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Hearing Robert Schumann's *Gesänge der Frühe*, Op. 133:

Lateness and Disability as Modes of Hearing

A supporting document submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Musical Arts

in Music

by

Chika Nobumori

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March 2026

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Hearing Robert Schumann's *Gesänge der Frühe*, Op. 133:

Lateness and Disability as Modes of Hearing

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Chika Nobumori

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ABSTRACT

Hearing Robert Schumann's *Gesänge der Frühe*, Op. 133:

Lateness and Disability as Modes of Hearing

by

Chika Nobumori

The aim of this research is to expand approaches to Robert Schumann's *Gesänge der Frühe* (Songs of Dawn), op. 133, through a performer-centered lens informed by concepts of lateness and disability. Schumann's late works have long been marginalized due to assumptions that his mental illness affected his compositions from the last two years of his life. These assumptions have been challenged, particularly following the release of additional primary sources in the 1980s, prompting renewed scholarly and performative attention to his late music.

This study aligns with that trend while emphasizing a performative perspective, examining *Gesänge der Frühe*, op. 133, not merely as a material object, but as a living work that continues to be reinterpreted. Focusing on musical features such as introspection, fragmentation, tonal ambiguity, and structural looseness, the research demonstrates how Schumann balances historical influence, literary engagement, and personal expression. Drawing on theories of "lateness" as a form of cultural disability, I investigate these musical features to show how they function as intentional

compositional strategies rather than signs of decline. The analysis also considers how performers navigate dynamics, tempi, and articulation, highlighting its layered, reflective character.

Through this performer-centered approach, the research aims to advocate for a more nuanced engagement with *Gesänge der Frühe*, op. 133, reveal the biases that shape reception and interpretation, and reframe Schumann's late style as a deliberate aesthetic rather than a symptom of decline, encouraging performers and listeners to build more personal, inclusive, and aesthetically informed relationships with Schumann's late works.

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Introduction

“What I mean by ‘transgression’ is something completely literal and secular at the same time: that faculty music has to travel, cross over, drift from place to place in a society, even though many institutions and orthodoxies have sought to confine it.”¹

Gesänge der Frühe, op. 133, is a solo piano composition written by Robert Schumann (1810–1856) between 13-18 October 1853. It is one of only two solo piano works from Schumann’s final years, and the only one published during his lifetime. The piece originally bore an inscription to Diotima, a fictional figure who appears as a goddess of love in Plato’s *Symposium*, and later in Friedrich Hölderlin’s *Hyperion*, where she serves as the nickname for both the protagonist’s and the poet-philosopher’s unrequited beloved. For the 1855 publication, Schumann instead dedicated the work to his friend “der hohen Dichterin Bettina von Arnim” [“the high poet Bettina von Arnim”].

The enigma surrounding the dedication has led to readings that connect Schumann with Hölderlin, whose biography parallels Schumann’s in terms of presumed madness. This, in turn, has encouraged associations with several of Hölderlin’s poems that share related themes, such as morning and spring. Depending on the interpretation, the symbol of dawn carries dualistic connotations, suggesting a beginning, an ending, or both simultaneously. Perhaps unavoidably, this metaphor aligns with the complicated biographical narrative of Schumann, who, only four months after completing this composition, attempted suicide and

¹ Edward W. Said, *Musical Elaborations*, introduction (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), xix.

voluntarily entered a medical asylum—events that significantly shaped the reception of his late works.

The biographical narratives surrounding Schumann produced a mix of misconceptions shaped by cultural and social ideas about disability, making his late works, including *Gesänge der Frühe*, both controversial and comparatively little known. These misconceptions stemmed from incomplete information—sometimes intentionally suppressed—and from the medical knowledge available at the time.

Chapter 1 will briefly outline how Schumann’s biographical narrative has changed over the past 160 years. For much of that period, especially before the mid-twentieth century, medical professionals wrote extensively about Schumann’s health in an attempt to explain his temperament, deterioration, and creative output. The image of Schumann as a “mad genius” became dominant, and various presumed disabilities were projected onto his music.

Musicologists, however, have pushed back against reading his music through his biography. When new documents, including medical records and correspondence, became available starting in the 1980s and again during the 150th-anniversary year in 2006, long-standing narratives were challenged, prompting renewed research on Schumann’s late works in both scholarship and performance.

Gesänge der Frühe, op. 133, is a five-movement work with a total performance time of approximately 13–15 minutes. In a letter to Dr. Friedrich Wilhelm Arnold, a German music seller and publisher, dated 24 February 1854, Schumann describes the piece as five characteristic pieces for pianoforte dedicated to the poet Bettina, “musical pieces depicting sensations at the approach and onset of morning, but more through the expression of feeling

than tone-painting.”² The content of this letter, along with Schumann’s desire to publish the piece, indicates his satisfaction with the composition. The following list of movement titles shows the range of nuances within the cycle, from calm to lively:

- I. *Im ruhigen* (calm, quiet)
- II. *Belebt, nicht zu rasch* (lively, not too fast)
- III. *Lebhaft* (lively)
- IV. *Bewegt* (emotional)
- V. *Im Anfange ruhiges, im Verlauf bewegteres* (first tranquil, then agitated)

The classification as *Gesänge* (songs) rather than *Lieder* reflects Schumann’s tendency to transform existing genre systems by blending and crossing genres. Since *Gesänge* is a subgroup of *Lied*, there are auditory characteristics that remain song-like: all movements feature lyrical, accessible melodies that repeat, akin to *Lieder* transcriptions and *Lieder ohne Worte*. However, the piece departs from conventional song forms in several ways: a complex structure, unpredictable harmonies, irregular phrase lengths, and expansive instrumental textures—features that can be interpreted as late style. On one hand, these traits make the piece sound complex and at times disorienting. On the other hand, they invite endless exploration of Schumann, Romanticism, and pianistic expression within a compact form.

Schumann’s compositional style

Schumann was a German Romantic composer known for his output across all genres. His father was a bookseller, and perhaps as a result, Schumann’s compositional style developed

² Akademie der Künste, Robert-Schumann-Forschungsstelle, and Bernhard R. Appel, *Robert Schumann in Endenich (1854–1856): Krankenakten, Briefzeugnisse und zeitgenössische Berichte* (Mainz: Schott, 2006), 51; English translation quoted in John Daverio, “Madness or Prophecy? Schumann’s *Gesänge der Frühe*, Op. 133,” in *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music: Essays in Performance and Analysis*, ed. David Witten (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 199.

in parallel with his literary interests. His music was deeply influenced by literature; in particular, he remained a lifelong admirer of E.T.A. Hoffmann. Hoffmann's impact is evident in Schumann's use of the personification of differing musical temperaments in both his compositions and his music criticism. *Carnaval*, op. 9 (1834), and *Fantasiestücke*, op. 12 (1837), are notable examples in which movements are associated with imaginary characters with opposing traits—most famously the introverted Eusebius and the extroverted Florestan. The frequent shifts between characters give the compositions a fragmentary, “montage-like” quality, as described by Schumann scholar John Daverio.³ From a performance perspective, this montage-like nature demands the ability to shift convincingly between moods, temperaments, and styles within a single performance. At the same time, the fragmentary quality makes the pieces suitable for selective performance, as Schumann's wife, Clara, frequently did, especially with *Fantasiestücke*, op. 12.⁴

Schumann's liberty in mixing diverse elements to create a new whole extends to other aspects of his compositions, including genre blending and the use of incomplete or modified versions of traditional compositional techniques, such as counterpoint and partial fugues. Schumann was also a prolific writer about music and musicians, and his writings provide insight into his vision for music.

³ John Daverio, *Nineteenth-Century Music and the German Romantic Ideology* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1993), 61.

⁴ *Konzerte Clara Schumanns (nach der im Robert-Schumann-Haus Zwickau erhaltenen kompletten Programmzettelsammlung)*, Robert-Schumann-Haus Zwickau, https://www.schumann-zwickau.de/media/download/Konzerte_Clara_Schumanns.pdf

Schumann's Late Years: Biographical Narratives

The fragmentary qualities of Schumann's compositional style reflect the multiplicity of his personality: eccentric, melancholic, passionate, and contemplative all at once. This duality has contributed to the persistent narrative of Schumann as a "mad genius," emphasized in biographies such as Anton Neumayr's *Music and Medicine* (1994)⁵ and Peter Ostwald's *Schumann: The Inner Voices of a Musical Genius* (1985). Such dramatization of madness is problematic because it overemphasizes posthumous diagnoses of Schumann's health, which in turn influences how his music is heard, performed, and taught.

The biography by Ostwald, for example, is organized based on the progressing decline of Schumann's wellness, while referencing Schumann's mentions of death or depression in his diary and making a disclaimer that this was also stylistic of artists during the Romantic era: "Many artists of the romantic era confidently engaged in 'mad' behavior—debauchery, drinking, drug use, irrational thinking—hoping thus to stimulate their creativity."⁶ In this context, "madness" is understood as a set of behaviors chosen for artistic effect rather than as a reflection of disability.

Nevertheless, a range of media, including biographies, fiction, and films, continue to depict and celebrate Schumann as a "mad" figure. This characterization is convenient for entertainment and adds extramusical context to his compositions, but it has shifted attention

⁵Anton Neumayr (1920-2017) is a physician in internal medicine as well as a pianist who graduated from Salzburg Conservatory of Music. His 3-volume book, *Music and Medicine*, explores the relationship between composers' medical history and biography.

⁶ Peter F. Ostwald, *Schumann: The Inner Voices of a Musical Genius. New and Expanded ed.* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2010), 191.

toward his personal life and medical history at the expense of an unbiased appreciation of his music. As a result, the reception of his late works, in particular, suffered. Chapter 1 demonstrates how evolving narratives and posthumous diagnoses shaped perceptions of both Schumann and his music, constructing an image of him as physically and mentally compromised, with his health seen as impairing his compositional capacity.

Following the discovery of previously missing documents, such perceptions have been reconsidered. More recent scholarship argues that Schumann's music was driven not by his mental or emotional state but rather by his pursuit of new forms of expression.

Late Schumann through Disability Studies

This paper continues the conversation beyond assumptions of Schumann's "disabilities" in his late years by approaching the issue from a performance perspective. Scholarship in disability studies within classical music addresses a wide range of topics, including disability notation based on biographical factors—such as the composer's physical or psychological state—and musical attributes, including form and structure. Schumann's late works have often been treated as "disabled," and the binary perception of ableness versus disability, intersecting with concepts of lateness, shapes the way these works are understood.

