyphic, can still more be read into the music? Is the fact that its opening page takes up where the *Arabesque* left off significant? Equally, that the *Arabesque*'s four-note motif comes back, ruminatively, in the final chapter? Is there anything to be drawn from the predominantly B flat tonality or the G minor incursion of the second and third sections? B flat – the key of 'untroubled love, clear conscience, hope and longing for a better world' of Christian Schubart's *Ideen zu einer Aesthetik der Tonkunst* (1806); G minor – the key of 'regret, discontentment, the strain of a plan that has misfired, a sullen gnawing at the bit, the expression of ill-will and displeasure.' Since childhood Schumann had admired and questioned this book. About the time of the *Arabesque*, he'd borrowed a copy in Vienna to re-read. In March 1839, with extracts appearing the very same month under his editorship in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, it surrounded him – forgotten witness to the new work as it coalesced hourly out of the nicotined furnace of a mind not yet twenty-nine.

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University of Surrey

Born in London in 1977, **Freddy Kempf** began playing the piano at the age of four. He first came to national prominence aged eight when he performed Mozart's piano concerto K.V.414 with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at London's Royal Festival Hall, whilst international attention followed soon afterwards with appearances in the same concerto in Germany.

In 1987 he won the first National Mozart Competition in England and in 1992 the biennial BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition. His award of third prize in the 1998 Tchaikovsky International Piano Competition in Moscow provoked an outcry in the Russian press, which described him as 'the hero of the competition', and his unprecedented popularity with Russian audiences has been reflected in several television broadcasts and sold-out performances.

Freddy Kempf has given concerts throughout Europe, the United States and Japan and has appeared on television across Europe. Recent solo recitals have included dates at London's Wigmore Hall, New York's 92nd Street 'Y' and the Salzburg Mozarteum, whilst concerto engagements have included appearances with the Berlin Symphony Orchestra, Moscow Symphony Orchestra, St Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra, Vienna Chamber Orchestra, Netherlands Radio Symphony Orchestra, National Orchestra of Belgium, Symphony Orchestra of Portugal, European Community Chamber Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, London Mozart Players, BBC National Orchestra of Wales and Hallé Orchestra. He has worked with many distinguished musicians, both in masterclass and in concert, including Vladimir Ashkenazy, Kurt Sanderling, Isidore Cohen, Libor Pešek and Fedor Gluschenko.

Freddy Kempf is now in great international demand. He is also passionately committed to chamber music and devotes much time to performing with his Kempf Trio. This is his first commercial recording. Recordings of music by Sergei Rachmaninov and Ludwig van Beethoven are in preparation.

Es gibt verständlicherweise kaum ein biographisches Werk über **Robert Schumann**, das auf eine ausführliche Erläuterung seiner Krankheitsgeschichte verzichtet. Die verschiedensten Theorien sind dabei erörtert worden, und die Schilderungen haben wohl einen einzigen Punkt gemeinsam: die Feststellung, daß Schumann in seinen letzten Jahren geistesgestört war. Fachleute der Psychiatrie bestätigen, daß er manisch-depressiv gewesen sein muß. Der schwedische ehemalige Universitätsrektor und Professor der Medizin, Philip Sandblom, verglich ihn mit Vincent van Gogh, der ebenfalls manisch-depressiv war; beide litten außerdem an jenem Zustand, der Hypergraphie genannt wird, einem nicht zu bändigenden Schaffenstaumel, der zu einer schier unglaublichen Produktivität und einem ebenso unglaublichen Phantasiereichtum führt. Bei van Gogh nannte Sandblom als Beispiel das berühmte, fast erschreckende Bild *Weizenfeld mit Raben*, und auch Schumanns Schaffen enthält zahlreiche Stücke ähnlich deskriptiver Art.

Es war gegen Schumanns Lebensende, daß die Rastlosigkeit am ausgeprägtesten wurde, aber bereits in jüngeren Jahren wies er manisch-depressive Züge auf. Daß er in seine Werke zwei imaginäre *alter-ego*-Gestalten einführte – den quicklebendigen Florestan und den verträumten Eusebius, Mitglieder des sogenannten Davidsbundes – war nur eines von mehreren „Symptomen“ dieser Krankheit, andere sind in seinem Lebensmärchen zu finden, das eine einzige Aneinanderreihung der Extremen ist: frühreif, gleichzeitige Jura- und Klavierstudien, Zerstörung der Hand (und einer Karriere als Klaviervirtuose) durch ein selbstgebasteltes Trainingsgerät, halbherzige Kompositionsstudien, Redakteur der *Neuen Zeitschrift für Musik*, Persönlichkeitsspaltung (führte vollen Ernstes Gespräche mit sich selbst), heiratete ohne Erlaubnis die Tochter seines Klavierlehrers, die Pianistin und Komponistin Clara Wieck, Welt- und Ruhm als Komponist, 1850 Musikdirektor in Düsseldorf trotz sich voll entwickelnder Geisteskrankheit, 1854 ein Versuch, sich im Rhein zu ertränken, Nervenheilanstalt, Tod.

Ein Werk, wo Schumanns verschiedene Persönlichkeiten zum Vorschein kommen, ist *Carnaval* op. 9, mit dem französisch abgefaßten Untertitel „Scènes mignonnes sur quatre notes“ (Niedliche Szenen über vier Töne). Die Arbeit am Zyklus begann 1834 und wurde um die Zeit des Faschingsdienstages 1835 vollendet. Anfänglich war er umfangreicher, aber Schumann strich einige der ursprünglich komponierten Stücke, und fünf von diesen erschienen später als Nr. 3 der *Bunten Blätter* op. 99, und Nr. 4, 11, 15 und 17 der *Albumblätter* op. 124. Im Spätsommer 1834 hatte sich Schumann heimlich mit der jungen Baronin Ernestine von Fricken verlobt, die er beim Klavierunterricht im Hause Wieck kennengelernt hatte.

Sie stammte aus dem böhmischen Städtchen Asch, und die Buchstaben dieses Namens ergaben die vier im Untertitel erwähnten Töne, die im Laufe des Werks in den verschiedensten Gestalten erscheinen, wie zum Beispiel A–Es–C–H, As–C–H und Es–C–H–A, wobei die letztere auch Schumanns eigenen Namen bezeichnen könnte: SCHumAnn. Wir sollten uns vielleicht glücklich schätzen, daß der Name des Städtchens damals deutsch geschrieben wurde; heute heißt es auf Tschechisch Aš, was Schumanns Möglichkeiten auf entweder zwei Töne (A–Es) oder gar einen Ton (As) begrenzt hätte...

Ein Teil der Faszination des *Carnaval* ist auf die originellen Satztitel zurückzuführen, und es ist überraschend, daß der Komponist selbst behauptete, er hätte sie erst später hinzugefügt: „einzig schienen mir die vielfachen verschiedenen Seelenzustände von Interesse“. Die Titel sind ohnehin in den meisten Fällen leicht rätselhaft, und nur zwei dieser Portraits können wohl als ganz eindeutig bezeichnet werden: Chopin und Paganini. Wer mit Schumanns Biographie vertraut ist wird hinter der italienischen Koseform Chiarina seine künftige Frau Clara, hinter Estrella Ernestine von Fricken erkennen. Die bunte Vielfalt und der Charakter von *Carnaval* wird durch das Erscheinen einiger klassischer Gestalten der *Commedia dell'arte* ergänzt – Pierrot, Arlequin, Pantalón und Colombine – und außerdem durch einige Davidsbündler, darunter Florestan und Eusebius, also Schumann selbst; es ist ein Marsch der Davidsbündler, der das ganze Werk beendet, einen Zyklus, der bei Publikum und Pianisten stets gleich beliebt ist.

Nicht zu Unrecht genießt die *Toccata* in C-Dur op. 7 einen festen Ruf als einer der boshaftesten Pianistenkiller aller Zeiten. Schumann selbst soll felsenfest überzeugt gewesen sein, das schwierigste Stück des gesamten Klavierrepertoires geschrieben zu haben, und er widmete es seinem Freund Ludwig Schunke, der es mehr oder weniger dadurch zu lernen schaffte, daß er Schumann beim Spielen anhörte. Dabei sind die Schwierigkeiten für einen Pianisten mit guter Akkordtechnik keineswegs unerschwinglich – das Problem ist eher die allmählich eintretende Ermattung und Versteifung. Wer sich an das Stück am Klavier herannähert, wird übrigens eine interessante Feststellung machen: es kann ohne Gebrauch des rechten Mittelfingers gespielt werden, und warum?: weil es eben dieser Finger war, den Schumann sich mit seinem Trainingsgerät unheilbar verletzt hatte.