Different composers' types and degrees of disabilities are interpreted differently. For comparison, Ludwig van Beethoven's compositional output is often divided into three periods, with his increasing deafness presumed to have a causal relationship with his development. Some readings of Beethoven's late works treat them as symptoms of illness, suggesting that deafness compelled him to listen inwardly; his late works are thus often

associated with interiority, a hallmark of late-style aesthetics.⁷ In this framework, late style is positioned beyond accepted “norms,” governed by a form of uncontrollable “disability,” where both norms and disability are understood as social and cultural constructs.

Expanding on the above example, late style and disability allow for the creation of various narratives. Joseph Straus, a music theorist who developed the concept of “disablist hearing,” describes several narratives in his book *Extraordinary Measures: Disability in Music*: a narrative of disability overcome (as in Beethoven), disability accommodated (as in Schubert), and balance lost and regained (in Schoenberg and Webern).⁸ Figure 1 below shows the categorization of four different responses to Schumann’s music. Two of the categories assume that the composer has a disability which impacts the music in one of the two ways: either the music has disability, and therefore is interpreted as “bad,” or the music has disability and is regarded as “divine.” Another category rejects the idea that the composer has a disability and thus assumes no impact on the music. The last category takes a nuanced approach that considers multiple interpretive possibilities.

⁷ Pianist Alfred Brendel identifies several attributes of late style in Ludwig van Beethoven’s late sonatas, including synthesis and expansion of resources, juxtaposition of direct opposites, Baroque influences, clashing seconds, avoided perfect cadences, religious associations, a withdrawing ending, and distillation. These characteristics parallel several late-style traits discussed in this dissertation. *Alfred Brendel on Music: Collected Essays* (Chicago: Acappella, 2001), 79–89.

⁸ Joseph N. Straus, *Extraordinary Measures: Disability in Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 45–94.

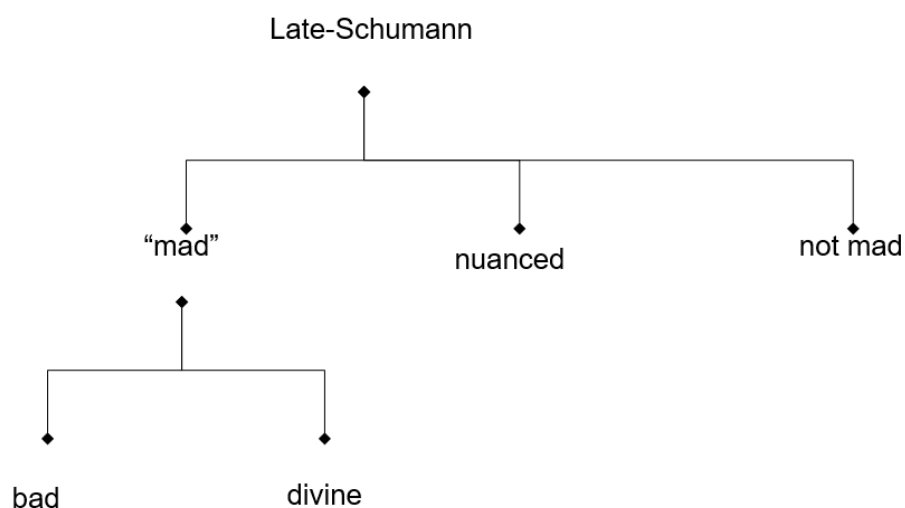


Figure 1. Categorization of responses in disability studies

Next, Table 1 organizes, and builds on, the different types of responses to the controversial late Schumann works discussed in Straus’s *Extraordinary Measures: Disability in Music* into four categories: suppressing or dismissing the music because he was “mad”; elevating it as “divine madness”; treating it objectively alongside contemporaneous works; or taking a more nuanced view that acknowledges its difference without pathologizing it.

Table 1. Disability studies responses to Schumann

	Pathology framing	Value judgement	Examples
Traditional notion of disability, madness as a personal affliction	Mad, so is the music	Bad	• Prevalent during Schumann’s lifetime, including Clara • Music shows signs of creative failure and incapacity • Richard Taruskin argues that there is a “classicizing tendency” to cover up his illness⁹
Romantic notion of disability; madness	Mad, so is the music	Good	• Charles Rosen claims that the best features of Schumann’s music are rooted in his madness

⁹ Straus, *Extraordinary Measures*, 38.

			while also warning against autobiographical interpretation of his music ¹⁰
Prevailing view on current musicology	Not mad, no impact on music	neither	• Yehudi Menuhin argued that his music is “real Schumann.... Thoroughly mentally healthy throughout”¹¹ • Laura Tunbridge argues that the simplicity of Schumann’s music makes sense in the social and cultural context of the time¹²
“Different enough,” madness as a “dangerous gift,”	Neither	Neither	• James Deaville argues that this is the only viable way to see Schumann works without bias of “findings of health science and traditions of musicological analysis”¹³ • John Daverio argues that Schumann was lucid, and the “madness” is a “prophecy” that prefigures Brahms¹⁴

Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 will demonstrate examples showing that most of the historical reception of late Schumann falls under the first two categories that assume that Schumann is “mad.” Chapter 2 will give a few examples from the third category, which separates the notion of madness from the music. From a performance perspective, the only sensible option to interact with Schumann’s late pieces is the fourth, which assumes neither madness nor any resulting value judgment, because it acknowledges all other existing categories and recognizes interpretation as subjective, naturally biased, and historically cumulative, shaped by a longstanding history of performance. In other words, a performer or listener cannot

¹⁰ Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 647.

¹¹ Straus, *Extraordinary Measures*, 39.

¹² Laura Tunbridge, *Schumann’s Late Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 7.

¹³ James Deaville, “Sounds of Mind: Music and Madness in the Popular Imagination,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Disability Studies*, ed. Blake Howe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 645.

¹⁴ John Daverio, “Madness or Prophecy? *Schumann’s Gesänge der Frühe*, Op. 133,” in *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music: Essays in Performance and Analysis*, ed. David Witten (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 193.

unhear built-in biases; they can only become aware of them. Chapter 4 will address musical lateness within the fourth category, attributing specific musical characteristics to readings grounded in disability, lateness, or neither.

Chapter 1: Constructing Late Schumann: Biography and Narrative

To perform or to hear this piece is to participate in the continual making of Robert Schumann. His biography and legacy are inseparable from the music, formed and re-formed each time the work is interpreted—whether through biographies, performance, or reception. The “Robert Schumann” to whom I refer is a narrative that has been shaped by layers of curiosity, historical and cultural interpretation, and misunderstandings that have accumulated over 150 years. The purpose of this chapter is not to provide an outline or diagnosis of Schumann, but rather to illuminate the degree of subjectivity within the narratives over time, to uncover myths, and to encourage ongoing historiographical awareness.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, *Gesänge der Frühe* is less well known and less frequently performed because it was written during a period of Schumann’s life that has been heavily shaped by biographical interpretation. Schumann composed the work on 13–18 October 1853. Just four months later, he attempted suicide by jumping off a bridge into the Rhine River, leading to his permanent stay at an asylum in Endenich, where he lived in isolation from family and friends for the remaining two years of his life.

In other words, *Gesänge der Frühe* was written during the last months in which Schumann lived what might be considered a “normal” life—or during a significant crisis that would culminate in his permanent decline. His final years in Endenich, which included important events such as the publication and discussion of the piece, were minimized or omitted in earlier biographies due to suppression and limited access to information. Worthen refers to

the Endenich period as “the twenty-eight-month dying of Robert Schumann,” pointing to the way Schumann’s life in Endenich was reduced in the making of his biographical narrative.¹⁵

Various receptions have tried to link Schumann’s creativity and his works directly to his suicide attempt and death in the asylum. Posthumous diagnoses ranged from physical and psychiatric to non-pathological. The first diagnostic report by Dr. Franz Richarz, Schumann’s doctor at the Endenich asylum, was published in the appendix section of the first biography of Schumann, written by Wasielewski in 1858. Titled “Communication on Schumann’s Illness and Death,” it was a short summary of findings most likely intended for Clara Schumann. The report states that there was insufficient reason to conclude the illness’s cause but concludes that Schumann had an “organic disease of the brain,” caused by “excessive mental exertion.”¹⁶

This became the most popular explanation of Schumann’s death mentioned in biographical and cultural writings of the 1850s and 1860s. Regarding the connection between Schumann’s creativity and presumed madness, mental instability, or melancholia, Deaville points out that contemporaries believed that “genius caused the disease,” as opposed to insanity leading to a decline in musical ability.¹⁷

Tendencies shifted as early as 1906, when neurologists tried to demonstrate a link between genius and madness. As a result, biographies began framing Schumann’s condition less in

¹⁵ John Worthen, *Robert Schumann: Life and Death of a Musician* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 370.

¹⁶ Wilhelm Joseph von Wasielewski, *Life of Robert Schumann*, trans. Abby Langdon Alger (Boston: O. Ditson and Co., 1871), 258.

¹⁷ Deaville, 646.

terms of physical causes and more through psychoanalysis, which “[erupted] into [an] intellectual debate.”¹⁸ Fitting Schumann into a mad genius trope, biographers, psychoanalysts, and amateurs debated whether Schumann suffered from schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, and often interpreted Schumann’s final years as a natural consequence of his mental illness. This posthumous and romanticized view of Schumann’s life used traits associated with psychoanalysis as a lens to hear the poetic nature in his works. One of the only few to resist viewing Schumann’s life “in the shadow of his last illness” was his daughter Eugenie. In her 1931 biography of her father, she describes Schumann as “healthy. His life, his work, and his oeuvre testify to an entirely healthy spirit.”¹⁹

A final turning point in Schumann historiography occurred around the 1980s, when previously unavailable medical reports were partially released. These documents allowed musicologists and writers to construct new narratives with the newly discovered data, including the hypothesis that Schumann had contracted syphilis in 1831, which contributed to his gradual paralysis and physical decline. This gave rise to critical reappraisals, though sporadic, starting from the mid-twentieth century. The revisionist critics focused on the musical substance separate from Schumann’s psychological state, arguing that Schumann’s late music “embodies the entire complex of features that have been associated, at one time or another, with the ‘great’ late styles of Beethoven and other creative artists.”²⁰ The unveiling

¹⁸ Worthen, 363.

¹⁹ Eugenie Schumann, *Ein Lebensbild meines Vaters* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1931) quoted in Worthen, 364.

²⁰ John Daverio, “Songs of Dawn and Dusk: Coming to Terms with the Late Music,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Schumann*, ed. Beate Julia Perrey (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 276.

of previously inaccessible information continued: additional medical records emerged in 1991, later published by B.R. Appel in 2006, along with letters.

Reading Different Narratives

Comparing the biographical narratives surrounding the critical year 1853/1854, when *Gesänge der Frühe* was composed, helps explain the varied ways the work has been treated over the past 150 years. How that year has been narrated establishes interpretive paradigms that continue to influence us today. To illustrate this shift in narrative, I briefly compare several influential Schumann biographies: Wasielewski (1871), Ostwald (1985), Neumayr (1995), Daverio (1997), and Worthen (2007).