Die *Toccata* wurde (selten bei Schumann) mehrmals umgearbeitet. Die erste Fassung (1829-30) war in D-Dur, die zweite, in C-Dur, entstand 1832, und sie wurde im folgenden Jahr auf ihre endgültige Gestalt gebracht. Es ist weit und breit gerätselt worden, wo Schu-

mann seine Vorbilder holte (außer beim damals obligaten Czerny), und zwei Komponisten doppelter Nationalitäten scheinen dabei besonders häufig auf: der Russe deutscher Abstammung Charles (Karl) Mayer, dessen Schaffen Schumann eingehend studiert hatte, und der chromatisch verwegene Franzose englischer Abstammung George(s) Onslow. (Eine weitere Inspiration fand er in der damals rapiden Entwicklung neuer Klaviere, deren Möglichkeiten er, wie die meisten Komponisten, sofort auskosten wollte.) Diese *Toccata* ist ihrerseits wiederum nicht ohne Nachfolger geblieben, und wir können gewiß sein, daß Prokofjew sich von ihrer Perkussivität inspirieren ließ...

„Leicht und zart“, die Vortragsbezeichnung der *Arabeske* in C-Dur op. 18, erfaßt in drei Worten den Charakter dieses kurzen und schlichten Stücks. 1838 sagte Schumann selbst, er hätte „entsetzlich viel“ komponiert, und das Klavierschaffen in jenem Jahr war selbst für seine Verhältnisse bemerkenswert: u.a. die Sonaten Op. 14 und 22, *Kreisleriana* und die *Kinderszenen*, Klavierwerke, die allein genügt hätten, um ihm Weltruf zu verschaffen. 1839 sollte sein letztes großes „Klavierjahr“ werden, bevor er sich hauptsächlich anderen musikalischen Medien zuwandte, und den Jahreswechsel feierte er in Wien mit der *Arabeske*, einem Rondo, das aus einem anmutigen Hauptthema mit zwei Trios besteht.

Wenig später, Mitte März 1839, konnte Schumann melden, daß er die zwölf Seiten der *Großen Humoreske* in B-Dur op. 20 (meistens nur *Humoreske* genannt) in nur einer Woche komponiert hatte. Dieses groß angelegte Werk ist hinsichtlich der Form schwer zu erfassen, und es enthält Züge nahezu sämtlicher Formen, derer sich der noch nicht ganz 29-jährige Schumann bis dahin bedient hatte. Der Musikwissenschaftler Harry Halbreich machte eine zutreffende Analyse; er bezeichnet das Werk als „Variationensuite von Stimmungen, deren vereinigendes Band eher poetischer als musikalischer Natur ist, oder gar ästhetisch.“ Er fügte hinzu, daß die Tonalität die fünf Teile des Stücks eng miteinander verbindet, denn sie kreisen fast ausnahmslos um die Grundtonart B-Dur und deren Paralleltonart g-moll.

Wenn die *Humoreske* relativ selten gespielt wird, hat dies aber noch mehr Gründe als die formalen Probleme, auf der internationalen Ebene vor allem den Titel. Bereits Schumann selbst erkannte, daß der deutsche Titel „Humoreske“ bei einer Übersetzung leicht einen Großteil seiner Nuancen verliert, vor allem „das Schwärmerische“, den Humor und die Gemütlichkeit. Ein Rätsel ist, daß motivische Teilchen der *Arabeske* in die *Humoreske* aufgenommen wurden – ist dies das Ergebnis einer tieferen Überlegung, oder kommt es einfach daher, daß dieses Material aus dem nur zehn Wochen früher komponierten Stück noch in Schu-

manns Kopf „lagernd“ war? Oder hat Schumann sich Gedanken hinsichtlich der Tonartencharakteristik gemacht: was bedeutete für ihn persönlich eigentlich B-Dur oder g-moll?

Am besten umgeht man diese Probleme, indem man sie einfach nicht beachtet. Wenn man sich vorbehaltlos dieser Musik hingibt, wird man bald ihre Schönheit und Großartigkeit entdecken – ohne Nachsinnen und Rätselraten.

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Der 1977 in London geborene **Freddy Kempf** begann mit vier Jahren, Klavier zu spielen. Im eigenen Lande wurde er im Alter von acht Jahren berühmt, als er in der Londoner Royal Festival Hall Mozarts Klavierkonzert KV 414 mit dem Royal Philharmonic Orchestra spielte; wenig später spielte er das gleiche Konzert in Deutschland.