Life of Robert Schumann by Wasielewski, the oldest of the five sources, is valuable for its firsthand proximity to Schumann and his circle, yet that closeness introduces bias and limitation. Writing as a friend of the Schumanns and of the next generation of musicians, Wasielewski tends to euphemize Schumann's decline, attributing the 1854 suicide attempt to increasing ringing in the ear—"hearing an incessant A."²¹ This explanation closely echoes the familiar narrative of Beethoven's deafness and artistic suffering. Written with limited sources, *Gesänge der Frühe* is not mentioned. Nevertheless, the letters, Dr. Richarz's note, personal anecdotes he includes, and the impact on Schumann's historiographical narrative make this biography valuable.

Schumann's move to the asylum is also depicted differently in Wasielewski's account. He writes that the decision was made by doctors and Clara after the suicide attempt, out of

²¹ Wasielewski, 183.

concern for Schumann's well-being. The biography then concludes with a recollection of Schumann's piano playing during his visit to Endenich: Schumann's playing was "far from pleasant. It seemed as if the force whence it proceeded were injured, like a machine whose springs are broken, but which still tries to work, jerking convulsively."²² By combining anecdotes that narrate Schumann's increasing loss of cognition, Wasielewski's biography ultimately shields Schumann's earlier compositions and his legacy from association with madness or deterioration.

However, other biographers claim that Schumann demanded to be institutionalized.²³ Ostwald views Schumann's health as a progressive mental disorder that eventually overtook him, argues that Schumann showed signs of psychosis from childhood, and grounds his arguments in medical records, especially those discovered more recently at the time of his writing, rather than diary entries, because he suspected Schumann of hypochondria. Similarly, Neumayr privileges medical documentation, referring to this period as the first sign of severe psychosis. As Ostwald and Neumayr are both medical professionals with a strong interest in music, their aim is to argue for a retrospective diagnosis based on the available evidence.²⁴ Neumayr's and Worthen's biographies include a full translation of Schumann's autopsy report, but Neumayr emphasizes the medical content of the diagnosis,

²² Wasielewski, 186.

²³ John Daverio, *Robert Schumann: Herald of a "New Poetic Age"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 459.

²⁴ Peter Frederic Ostwald (1928–1996) was an American-German psychiatrist, and Anton Neumayr (1920–2017) was a specialist in internal medicine in Vienna.

while Worthen focuses on its purpose: to communicate details of Schumann's death to Clara.²⁵

Daverio, by contrast, approaches Schumann's life from a musicological perspective. Daverio narrates by fact: activities, compositions, and events in detail, supplementing them with letters and diary entries. Unlike Ostwald and Neumayr, Daverio avoids describing permanent decline by framing health complaints as a "depressive phrase," without making diagnostic judgments.²⁶ Rather, Daverio may be interested in the implications of this period for Schumann's late style: friendships with Joachim and Brahms, Clara's creative outburst, and contemporary performances. Daverio purposefully separates biographical events from music, noting that Schumann was prolific, wrote music of "practically all the major genres," varying in "style and content, and consistently high in quality," and insisting that "whoever hears signs of decay in the late music simply does not know it very well."²⁷

Worthen, writing with the benefit of more recently available sources, is able to take a more informed and nuanced approach, ultimately rejecting the popular belief that Schumann was mentally ill. He describes his study as the "first biography of Schumann not to consign him to Romantic lunacy," and refuses to draw a connection between Schumann's music and any psychological disorder or mental instability. In his epilogue, he moves away from the myth of the "mad genius" and instead presents Schumann as a human being shaped by ordinary vulnerabilities: "His life and work were affected—as the life and work of any revolutionary artist will be—by the vicissitudes of everyday life, by illness, loss, and anxiety," and "our

²⁵ Anton Neumayr, *Music and Medicine* (Bloomington: Medi-Ed Press, 1994), 354.

²⁶ Daverio, *Robert Schumann*, 450.

²⁷ Daverio, *Robert Schumann*, 459.

study of his ‘human heart’ freed from the preconceptions which have dominated such study for the century and a half since his death.”²⁸

From Biography to Performance Interpretation

The different ways that the biographies present 1854—as a crisis or a permanent downfall, mad or human—and the connections drawn to Schumann’s creative ability give us choices regarding how we hear *Gesänge der Frühe* and Schumann’s late compositions.

Following Wasielewski’s biography, which treats the year 1854 as the final sane years of Schumann, disregarding the music seems understandable. Such was the case for the Violin Concerto, WoO 23, written during September–October 1853, the same month as *Gesänge der Frühe*; it was lost until 1936 because Clara believed she detected “traces of Schumann’s fatal disease” in it, and it did not appear in print until 1937.²⁹

Most of the twentieth-century interpretations celebrate Schumann as a mad genius following a romanticized view of madness. Even Neumayr, who disproved the myth that madness led to Schumann’s death—syphilis being the more likely cause—asserts that the psychological suffering caused by syphilis must be embodied in his works: [Robert Schumann’s] music and personality “become understandable only through a perception of interplay between his creativity and his suffering,” and analysis of later works “allows us to draw conclusions

²⁸ Worthen, 389.

²⁹ Neumayr, 321.

regarding his mental state.”³⁰ The diagnosis of bipolar disorder made in parallel to the Eusebius–Florestan juxtaposition of his earlier pieces is an example of such biased hearing.

Daverio and Worthen are more aligned with my intended lateness interpretation for two reasons. First, they clearly separate any causal relationship between pathological illness and Schumann’s music. Second, they rehumanize Schumann, who experienced depression, anxiety, and exposed vulnerability. Worthen relates to Schumann’s tendency to talk to himself and accuse himself: “inner voices know where we are most vulnerable. They might accuse us of writing awful music (or dreadful biography) because they know our fear of inadequacy.”³¹ This self-doubt, introversion, vulnerability, and interiority are all universal experiences for creative artists; they are the quintessential late style characteristics that resonate strongly in *Gesänge der Frühe*.

³⁰ Neumayr, 223.

³¹ Worthen, 375.

Chapter 2: Reading Schumann's Late Period Aesthetic without Madness

Gesänge der Frühe is mentioned briefly in Clara's diary, which was published in Berthold Litzmann's biography on Clara Schumann, published between 1902 and 1908: "Oct. 18th. Robert has composed 5 morning-songs—highly original pieces again, but difficult to grasp, the feeling in them is so unusual."³² Her describing the piece as peculiar, through the biographical narrative of Robert Schumann's mental decline, led to the piece's original dismissal. However, a more recently discovered letter from Clara to Bettina von Arnim, written on 25 May 1855, negates this; Clara describes the piece as difficult to play and to understand because of its deeply poetic atmosphere, stating a need for careful interpretation.³³ This new approach supports the view that assumes no impact on Schumann's music because it does not assume Schumann had a disability.

This chapter demonstrates how Schumann's late oeuvre can be understood as a natural continuation of his stylistic development and articulated aesthetic ideals, entirely separate from cognitive decline or madness. Rather, Romantic imaginative frameworks that are apparent in Schumann's own critical writing and further argued in existing scholarship can shape interpretations of his late style.

With regard to Schumann, we have the privilege of studying his aesthetic intentions from the composer who was perhaps better known and more influential as a critic than as a composer.

³² Berthold Litzmann, *Clara Schumann: An Artist's Life, Based on Material Found in Diaries and Letters*, trans. and abridged by Grace E. Hadow, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan; Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1913), 45.

³³ Akademie der Künste, 287.

His writing on music can be found in his music criticism in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (NZfM), the journal he helped establish in 1834 and edited from January 1835 until July 1844.³⁴

According to Leon B. Plantinga's *Schumann as Critic*, Schumann was recognized as a leader of the romantic composers by the later 1830s and his journal "as an organ for a romantic (or neoromantic) movement in music" included Schumann's opinions of various composers and compositional styles.³⁵ Notable observations are Schumann's contributions to the Bach revival, his appreciation for Beethoven's late works, and a consciousness toward a music legacy.

Schumann believed that "everything of significance that happened in the music of his time had to be fitted into his historical scheme,"³⁶ meaning that, in order for a composer to find their individual expression of his or her own time—"the contemporary style,"—the composer should study previous composers and derive a new style that builds on their techniques:

But never are historical models to be imitated literally; they serve instead as a fund of ideas and techniques usable for the enrichment of contemporary style—but it must always remain contemporary style. Thus elements of Bach's powerful harmonic vocabulary, Beethoven's technique of achieving climax, and Schubert's abrupt and

³⁴ Leon B. Plantinga, *Schumann as Critic*, introduction (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), x.

³⁵ Schumann generally used *romantic* to describe composers and music endorsed by him and the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. For example, the NZfM described itself as "meant to promote those younger talents, the best of whom are called romantics." Leon B. Plantinga, *Schumann as Critic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 104–107.

³⁶ Plantinga, 100.

delicate modulations are all fair game for the contemporary composer if he knows how to use them... By studying the best music of his forebears, he comes to understand better the enriched means of expression of his own time, avoids the pitfalls of mannerism, and learns genuine individuality by observing the works of great individuality.³⁷

Hence, Schumann's late style uses familiar compositional techniques from past composers, like Bach's contrapuntal writing and Beethoven's use of extended sections with trills, but modified to a new Romantic style idiom. The specific occurrences of such in *Gesänge der Frühe* are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

Chivalric Style

In addition to the preceding composers, we can take into consideration the impacts of the German culture of the time and the musical Romanticism, the popularity of "tales of pious crusaders and chivalric knights," what musicologist Jonathan Bellman refers to as "Chivalric Style." Bellman argues that this style hinted at two themes: "emergent nationalism and nostalgia for a mythical German Golden Age," and, though he attributes the musical use of idea to Schumann.³⁸ Musical characteristics that create Chivalric Style include references to: 1) horses, like galloping 6/8 meter or continuous triplets in a brisk common time; 2) horns, such as interval of fifths, fanfare figures, trumpet-calls and clarion melodic lines; and 3) archaicism, through modal harmonies that look to an idealized, noble past.^{39,40} Bellman

³⁷ Plantinga, 100.

³⁸ Jonathan Bellman, "Aus Alten Märchen: The Chivalric Style of Schumann and Brahms," *Journal of Musicology* 13, no. 1 (1995): 118. <https://doi.org/10.1525/jm.1995.13.1.03a00060>.

³⁹ Bellman, 119.

⁴⁰ Bellman, 134.

claims that Schumann's use of Chivalric Style originated from his literary imagination, and points to examples of Chivalric Style in Schumann's earlier works, including *Liederkreis*, op. 39 (1840–1842), Piano Concerto in A Minor, op. 54 (1845), and Romances for Oboe and Piano, op. 94 (1849) for its archaic tone, “evocative gestures,” and “heroic stance,” respectively.⁴¹

Because Chivalric Style is a dialect of nostalgia that evokes an earlier time, it can be connected directly to late style. Chivalric Style topos play out in *Gesänge der Frühe* in a carefully crafted manner: an archaizing tone with dissonant and modal harmonies characterizes the first movement, and the imagery of horses and horns that evokes tales of medieval knighthood is pervasive throughout the third movement. *Märchenbilder*, (*Fairy Tale Pictures*) for Piano and Viola, op. 113 (1851), and *Märchenerzählungen* (*Fairy Tale Narrations*) for Clarinet, Viola, and Piano, op. 132 (1853), are also examples of Chivalric Style, as the titles suggest. The third movement of *Märchenerzählungen* and the second movement of *Gesänge der Frühe* share the same theme and trio texture, further strengthening the connection between *Gesänge der Frühe* and Romantic medievalism.

In his article, Bellman discusses Chivalric Style through both Brahms and Schumann, arguing that Brahms adopted this style from Schumann and continued to develop it within his own musical vocabulary by “expanding Schumann’s harmonic and gestural vocabulary.”⁴² This is a worthwhile point, as the mutual influence between the two composers is frequently discussed; yet narratives that overstate Schumann’s decline too often frame the relationship

⁴¹ Bellman, 127.

⁴² Bellman, 129.

as one in which Brahms influences Schumann, but not vice versa. The contemplative, dark atmosphere created through modal harmonies—now widely regarded as a hallmark of Brahms’s late piano works—is already present in Schumann’s *Gesänge der Frühe* and, in fact, in his earlier works. We know Brahms knew *Gesänge der Frühe* well because he reworked its first movement for unaccompanied choir in *Dem dunkeln Schoß der heiligen Erde*, WoO 20.

Ossianic Manner

Daverio hears some of the Chivalric Style traits like the fanfare motives, modal progressions, and a look toward the past, to describe a manner, or a different expressive world: one that references the epic Celtic bard, Ossian, a style that had taken over late-Eighteenth- and early Nineteenth-Century Europe first through poetry, then later through music, influencing Schumann’s contemporaries like Gade, Mendelssohn, and Brahms.

Ossianic Manner may be evoked using similar musical traits as Chivalric Style: “open spacing, parallelisms in voice leading, pentatonic or modal melodies, major-minor shifts, striking orchestral tone colors, and fanfare-like motives emblematic of battle or the hunt.”⁴³ However, the difference is the desired effect that is shared with Ossianic poetry: “a pervasive melancholy tone emanating from the bard’s consciousness of the transience of all things, [...] images of the absence, withdrawal, or diffusion of light in nocturnal landscapes, [...] and invocations to the harp.”⁴⁴

⁴³ John Daverio, “Schumann’s Ossianic Manner,” *19th-Century Music* 21, no. 3 (1998): 251, <https://doi.org/10.2307/746824>.

⁴⁴ Daverio, “Schumann’s Ossianic Manner,” 247.

Schumann described the Ossianic sound he encountered through Gade as “quite a novel artistic character [seeming] as if nations bordering on Germany wished to emancipate themselves from the hegemony of German music.”⁴⁵ Ossianism thus offered him a new musical language—one deeply intertwined with literary imagination—that expanded his compositional palette. In his 1843 article, Schumann praises Gade and acknowledges his Nordic influences: “Our young composer also has been reared by the poets of his fatherland. Ossian’s giant harp gleamed across the sea to him from England’s coast.”⁴⁶ This deliberate departure from the perceived “hegemony of German music” may have contributed to the mixed reception of Schumann’s later works, particularly those shaped by Ossianic Manner.

Schumann’s engagement with Ossian is evident in *Gesänge der Frühe*: folklike introductory ideas expressed through simplicity and chordal textures, plagal progressions, and archaicism conveyed through open and parallel intervals. The compositions that Daverio lists as expressing Nordic character, Scottish style, and Ossianic manner, in his 1998 article “Schumann’s Ossianic Manner,” are written in the years leading up to *Gesänge der Frühe*—between 1848 and 1853—and are mostly choral part-songs or choral ballads—settings of ballads for choir and orchestra.⁴⁷

There are musical similarities between *Gesänge der Frühe* and the choral ballades that Schumann wrote toward the end of his employment as a choir conductor in Düsseldorf. For example, the opening of *Das Glück von Edenhall*, op. 143, composed in February–March

⁴⁵ Robert Schumann, *On Music and Musicians*, ed. Konrad Wolff, trans. Paul Rosenfeld (New York: Pantheon, 1946), 244.

⁴⁶ Schumann, *On Music and Musicians*, 245.

⁴⁷ Daverio, “Schumann’s Ossianic Manner,” 250.

1853, resembles the third movement of *Gesänge der Frühe* in its march rhythm, broken triads, and triplets. The wide range of color and imagined instrumentation in *Gesänge der Frühe* can also be heard through the timbres of choral ballads. In particular, the driving texture of the third movement imitates the effect of a harp, which “in Ossianic poetry... often serves to summon the spirits of the heroes of yore, who in turn make their presence known through its ethereal sounds,” connecting the present to the afterlife.⁴⁸

Cultural Context

The musical attributes of the chorale ballade as a genre did not gain widespread popularity, leading to broader questions of cultural context. When Schumann was composing works in this musical language—around the time he resigned his conductorship of the Düsseldorf Music Society—the musical-institutional landscape was shifting. As Daverio argues in “Songs of Dawn and Dusk: The Late Music,” external factors significantly shaped the reception of Schumann’s late works: first, the decline of choral culture; second, a broader nineteenth-century aesthetic shift that favored “dramatic” modes of expression over their “epic” counterparts; and third, the conflict between proponents of the progressive “New German” School and their adversaries.⁴⁹ The reception of *Gesänge der Frühe*, therefore, reflects a cultural isolation of its musical language within a changing aesthetic and institutional environment.

⁴⁸ Daverio, “Schumann’s Ossianic Manner,” 263.

⁴⁹ Daverio, “Songs of Dawn and Dusk,” 270-271.

Literary Roots

Lastly, to continue to understand Schumann's aesthetic style, it is useful to consider the cultural context of Schumann's upbringing: his literary roots were closely tied to the middle-class intellectual world in which he was raised. Ulrich Tadday describes Schumann's aesthetic as emerging from middle-class intellectual culture, "a process of enculturation within an educated and cultured bourgeoisie," with a tendency to construct identity by reflecting on culture and society through artistic form.⁵⁰ Tadday's focus is not merely on the fact that Schumann's father, Friedrich August Gottlob Schumann, was a clergyman and a publisher-bookseller, but rather on how their middle-class standing fostered a strong emphasis on education and culture.

Tadday attributes Schumann's musical style as early as the 1830s to influences from Jean Paul, impacting form, temperament, and use of themes: "1. The propensity for brief, almost aphoristic musical statements . . . 2. A love for mystery and concealed meaning . . . 3. The quotation of thematic material from previous compositions in new ones . . . 4. The often abrupt juxtaposition of grotesque humor with elements of profound sentiment."⁵¹ All of the attributes above, already apparent in Schumann's earlier works, appear in a more concentrated manner in *Gesänge der Frühe*—though they are often misinterpreted as signs of incoherence.

⁵⁰ Ulrich Tadday, "Life and Literature, Poetry and Philosophy: Robert Schumann's Aesthetics of Music," in *The Cambridge Companion to Schumann*, edited by Beate Julia Perrey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 38.

⁵¹ Eric Frederick Jensen, "Explicating Jean Paul: Robert Schumann's Program for *Papillons*, Op. 2," *19th-Century Music* 22, no. 2 (autumn 1998), 133f.; Erika Reiman, *Schumann's Piano Cycles and the Novels of Jean Paul* (Rochester, 2004). Quoted in Tadday, 38.

Ultimately, it is the combination of these elements—Schumann shaping his aesthetic style over the course of his lifetime while absorbing and reacting to his surrounding culture and music history—that defines his music. Building on the techniques of earlier composers, turning to the idyllic past or to myths through Chivalric style or Ossianic Manner, and embracing the freedom and experimentation of literature can all serve as useful lenses for interpreting Schumann's music.

Chapter 3: Musical Interpretations and Receptions of *Gesänge der Frühe*

This short chapter will present two examples where Schumann's *Gesänge der Frühe* served as the basis for another musical work: Johannes Brahms's *Dem dunkeln Schoß der heiligen Erde*, WoO 20 (composition year unknown), and Heinz Holliger's, *Gesänge der Frühe* for orchestra, choir, and tape (1987). Both works revive and transform Schumann's *Gesänge der Frühe*, but the pieces represent different responses to late Schumann when understood through the lens of cultural disability.

Brahms modified and rewrote the first movement of Schumann's *Gesänge der Frühe* for an unaccompanied choir, setting it to the words of German poet Friedrich Schiller's *Das Lied von der Glocke* (*Song of the Bell*)—a poem that “belongs to the last period of his poetic activity, where his genius and his skill had attained their fullest maturity.”⁵² The excerpt of the poem that Brahms uses comes from a section of the text where hope is described as blooming from the ground of loss:

To earth's dark womb, our hopes possessing.
As trusts the sower the seed he's sown,
And hopes 'twill bloom into a blessing,
And bless him, then, as heaven has shown.
Yet costlier seed, in sorrow sowing,
We trembling hide in earth's dark womb,
And hope that from the coffin growing,

⁵² Willis Arde Chamberlin, introduction to *Schiller's Das Lied von der Glocke* (Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., 1900), iii.

A fairer form will sometime bloom.⁵³

Brahm's reinterpretation of *Gesänge der Frühe* was posthumously published in 1927 under the title *Dem dunkeln Schoß der heiligen Erde*, WoO 20. Not widely known, this piece and its connection to Schumann's *Gesänge der Frühe* are generally unrecognized. In liner notes to a CD recording of *Dem dunkeln Schoß der heiligen Erde*, WoO 20, music critic and author Calum (Malcolm) MacDonald writes that Brahms mentioned this piece in an 1880 letter to Wasielewski, who had requested music for the unveiling of the Schumann Monument in Bonn—but only to dismiss the piece as “unfit for the occasion.”⁵⁴ MacDonald does not note its relationship to *Gesänge der Frühe*.