1987 siegte er beim ersten Nationalen Mozart-Wettbewerb in England, 1992 beim BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition. Die russische Presse reagierte scharf darauf, daß er beim 1998er Tschajkowskij-Wettbewerb in Moskau den dritten Preis erhielt – er wurde als „Held des Wettbewerbes“ beschrieben, und seine einzigartige Beliebtheit beim russischen Publikum fand in mehreren Fernsehsendungen und ausverkauften Konzerten Niederschlag.

Freddy Kempf konzertierte in Europa, den USA und Japan, und erschien in ganz Europa im Fernsehen. Unter seinen Solokonzerten jüngster Zeit können die Wigmore Hall, das Salzburger Mozarteum und der New Yorker CVJM erwähnt werden. Außerdem erschien er mit dem Berliner Sinfonieorchester, dem Moskauer Symphonieorchester, dem Philharmonischen Orchester in St. Petersburg, dem Wiener Kammerorchester, dem Symphonieorchester des Niederländischen Rundfunks, dem Belgischen Nationalorchester, dem Portugiesischen Symphonieorchester, dem Kammerorchester der Europäischen Gemeinschaft, dem Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, den London Mozart Players, dem BBC National Orchestra of Wales und dem Hallé-Orchester. Er arbeitete mit vielen hervorragenden Musikern bei Meisterklassen und Konzerten, wie Vladimir Ashkenazy, Kurt Sanderling, Isidore Cohen, Libor Pešek und Fedor Gluschenko.

Freddy Kempf ist jetzt international sehr gefragt. Er spielt auch leidenschaftlich gerne Kammermusik und widmet seinem Kempf-Trio viel Zeit. Dies ist seine erste kommerzielle Aufnahme. Aufnahmen von Sergej Rachmaninow und Ludwig van Beethoven werden vorbereitet.

Presque toute la littérature biographique sur **Robert Schumann** inclut une chronique détaillée de sa maladie. Les théories les plus diverses ont été avancées et les descriptions ne correspondent que sur un point: l’assertion que, les dernières années de sa vie, Schumann était mentalement malade. Des psychiatres spécialistes confirment qu’il a dû souffrir de psychose maniaque dépressive. L’érudit suédois, ancien recteur d’université et professeur de médecine Philip Sandblom le compara à Vincent van Gogh qui était aussi un maniaque dépressif; de plus, Schumann et van Gogh souffraient tous deux de la condition connue sous le nom d’hypergraphie – une frénésie créative irrépressible résultant en un degré à peine croyable de productivité et une richesse d’imagination tout aussi étonnante. Dans le cas de van Gogh, Sandblom cite comme exemple le célèbre tableau presque apeurant *Champ de maïs avec vol d’oiseaux* – mais l’œuvre de Schumann aussi renferme des pièces de caractère semblablement descriptif.

La qualité d’agitation devint le plus prononcée vers la fin de la vie de Schumann mais il montra des traits de psychose maniaque dépressive dans ses jeunes années aussi. L’introduction de deux figures *alter ego* dans ses œuvres – l’alerte Florestan et le rêveur Eusibius, membres de la dite Ligue de David (Davidsbund) – était juste un des nombreux “symptômes” de cette maladie; d’autres peuvent être trouvés simplement en lisant un résumé de sa biographie où on trouve un extrême après l’autre. Il était un prodige qui étudia simultanément la musique et le droit; il subit une blessure sévère à la main (qui ruina sa carrière de pianiste virtuose) suite à un entraînement avec un appareil fait maison; il entreprit plus ou moins de bon cœur des études de composition et il devint éditeur du *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*; il souffrit d’un dédoublement de personnalité (et poursuivait des conversations avec lui-même avec grand sérieux); il épousa – sans la permission du père – la pianiste et compositrice Clara Wieck, fille de son professeur de piano; il devint mondialement célèbre comme compositeur et fut nommé Directeur de la Musique à Düsseldorf en 1850 malgré le développement complet de sa maladie mentale; il essaya de se noyer dans le Rhin en 1854 et fut finalement interné dans une institution où il mourut.