Brahms's version keeps the four-part texture, most of the theme, keys, and the overall structure. The text source, *Das Lied von der Glocke*, reflects late style themes: simplicity, idealism, which reflect the poet's reflection on the “common experiences of life.”⁵⁵ However, Schumann's late style musical attributes—the rhythmic complexities, unexpected harmonic dissonances, modulations, incomplete counterpoints, and irregular phrase lengths—are now replaced with more predictable alternatives, as if in an attempt to “correct” Schumann's *Gesänge der Frühe* or remove “traces of Schumann's fatal disease” that Clara referred to regarding the Violin Concerto, WoO 23.⁵⁶

⁵³ Friedrich Schiller, *Schiller's “The Song of the Bell” and Other Poems*, trans. Thomas C. Zimmerman, 2nd ed. (Reading, PA: privately printed, 1896), 5.

⁵⁴ Calum MacDonald, liner notes to *Consortium*, by Johannes Brahms, performed by Andrew-John Smith (London: Hyperion, 2009), CD.

⁵⁵ Chamberlin, introduction to *Schiller's Das Lied von der Glocke*, iv-v.

⁵⁶ Worthen, *Robert Schumann*, 389.

Example 3.1. Brahms, *Dem dunkeln Schoß der heiligen Erde*, WoO 20, opening, mm. 1–7.⁵⁷

Johannes Brahms
(nachgelassen, veröffentlicht 1927)

The image shows a musical score for four voices: Sopran, Alt, Tenor, and Baß. Each voice part has a staff with a treble or bass clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are written below the staves. The first seven measures are shown. The lyrics are: 'Dem dunkeln Schoß der heil - gen Er - de ver - traut der Sä - mann sei - ne'.

The first seven measures are shown in Ex. 3.1. In the opening phrase, Brahms reduces the harmonic ambiguity of the original composition by turning m. 1 into half notes and adding an extra measure, m. 2, to establish the tonic key (D major) before progressing to the dominant in m. 6. Overall, Brahms's take on *Gesänge der Frühe* is more cohesive and accessible, perhaps because it is a choral work. It points to lateness in the text, yet musically it lacks the original work's spontaneity, enigmatic and poetic—perhaps Ossianic—character, and, most of all, the paradoxical continuity and open-endedness that emerge from discontinuity.

Another interesting interpretation of Schumann's *Gesänge der Frühe* is Heinz Holliger (1939–)'s 1987 composition for orchestra, choir and tape under the same title. Holliger was interested in the themes of death and existence—an attribute of late style—and his vocal-orchestral-tape suite parallels Friedrich Hölderlin's and Schumann's biographies, both of which are marked by narratives of instability. Holliger's *Gesänge der Frühe* is a four-movement narrative collage reflecting Schumann's final years. It intertwines quotations from

⁵⁷ Johannes Brahms, *Sämtliche Werke, Band 21: Mehrstimmige Gesänge ohne Begleitung*, ed. Eusebius Mandyczewski (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1926–27), 1–7.

different sources, such as Schumann's own *Gesänge der Frühe*, *Geistervariationen*, WoO 24, his choral work from the Endenich period, "Wenn mein Stündlein vorhanden ist," autopsy reports and letters from his late years, and Hölderlin's poetry, including "Der Frühling" (1785), "An ...," "An Diotima" (1796–1798), and "Geh unter, schöne Sonne ..." (1798–1800).⁵⁸

The various components of the sound collage are unified by common themes of life and nature. The electric distortion and disjointedness of the musical material create a sense of disturbance, with the latter movements growing increasingly fragmented and discordant. The auditory disintegration mirrors the cultural portrayals of late Schumann as unstable or non-normal, reinforcing the "mad genius" image that has been passed down through reception history.

In the *American Record Guide* magazine, music critic David W. Moore refers to Holliger's *Gesänge der Frühe* as part of an "emotional study of [Schumann's] year 1853 and the relations of Robert and Clara Schumann with the poet Hölderlin and Johannes Brahms," suggesting that the music represents a narrative. Moore notes its disjointedness and distance: there "seems nothing to hold it together except the events the composer is imagining."⁵⁹ Similarly, another reviewer of the same CD comments on the neurotic and disturbing affect of the piece: "Further flights of madness follow with Holliger's dark setting, for choir,

⁵⁸ Heinz Holliger, *Gesänge der Frühe nach Schumann und Hölderlin für Chor, Orchester und Tonband* (Mainz: Schott, 1987).

⁵⁹ David W. Moore, "Guide to Records," *American Record Guide* 72, no. 5 (September–October 2009): 125.

orchestra, and tape, of *Gesänge der Frühe* [...] At times its blackness feels all-enveloping—
listener, be warned.”⁶⁰

Both Brahms and Holliger interpret Schumann’s original *Gesänge der Frühe* through their own late-period lens: Brahms expresses lateness through a poem and alters the piece so that it sounds less jarring or confusing, while Holliger exaggerates its discontinuity by fragmenting the music further and linking it to biographical artifacts. As a result, *Gesänge der Frühe* is overshadowed by readings that frame it through decline, associating it with metaphors of darkness and disjointedness, thereby limiting the freedom to contemplate alternative interpretations of Schumann’s late style.

⁶⁰ Catherine Nelson, “Reviews: CDs,” *The Strad* 120 (September 2009): 101.

Chapter 4: Lateness in Schumann's *Gesänge der Frühe*, op. 133

If one moves beyond pathology and instead listens through the idea of lateness, what does lateness sound like? To answer this question, one must tread carefully and avoid treating late style, a composer's late period, and biography as synonymous. Lateness, as a category within disability studies, is not necessarily reflective of the composer's age but of the composer's physical and mental condition. In other words, a popular biographical reading may position Schumann's 1853 and after as a period that may demonstrate lateness, citing his departure from the conductorship, the events surrounding his suicide attempt, and his ensuing isolation at Endenich. Although *Gesänge der Frühe* belongs to this period, the extent to which it can be understood as musically "late" requires careful evaluation, taking into account not only biography but also context and style, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Edward Said, a literary critic and cultural theorist known for his work on late style, defines artistic lateness in two ways: (1) as the culmination of an artist's oeuvre, and (2) as a form of alienation experienced by the artist. Both characteristics can be applied to Schumann around the composition of *Gesänge der Frühe*.⁶¹ First, the work contains musical elements that reflect a mature consolidation of Schumann's compositional style, one that aligns with his own writings on music. Second, Schumann was experiencing several circumstances—resigning from a conductorship position with the Music Society, a suicidal attempt, and a move to Endenich—all of which can be interpreted as a form of social isolation. Said's definition is useful and historically grounded, yet it does not directly address how such

⁶¹ Mariann Wheeldon, *Debussy's Late Style* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 2–3.

biographical conditions shape interpretive choices—an aspect that is central to understanding lateness as a mode of musical hearing.

Scott Burnham, a late-Schumann scholar, posits that Schumann’s lateness can be heard in a more humanistic sense: it may be a feeling of belatedness or of feeling old, regardless of whether one is aware of a forthcoming death. Burnham suggests that such a feeling might produce a tangible sense of temporal juxtaposition that is reflected in the music.⁶² This definition is more flexible and subjective than biographical or stylistic accounts, allowing it to be connected directly to specific musical characteristics and interpretive choices.

Joseph Straus approaches musical late style characteristics through the lens of disability studies, offering a detailed list of metaphorical musical traits in his 2008 article *Disability and Late Style in Music*.⁶³ Such traits include, but are not limited to, introspective, austere, difficult, compressed, fragmentary, and retrospective (see Table 4.1).⁶⁴ He argues that “late” style can be understood as a type of disability style, because, in contrast to “mature” style, it “represents nonnormative mental and bodily states.”⁶⁵ This approach to connecting disability with late style echoes Adorno’s study of late Beethoven in the first half of the twentieth century, which differentiates the maturing process of music to one of a fruit: “Maturity of the

⁶² Scott Burnham, “Late Styles” in *Rethinking Schumann*, ed. Roe-Min Kok and Laura Tunbridge (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 417.

⁶³ Joseph N. Straus, “Disability and ‘Late Style’ in Music,” *The Journal of Musicology* (St. Joseph, Mich.) 25, no. 1 (2008): 12, table 2, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jm.2008.25.1.3>.

⁶⁴ Straus, “Disability and ‘Late Style’ in Music,” 12, table 2.

⁶⁵ Straus, “Disability and ‘Late Style’ in Music,” 12.

late works ... [is] ...for the most part, not round, but furrowed, even ravaged. Devoid of sweetness, bitter, and spiny, they do not surrender themselves to a mere delectation.”⁶⁶

Many of the qualities in Straus’s list, in fact, seem particularly well-suited to describe Beethoven’s late works, such as his last piano sonatas and bagatelles—perhaps the most familiar examples of late style. While avoiding a direct equation between Beethoven’s and Schumann’s cases, this chapter will occasionally reference Beethoven, with the understanding that Schumann studied and promoted Beethoven’s late style.⁶⁷

Table 4.1. Straus’s six metaphorical clusters of late-style characteristics

Six metaphorical clusters of late-style characteristics	
Introspective.	Alienated, apart, detached, estranged, exiled, intimate, introverted, isolated, personal, private, refined, reflective, uncommunicative, withdrawn.
Austere.	Anonymous, bare, elemental, expressionless, immobilized, impersonal, laconic, objective, pared down, rarified, restrained, simple, spare, stripped down.
Difficult.	Abstract, bitter, catastrophic, complex, contradictory, contrapuntal (canonic), enigmatic, experimental, formidable, incomprehensible, intransigent, irascible, mannerist, technically advanced, tense, severe, socially resistant, spiny, unconcerned about pleasing.
Compressed.	Compact, concentrated, concise, condensed, dense, distilled, economical, miniaturized, pithy, unadorned, undecorated, unencumbered, unornamented.
Fragmentary.	Attenuated, discontinuous, episodic, fissured, furrowed, heterogeneous, interrupted, juxtaposed, loosely structured, nonharmonious, paratactic, ravaged, riven, torn, unintegrated, unreconciled.
Retrospective.	Anachronistic, archaic, fascinated with the past, lucid, lyrical, naïve, nostalgic, sentimental, serene, simplified, spiritual, translucent.

⁶⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard D. Leppert, trans. Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 564.

⁶⁷ Plantinga notes late Beethoven’s influence on Schumann, observing that Schumann and his journal were “almost alone in championing Beethoven’s little-appreciated late works. The late quartets and sonata and the Ninth Symphony were in Schumann’s opinion Beethoven’s highest achievements, and the ideal models for contemporary composers.” Plantinga, *Schumann as a Critic*, 100.

Although some of the metaphors in Straus's list can easily be associated with the late works of various composers, the traits—such as increased chromaticism, lack of a clear key, or contemplative slow tempo—are open for different interpretations. Moreover, these characteristics are not always unique to compositions from the “late period” and may also appear in earlier works, as is the case with the fragmentary nature of Schumann's music. In practice, Straus's list is neither comprehensive nor mutually exclusive; it includes metaphors that can directly oppose one another, creating a paradox. Ultimately, this paradox becomes a key attribute of late style, contributing to its complexity and resistance to conventional norms.

The following section will relate specific musical observations of *Gesänge der Frühe*, op. 133, to the late style metaphors. Some observations and musical ideas can be directly connected to a concrete context of lateness, while others are interpreted through the lens of the performer's choices.

Musical Characteristic 1. Loosely Structured Form

An immediate audible paradox is heard in the cycle's loosely structured yet intentionally crafted form. As shown in Fig. 4.1, at a broad level, the cycle's five movements create an overall I–V–iii–I tonal structure, despite frequent modal borrowing and tonal ambiguities throughout the piece. The fourth movement, in particular, exemplifies this tonal ambiguity: its refrains are set in relative keys, alternate between major and minor modes, feature Neapolitan harmonies, and include a move to the parallel major.

At a smaller scale, all five movements, or “songs,” feature varied refrains. The variations between the refrains make each movement highly concentrated, preventing the cycle from relying on repeated material. Furthermore, the variations lend themselves to inconsistent

phrase lengths, which all accumulate to a manifestation of late style's tendency toward fragmentation and formal irregularity.

movement	I	II	III	IV	V
key	D major	D major	A major	F# minor / F# major	D major
tonal relationship	I		V	iii	I

Figure 4.1. Tonal structure of op. 133.

A straightforward sense of form is further obscured by several factors: the use of I_4^6 instead of I to end sections and movements, the seamless lead-in to the next movement, and the unclear tonal center at the beginning of each subsequent movement, which often still reflects the previous movement. The following excerpt of the transition between the third and fourth movements illustrates an ending characterized by a subdued sense of finality (with a I_4^6 chord in A major) and an inconspicuous entrance of the next movement in F# minor, achieved through the continuation of the musical line on the high A (A_5) in the treble clef (see Ex. 4.1).

Example 4.1. Transition between op. 133/3, mm. 61–63 and op. 133/4, mm. 1–3. Adapted from Robert Schumann, *Complete Piano Works*, vol. 6, ed. Ernst Herttrich (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2009), 145–6.

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The top system, labeled 'A:', is in 6/4 time and marked 'I 6/4'. It begins with a 6/8 time signature and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The music is in a complex, contrapuntal style with various dynamic markings including *sf*, *dim.*, and *p*. The bottom system, labeled 'F#m:', is in 2/4 time and marked 'IV'. It begins with a 2/4 time signature and a key signature of two sharps. The music is in a more rhythmic, dance-like style with various dynamic markings including *f* and *p*. The score includes fingering numbers and a tempo marking 'Bewegt' with a quarter note equal to 72 beats per minute.

Another way Schumann obscures the sense of form is by avoiding clear cadences throughout the piece. In the entirety of the second movement, for example, the music never lands on a tonic chord (D major) in root position. Instead, the phrases circle around the I_4^6 chord only occasionally and fleetingly. The contrapuntal nature of this movement makes elisions a natural component, and the formal markers are, ironically, created not by cadences but by sudden interjections of brief, completely contrasting material. The interjections will be discussed again in the fragment section. The ambiguous form, driven by deferred tonal resolution, lends itself to harmonic and formal abstraction, a characteristic of late style.

The varied refrains can be understood as resembling a theme-and-variations structure, but the fact that the themes are initially obscure and the variations unfold without clear delineation makes such a claim overly simplified. If we consider that Schumann classified the work as a song, the varied refrains function more like those of a through-composed song, creating a

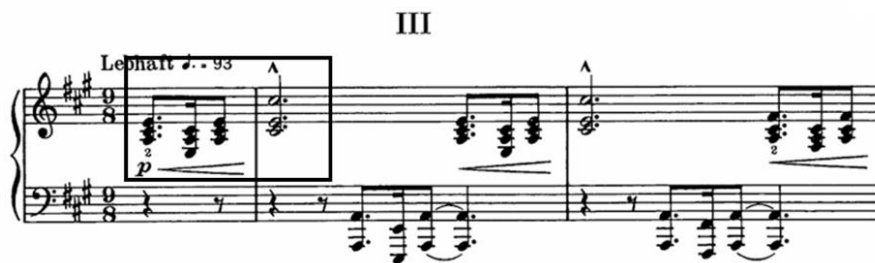
developing narrative. If one positions *Gesänge der Frühe* as an Ossianic-chivalric style (see Chap. 2), the piece can be heard as a Ballade, a narrative poem, which supports the lyrical yet developing nature of this cycle.

Musical Characteristic 2. Dynamics and Estrangement

To a surprising degree, most of this cycle is marked *piano*, with only sparse use of *forte*. This is true of all movements except for the chivalric middle movement, the third. The *piano* dynamics are intentionally nuanced, supported by sparse but intentional articulation markings throughout the cycle.

Some of these dynamic indications are counterintuitive, as in the third movement: its dotted rhythm and simple harmony suggest a hunting song, typically performed energetically at *forte*, yet Schumann instructs the beginning and the end to sound distant. See Ex 4.2 for the *piano* entrance and Ex. 4.6 for the tapering off at the end of the movement. Measure 1 shows a quick crescendo from *piano* to an emphasized downbeat with a marcato.

Example 4.2. Piano entrance with a horn call motif in op. 133/3 mm. 1–2. Adapted from Schumann, *Complete Piano Works*, vol. 6, 151.



By creating distance between the third movement and the rest of the cycle by starting and ending it *piano*, Schumann integrates this chivalric movement within the context of the entire

cycle as a Ballade. The added narrative layer evokes a sense of a chivalric past, symbolized by the horn-call figure, rather than conveying direct experience.

Another frequent dynamic feature is the use of muted dramatic gestures. Crescendos within phrases often do not reach a peak but are instead interrupted by sudden *piano*, diminuendo, or abruptly contrasting material. Example 4.3 shows a refrain from the second movement: the phrase begins at m. 17, with a natural crescendo in the ascending octave line in the bass between mm. 20–22, aided by marcato (^) markings, only to be interrupted in m. 23 by two measures of new material marked *piano*. This new material in mm. 23–24 appears only once in the entire cycle, making it an isolated element that conveys no sense of belonging—a lateness attribute that applies to form through fragmentation.

Example 4.3. Interrupted crescendo in op. 133/2, mm. 18–24. Adapted from Schumann, *Complete Piano Works*, vol. 6, 149.

16 *sf* *sf* *p* L.H. *start of the phrase*

19 *crescendo*-----

22 *piano*

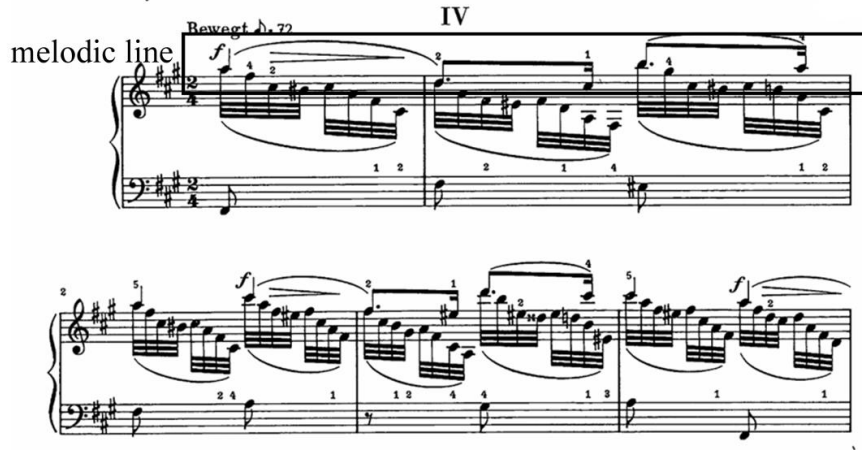
By removing the opportunity for emotional culmination, this attribute can be interpreted as a late style characteristic, in which intensity is withdrawn and internalized rather than outwardly displayed, contributing to a sense of introversion.

A third example of Schumann using dynamics to convey a sense of lateness is his use of *forte* to evoke desolation, creating an unexpected atmosphere of austerity and introspection.

Although the beginning of the fourth movement features three independent parts—the melody on top, aeolian-harp-like⁶⁸ cascading thirty-second notes, and a bass line of eighth notes—the overall texture remains thin for two reasons: the *forte*, followed by a diminuendo, affects only the melody in the top line, and the bass line does not fill the entirety of the 2/4 measure (see Ex. 4.4).

⁶⁸ The Aeolian harp became a Romantic symbol of nature and melancholy, representing both the poet's experience and the poetic mind, as in Coleridge's *The Eolian Harp* (1795) and Goethe's *An eine Äolsharfe* (1867). Stephen Bonner, "Aeolian Harp," *Grove Music Online*, 2001, <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000046545>.

Example 4.4. Opening texture of op. 133/4 mm. 1–4. Adapted from Schumann, *Complete Piano Works*, vol. 6, 155.



The registral spacing of the accompaniment makes this movement more open and sparse; the body of the sound is skewed to middle C (C₄) and above. When combined with the *forte* melodic line in the treble, it produces a sense of emotional intensity but within an overall austerity. Open harmony and the aeolian-harp figure in the middle-register accompaniment can both be interpreted as traits of Ossianic style. As noted earlier, this movement hovers between major and minor keys, another characteristic of possible Ossianism.

Musical Characteristic 3. Trills

There is not much scholarly attention to Schumann's use of trills because he used them sparsely. However, *Gesänge der Frühe*, op. 133 uses trills in its third and fifth movements in unconventional and significant ways, and their possible roles and the studies of trills as a late-style symbol are worth discussing.

As mentioned in the introduction, much of what is considered late style musical elements originates from writings by Adorno on Beethoven's late works, and he directly connects Beethoven's deviation from compositional conventions with his approaching death:

But Adorno's stress is on the formal law of Beethoven's final compositional mode, by which he means the rights of the aesthetic. This law reveals itself to be a peculiar amalgam of subjectivity and convention, evident in such devices as "decorative trill sequences, cadences and fiorituras." In a formulation of what that subjectivity is, Adorno says: "This law is revealed precisely in the thought of death...."⁶⁹

In the case of Beethoven, he uses trills in a piece's development section and in the end; the development section's trills are described as depicting "struggle with [Beethoven's] inability to express" and as the music progresses, Beethoven uses the trill to "[pass] into a higher state of mind and [become] free."⁷⁰ The trill takes on a life of its own, creating a distinctive color and presence. Often described as "sublime," Beethoven's trills convey a sense of rising above the ordinary world, which can also be interpreted as a retrospective late-style characteristic.

⁶⁹ Edward W. Said, *On Late Style: Music and Literature against the Grain*. 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), 9, quoting Theodor W. Adorno, *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard D. Leppert, trans. Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 565.