Une œuvre qui met très en évidence les différentes personnalités de Schumann est *Carnaval* op. 9 sous-titré “Scènes mignonnes sur quatre notes”. Il commença à travailler sur le cycle en 1834 et il fut prêt en temps pour le Mardi gras en 1835. Il était originalement plus volumineux mais Schumann en extraya quelques mouvements qu’il avait pensé inclure et cinq de ces pièces apparurent plus tard comme le no 3 des *Bunte Blätter* op. 99 ainsi que les

nos 4, 11, 15 et 17 des *Albumblätter* op.124. A la fin de l'été de 1834, Schumann s'était secrètement fiancé à la jeune baronne Ernestine von Fricken dont il avait fait la connaissance lors des leçons de piano chez les Wieck. Elle venait de la ville d'Asch en Bohême et les lettres du nom de la ville correspondent aux quatre notes du sous-titre. Au cours de l'œuvre, les lettres apparaissent dans une grande variété de formes, comme par exemple A–Es–C–H (les noms allemands des notes la, mi bémol, do, si), As–C–H (la bémol, do, si) et Es–C–H–A (mi bémol, do, si, la); cette dernière forme pourrait se référer au nom même de Schumann: SCHumAnn. Nous pouvons nous compter heureux que le nom de cette petite ville fût alors écrit en allemand; aujourd'hui, son nom – en tchèque – est Aš, ce qui aurait réduit les possibilités de Schumann à soit deux notes (A–Es ou la, mi bémol) ou même à juste une seule (As ou la bémol)...

Un partie de la fascination de *Carnaval* réside dans ses titres originaux de mouvements et il est surprenant que le compositeur lui-même soutint les avoir ajoutés rétrospectivement: "seuls les différents états mentaux me semblaient intéressants." En tout cas, la majorité des titres est légèrement énigmatique et on peut dire de deux seulement qu'ils sont évidents: Chopin et Paganini. La connaissance de l'histoire de la vie de Schumann distingue sa future, Clara Wieck, derrière le nom doux italien de "Chiarina" et Ernestine von Fricken derrière celui d'"Estrella". La diversité colorée et le caractère de *Carnaval* sont complétés par la présence de quelques figures classiques tirées de la *commedia dell'arte* – Pierrot, Arlequin, Pantalon et Colombine – et aussi de quelques membres de la Ligue de David – dont Florestan et Eusebius, en d'autres termes Schumann lui-même. Une marche des membres de la Ligue de David termine l'œuvre en entier – un cycle qui est resté populaire tant auprès du public que des pianistes.

La *Toccata* en do majeur op.7 jouit – non sans justification – d'une réputation assurée comme l'un des "tueurs de pianistes" les plus malicieux qui soient. On dit que Schumann lui-même était fermement convaincu d'avoir écrit la pièce la plus difficile de l'entier répertoire pour piano et il la dédia à son ami Ludwig Schunke qui réussit à l'apprendre plus ou moins en regardant Schumann la jouer. Les difficultés ne sont pas prohibitives pour un pianiste possédant une bonne technique d'accords; le problème se trouve plutôt dans la fatigue qui s'accumule et la tension qui s'ensuit. Quand on joue la pièce au piano, on remarque avec intérêt qu'elle peut être jouée sans le majeur de la main droite – parce que c'est le doigt que Schumann avait irrémédiablement blessé avec son appareil d'entraînement.

La *Toccata* fut révisée à plusieurs occasions – chose inhabituelle pour Schumann. La première version (1829-30) était en ré majeur; la seconde, en do majeur, date de 1832 et la pièce atteignit sa forme finale l'année suivante. L'identité des rôles-modèles de Schumann ici (sauf pour Czerny, alors omniprésent) a été la cause de spéculation considérable au cours de laquelle deux compositeurs à la double nationalité se présentent fréquemment: Charles (Karl) Mayer, un Russe d'origine allemande dont Schumann étudia les œuvres en profondeur, et George(s) Onslow, le Français aux racines anglaises et à l'audace chromatique. (Une autre source d'inspiration fut le rapide développement de nouveaux pianos – dont Schumann, comme la plupart des compositeurs de l'époque, exploitait volontiers immédiatement les possibilités.) A son tour, cette *Toccata* réussit à engendrer des successeurs et on peut être certain que Prokofiev fût inspiré par sa nature percussive...

"Leicht und zart" (légèrement et tendrement), l'indication trouvée au début de l'*Arabesque* en do majeur op. 18, capture en trois mots seulement le caractère de cette pièce brève et simple. En 1838, on dit que Schumann avait composé "entsetzlich viel" (terriblement beaucoup) et son compte de pièces pour piano cette année-là était remarquable même par son échelle, incluant les sonates op. 14 et 22, *Kreisleriana* et *Kinderszenen* – des pièces pour piano qui auraient suffi à lui garantir une renommée mondiale même s'il n'avait rien écrit d'autre. 1839 devait être la dernière grande "année de piano" avant qu'il se consacre surtout à d'autres media musicaux, et il célébra le nouvel an à Vienne avec l'*Arabesque*, un rondo consistant en un thème principal attrayant doté de deux trios.