⁷⁰ John Harley, "The Trill in Beethoven's Later Music." *The Musical Times* 95, no. 1332 (1954): 70, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/934175>.

Schumann's *Gesänge der Frühe* similarly uses trills and fioritura to create bursts of intensity or concentrated sections of heightened emotion. The first subsection focuses on bursts of intensity, while the following subsection addresses trills as markers of heightened emotion.

Musical Characteristic 3a. Accentuation through Trills

The first occurrence of a trill in *Gesänge der Frühe* appears in the third movement, the most energetic of the five. As noted earlier, much of the movement is at a *piano* level, with frequent marcato (^) and *sforzando* (*sf*) accents, keeping the emotional peaks somewhat distant or intentionally subdued. The distribution of dynamic markings and accents across the three refrains (A, A', A'') and their measures is plotted on Fig. 4.2. The trill occurs in the final measures of the piece in the last refrain A'', in mm. 56–58, followed by a fioritura that finally asserts a climactic moment in the movement, breaking the restrained atmosphere that precedes it (see Ex. 4.5).

Example 4.5. Climactic trill and fioritura, op. 133/3, mm. 56–60. Adapted from Schumann, *Complete Piano Works*, vol. 6, 154.



In this movement, the combination of embellishments—the trill and fioritura—releases the intensity accumulated in the preceding section. Despite this surge of energy, the persistence of *piano* dynamics suggests that the embellishments serve a purpose beyond mere brilliance or virtuosity, lending them a fantastical quality.

Figure 4.2 below demonstrates the relationship between frequently occurring accents, and the placement of the trill and fioritura, as well as dynamic markings.

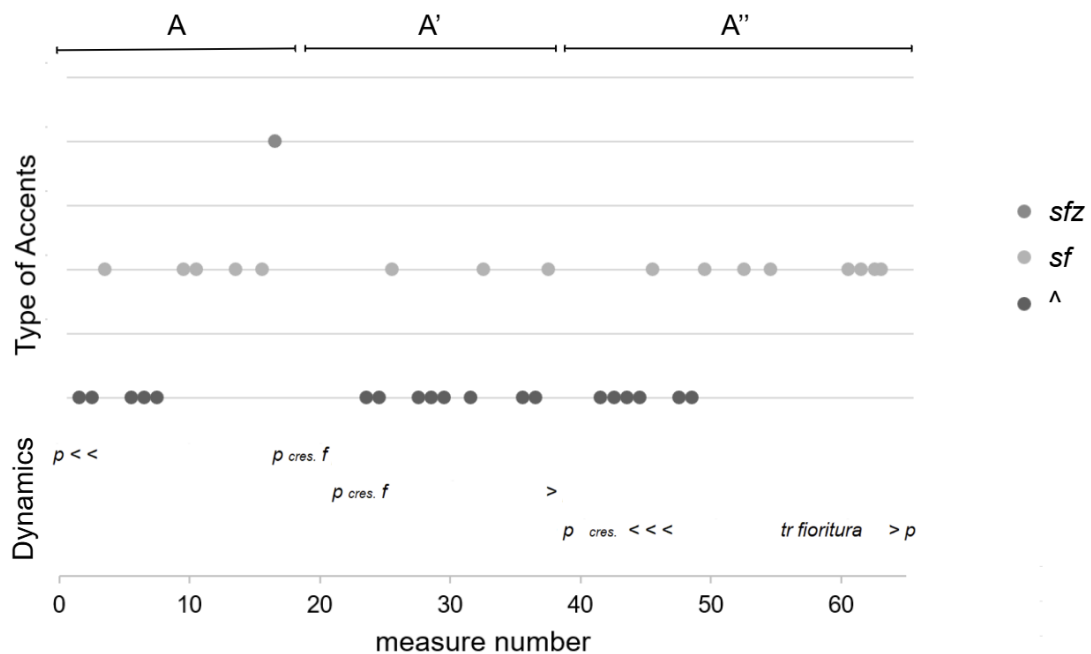


Figure. 4.2. Accents and ornaments in op. 133/3 in relation to dynamic level.

As shown in the bottom half of the figure, most of Schumann's seven dynamic indications are *piano*, with two occurrences of *forte* (m. 19 and mm. 23–27); the remaining sections are all *piano*. This represents Schumann's conception of nuance in color and articulation rather than sheer loudness. Across the movement, he uses 19 marcato ($\wedge$) accents, 16 *sforzato* (*sf*), and 1 *sforzando* (*sfz*). This prompts an interpretive question, as the distinctions among these three types of accents are subtle and often subjective.

Clive Brown discusses the distinctions in his book, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750–1900*’s, as follows: 1) *sf* implies accent by sharper attack (though heavy or light is unclear), *sfz* a stronger accent, *^* is less intense. 2) *sf/fz* occurring in a piano dynamic does not always follow with a forte continuation unless denoted with *p* after i.e. *sfp*.⁷¹

For this movement, Schumann develops the varied refrains through the use of accents and trills. The first refrain, A (mm. 1–17), ends with *sfz*. A’ (mm. 17–38) is the only refrain in *forte* and employs only marcato (^) and *sf* accents. The third section, A’’ (mm. 39–end), features fewer marcato accents, noticeably more *sf*, and concludes with a climactic trill and fioritura. Choosing not to perform A’’ *forte* adds a whimsical quality to the rapid trill and fioritura run. This interpretation also aligns with the sudden, brief diminuendo before the *piano* ending of the piece (Ex. 4.6), reinforcing the reading that the movement represents a recalled tale with an added layer of reflective consciousness.

Example 4.6. Quick diminuendo and *piano* dynamic at end of op. 133/3, mm. 61–63.

Adapted from Schumann, *Complete Piano Works*, vol. 6, 154.



⁷¹ Whether *sf* indicates absolute dynamic level depends on the composer, and Schumann’s *sf* was inconsistent throughout his career. However, Brown notes “for the most part to be a fairly powerful accent; [Schumann] was sparing of its use in piano passages.” See Clive, Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 78-82.

Careful attention to articulation and ornamentation in relation to the movement's dynamic structure allows this harmonically and rhythmically simple passage to convey a sense of playfulness, of an adventurous episode fleetingly imagined. The restrained use of dynamics and embellishments creates an introspective quality within an otherwise extroverted movement, suggesting not merely compositional maturity but a nostalgic and wry yearning for a youthful past. In this way, the trill and fioritura within the *piano* dynamic contribute to a complex late-style sensibility.

Musical Characteristic 3b. Trill as a Formal Device:

In its fifth and last movement, *Gesänge der Frühe*, op. 133, a different yet curious use of trills appears as quavering sixteenth notes. The tempo is indicated as ♩=68, 68 bpm per quarter note, considered as *adagietto*, thus one may choose to hear this as melodic sixteenth notes. However, the sixteenth notes' relationship to the melody and a late style interpretation allow a different reading—as a type of written-out tremolo or trill.

This movement recalls the first; it starts out with simple, slow four-part harmony that suggests a chorale. The theme is an eight-measure phrase. Following the eight-measure theme and a bridge-like section, the theme returns with oscillating sixteenth notes joining the chordal melody. Example 4.7a) shows the first four measures of the theme, and b) shows the corresponding measures of its return with the tremolo embellishment in sixteenth notes.

Example 4.7. Sixteenth note embellishments in op. 133/5, mm. 1–4, 8–10. Adapted from Schumann, *Complete Piano Works*, vol. 6, 159.

a) Theme

The musical score for the theme is presented in two systems. The first system, measures 1-4, is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It begins with a tempo and mood instruction: "Im Anfange ruhiges, im Verlauf bewegteres Tempo ♩. 68". The music features a piano (p) dynamic and includes various fingering numbers (1-5) and articulation marks. The second system, measures 8-10, continues the melodic line with similar fingering and articulation.

b) Theme with tremolo embellishment

The musical score for the theme with tremolo embellishment is shown in measures 18-21. It features a piano (p) dynamic and includes various fingering numbers (1-5) and articulation marks. Above the main score, a diagram illustrates the tremolo embellishment technique. The diagram shows a single sixteenth note on a staff, with a bracket underneath it indicating the tremolo effect. The text "theme" and "tremolo embellishment" are placed next to the diagram.

This sixteenth-note pattern continues for the rest of the final movement, subdividing every beat like a clock. While the trill remains in sixteenth notes and does not accelerate into a full trill, the way it marks a climactic, conclusive intensity at the end of a long piece is similar to

Beethoven's use of trills in his late style—for example, in the Piano Sonata in E Major, op. 109 (See Ex. 4.8).

While both Schumann and Beethoven use a layer of trills as a formal device, the differences between their approaches lend themselves to distinct readings in both disability and lateness interpretations.

Beethoven's Piano Sonata, op. 109, final movement is in a theme-and-variation form, and Ex. 4.8 shows the opening nine measures of the final variation—the last section of the entire sonata. The first four measures open with the theme, continuing in its chorale-like texture; melody is in the alto line and is marked by a). In m. 5, the melody is passed to the soprano line, and the onset of the trill—marked b)—appears in the alto line. This trill continues to increase in speed from mm. 157–161.

Example 4.8. Trill in late Beethoven, Piano Sonata in E Major, op. 109/3 mm. 153–161.⁷²

Var. VI
Tempo I del tema
Cantabile

a) theme

b) start of trill

theme

trill increases in speed

cresc.

p

cresc. -

poco - a - poco -

As shown in the above example, the trill in Beethoven’s Piano Sonata op. 109, last movement accelerates to the end of the piece into a transcendental buzz.

In comparison, the sixteenth notes in Schumann’s op. 133 have subtle transformations with ebbs and flows, occasionally shifting from tremolos to arpeggios. In the end, this movement, like the others, grows quieter until it fades into nothing, concluding the cycle—the last four measures, mm. 37–40, are marked *verhallend nach und nach* - -.

If one interprets Schumann’s trills through a Beethovenian model, Schumann’s remains a partial trill that neither aspires to nor manages to “overcome” a disability. Beethoven’s trill is

⁷² Ludwig van Beethoven, *Klaviersonaten, Band II*, ed. Bertha Antonia Wallner (G. Henle Verlag, 1952), 288, mm. 153–161.

an example of what Said refers to as “miraculous transfiguration of common reality,” that signals “a special maturity.”⁷³ Applying this logic to Schumann’s *Gesänge der Frühe*, however, the continuous sixteenth notes show no impulse to overcome anything; instead, they evoke a reflective, calm, multicolored veil—like the soft light of dawn.