Un peu plus tard, à la mi-mars 1839, Schumann pouvait annoncer qu'en l'espace d'une semaine, il avait composé *Große Humoreske* en si bémol majeur op. 20 (normalement appelée simplement *Humoresque*), longue de 12 pages. En termes de forme, cette œuvre de grande échelle est difficile à saisir et elle renferme des éléments de presque toutes les formes que le compositeur – qui n'avait pas encore 29 ans – avait employées jusque-là. Le musicologue Harry Halbreicht décrit avec finesse l'œuvre comme suit: "Il s'agit d'une suite de variations de climat expressif – de *Stimmung*, comme le disent les Allemands – dont le lien unificateur est de nature poétique bien plus que musicale ou même esthétique." Il poursuivait en soulignant que les cinq sections de la pièce sont intimement reliées par la tonalité: elles tournent presque sans exception autour de la tonalité principale de si bémol majeur et de sa relative, sol mineur.

La rareté relative d'exécutions de l'*Humoresque* cependant ne peut pas être attribuée

seulement à ses problèmes formels: elle souffre, surtout sur un niveau international, de son titre. Schumann lui-même reconnu que le titre allemand “Humoreske” a tendance à perdre plusieurs de ses nuances en traduction – surtout ses harmoniques de “transports”, de caprice et de confort. Chose étrange, des fragments motiviques de l’*Arabesque* sont présents dans l’*Humoresque* – le résultat d’une réflexion plus poussée ou simplement parce que ce matériel d’une pièce composée juste dix semaines auparavant était encore très présent dans les pensées de Schumann? Ou Schumann était-il ici préoccupé par les caractéristiques des différentes tonalités: qu’est-ce que si bémol majeur et sol mineur voulaient dire pour lui personnellement?

Il est peut-être mieux d’ignorer tout simplement ces questions. En se consacrant inconditionnellement à la musique, nous découvrons rapidement sa beauté et sa magnificence – sans aucune sorte de délibération ni de devinettes.

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Né à Londres en 1977, **Freddy Kempf** a commencé à apprendre le piano à l’âge de quatre ans. A huit ans, il fut remarqué en Angleterre quand il joua le concerto pour piano K.V. 414 de Mozart avec l’Orchestre Philharmonique Royal au Royal Festival Hall de Londres; sa réputation s’étendit bientôt hors de son pays natal quand il interpréta peu après le même concerto en Allemagne.

En 1987, il gagna le premier Concours National Mozart en Angleterre et, en 1992, le concours biennal BBC Young Musician of the Year. Son troisième prix au Concours International Tchaïkovski de Piano à Moscou en 1998 provoqua un tollé dans la presse russe qui le décrivit comme “le héros du concours” et sa popularité sans précédent auprès du public russe a été reflétée dans plusieurs diffusions télévisées et concerts à guichets fermés.

Freddy Kempf a donné des concerts partout en Europe, aux Etats-Unis et au Japon en plus de ses diffusions télévisées en Europe. Il a récemment donné des récitals au Wigmore Hall de Londres, 92nd Street “Y” de New York et Mozarteum de Salzbourg; il a interprété des concertos accompagné par les orchestres symphoniques de Berlin, Moscou et du Portugal, Philharmonique de St-Petersbourg, Orchestre de Chambre de Vienne, Orchestre Symphonique de la Radio des Pays-Bas, Orchestre National de Belgique, Orchestre de Chambre de la Communauté Européenne, Philharmonique Royal de Liverpool, London Mozart Players, Orchestre National de la BBC du pays de Galles et Orchestre Hallé. Il a travaillé

avec plusieurs musiciens distingués, en classes de maître et en concert, dont Vladimir Ashkenazy, Kurt Sanderling, Isidore Cohen, Libor Pešek et Fedor Gluschenko.

Freddy Kempf est maintenant en grande demande internationale. Il est aussi passionnément engagé en musique de chambre et consacre beaucoup de temps à jouer avec son Trio Kempf. C'est son premier enregistrement commercial. Des enregistrements de musique de Serghei Rachmaninov et Ludwig van Beethoven sont en préparation.

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Tel.: +46 8 544 102 30 Fax: +46 8 544 102 40

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