From the performance perspective, this is an example that urges the performer to resist the impulse to save the piece—and the composer—by resolving its tensions musically, creating a kind of comfort in experiencing discomfort with acceptance. Said describes a lack of satisfying resolution and late style:

This is the prerogative of late style: it has the power to render disenchantment and pleasure without resolving the contradiction between them. What holds them in tension, as equal forces straining in opposite directions, is the artist’s mature subjectivity, stripped of hubris and pomposity, unashamed either of its fallibility or of the modest assurance it has gained as a result of age and exile.⁷⁴

Late style invites performers and listeners alike to accept uncertainty as part of the musical experience. In *Gesänge der Frühe*, our own mature subjectivity shapes how we perceive and respond to the cycle’s ending, marked by the continuing trills.

Musical Characteristic 4. Tempo and Interiority

The cycle’s generally slow tempi also contribute to its late style. This cycle does not start or end fast like the majority of piano solo repertoire; instead, the opening and closing movements are serene and chorale-like. Melody, setting aside the accompaniment figures,

⁷³ Said, *On Late Style*, 6.

⁷⁴ Said, *On Late Style*, 148.

sings slowest in the outer movements, moderately in the second and fourth movements, and fastest in the middle, creating a gentle arch of pensiveness and intensity.

With the exception of the third movement, which sounds rather orchestral, most of the movements of this set of songs consist of melodies constructed from quarter-note values or longer. The movement's meters and main melodic subdivision are summarized in Table 4.2 below; the tempo markings follow the 2009 Henle edition. When the given tempo markings are normalized to the main pulses of the movements' melodies as suggested by the time signatures, the movements'—or the songs'—beats pulse at *Andante* or slower, at one beat at bpm = 73, 95, 93, 36, and 68, respectively.

Although the accompaniments of the second and fourth movements are more tumultuous, the melodic line remains calm and persistent. Awareness of the subtle differences in the melody's interaction with the accompanying figures between the movements is therefore essential to prevent the cycle from sounding emotionally flattened.

Table 4.2. Melodic subdivisions and tempo relationships in op. 133.

Movement	Indications	Meter and subdivisions	Tempo marking
I	<i>Im ruhigen</i>	4/4; ♩, ♩	♩ = 73
II	<i>Belebt, nicht zu rasch</i>	4/4; ♩, ♩, dotted 8 th , triplets	♩ = 190
III	<i>Lebhaft</i>	9/8; dotted triplets	♩. = 93 ⁷⁵

⁷⁵ The commentary notes that the metronome marking is taken from the copyist's manuscript and the first edition. The completed edition by Clara Schumann has ♩ = 93, which is probably an error. Ernst Herttrich, ed., *Robert Schumann: Klavierwerke*, Urtext ed. (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2009), 222.

IV	<i>Bewegt</i>	2/4; melody with ♩ and dotted 8ths, with 32 nd note figurations	♩ = 72
V	<i>Im Anfange ruhiges, im Verlauf bewegteres</i>	4/4; ♩., ♩, 16 th note figurations	♩ = 68

Although the fifth movement's character indication, *Im Anfange ruhiges, im Verlauf bewegteres* (calm at the beginning, becoming more agitated as it progresses), suggests an increase in agitation, this is achieved primarily through changes in texture with the trills rather than through changes in tempo.

Adherence to Schumann's metronome markings varies widely among performers. Brown explains that Schumann's metronome markings are less definite than those of some other composers, such as Mendelssohn.⁷⁶ As a result, tempo choice should be considered relative to each movement and shaped by the performer's decisions.

This flexibility can be strongly influenced by one's late style interpretation. How to musically express a late style ultimately depends on the performer's musical associations and life experiences. Evoking a dawn with a pensive, melancholic air—an atmosphere filled with mist, with vision obscured, and with chills felt on the skin—creates an unsettled mixture of serenity and cold for the audience. Such a beginning is already quite different from a typical classical performance, leaning instead toward something more intimate and introverted. Openness to these differences allows for more personal and distinctive interpretive decisions, enabling performances in ways that might otherwise feel less accepted.

⁷⁶ Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice*, 309.

Tempo choice and its degree of *rubato* use also create differing impressions of late style. In the following section, inverse-interpretation⁷⁷ is applied to two recordings. The first is of a French pianist Jean Martin (1927-2020). This 1972 recording plays *Gesänge der Frühe*'s first and fifth movements at $J=40$ (40 bpm per quarter note), which is more than 40% slower than the tempo indications in the Urtext edition of the score.⁷⁸ The second recording is of an Austrian pianist Jörg Wolfgang Demus (1928-2019), who plays at tempi close to the Urtext's indications, except the fourth movement, which he plays at about 1.5 times faster than indicated. Hence, these two performances are good examples for discussing the possible effect of playing outer movements at slower tempi.⁷⁹

The aural temporal effect is visualized in the plot below, Fig. 4.3.

⁷⁷ Senn defines “inverse interpretation” as “the analytical process of performance to study the characteristics of a performance in order to discover those structural features of the composition which are highlighted in the interpretation.” He further emphasizes that “inverse interpretation never claims to reconstruct the intentions or thoughts of a performer; one rather tries to argue, from an observer’s perspective, why a performance makes sense with respect to the score.” Olivier Senn, Lorenz Kilchenmann, and Marc-Antoine Camp, “A Turbulent Acceleration into the Stretto: Martha Argerich Plays Chopin’s Prelude op. 28/4 in E minor,” *Dissonanz = Dissonance*, no. 120 (2012): 31–35, <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-927684>.

⁷⁸ Jörg Demus, piano, *Robert Schumann: Complete Piano Works*, Nuova Era Internazionale, 2007, CD.

⁷⁹ Jean Martin, piano, *Robert Schumann: Sonate No. 1, Op. 11; Intermezzi, Op. 4; Quasi Variazioni, Op. 14; Bunte Blätter, Op. 99; Gesänge der Frühe, Op. 133; Impromptus, Op. 5, Arion*, 1992, CD.

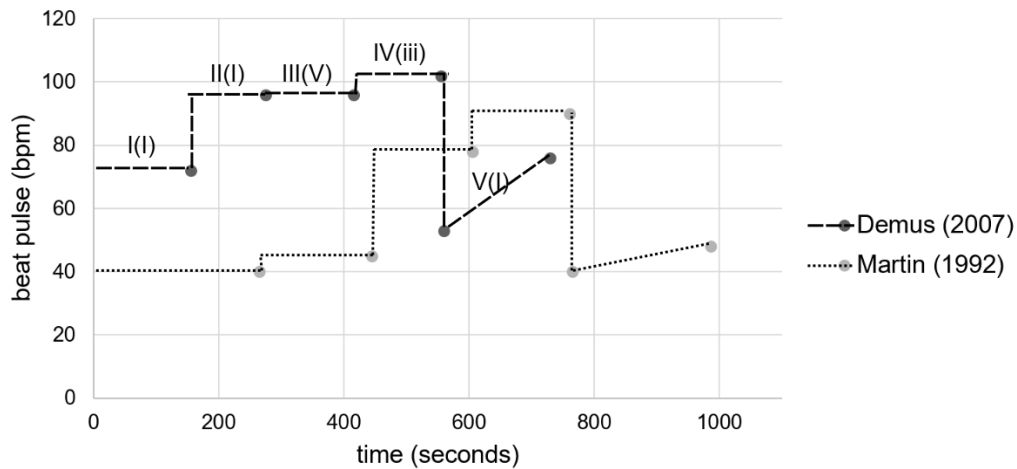


Figure 4.3. Two tempo interpretations and its effect on temporality.

The x-axis (horizontal) represents the performance time (in seconds), the y-axis (vertical) represents tempo, and the graph shows each movement's average quarter-note pulse (bpm). For the list of time measurements, see Appendix. The label above the plot indicates the movement and the overall key. "I(I)" represents first movement, tonic key; "III(V)" represents third movement, dominant key; and so on. As mentioned earlier in Fig. 4.1, the overall tonal structure over the entire piece is I–V–iii–I.

The graph leads to several immediate observations. *Gesänge der Frühe* presented by Martin is longer by approximately four minutes (250 seconds $\approx$ 4:10). Martin's performance is generally much slower, shown by the lighter line being lower than the darker line. This difference reinforces a late-style approach, since Martin lingers in the tonic—the most stable key in the first, second, and fifth movements—longer than Demus.

The ratio between time in the tonic key versus an obscure key influences the sense of stability, which is often a discussion associated with the late works of Beethoven, Schubert,

or Brahms; longer duration of time in an uncertain or unrelated key leads to excitement, confusion, and discomfort. On the other extreme, if the key structure is too simple and phrase structures are too obvious, the piece gives off an impression of bluntness or simplicity to a fault. This ideal aesthetic balance depends on the performer's taste, the performance occasion, and the audience.

As far as similarities, both performers increase tempo when going from the first and second movements (both in the tonic key of D major) to the third and fourth (dominant key and the minor tonic key: A major and D minor). Furthermore, and perhaps most relevant, both performers play the fifth movement at a tempo similar to the first, suggesting a return to the beginning and creating a sense of cyclicity or symbolic rebirth. This effect is supplemented by the score as well, with the return of similar texture, meter, and rhythm.

This deliberate connection between the first and fifth movements shows an intention to emphasize the roundedness of the piece—a trait that is familiar from ABA form, sonata-allegro form, or Beethoven's Piano Sonata op. 109's ending, where the original theme concludes the piece. The dual sense of ending and a return to the beginning, cyclicity, teases the listeners' temporal sense, as if the beginning becomes the end, and the ending becomes a beginning. While time, in which we experience the performance, is linear, there is an aural illusion of *Déjà vu*. Late style and *Déjà vu* are related in that the present experience is impacted by one's memories and associated emotions.

The similarity between the first and last movements in their tempi and atmosphere is a gateway for the listeners to get in and out of a deep mode of listening: the entrance for those who get pulled into this aural world, and the exit to send them back gently into the world of reality. Often, late style is associated with a sense of serenity—which Straus associates with

the retrospective metaphor—and reconciliation, or lack thereof, which may be expressed by slightly slower tempo the second time than the first, as done in Demus's recording.

The overall tempo in *Gesänge der Frühe*, op. 133, makes the piece the opposite of a virtuosic piece. As hinted by the first movement's tempo indication is "*Im ruhigen (quietly, peaceful),*" the piece is unobtrusive while evoking interiority, starting and ending with a sense of inwardness. The slow tempo does not represent technical display but rather sits with the listener. The performance tempo, like Martin's, brings out this essence that may otherwise be overlooked in a fast-paced, matter-of-fact performance.

An intentional resistance to fast-tempo virtuosity is apparent in the way Schumann writes the fourth movement. The movement, labeled *Bewegt (with motion)*, has a tempo marking of 72 bpm per eighth note. The opening of the fourth movement (Ex. 4.4) shows that the movement has several indications of virtuosity: the tempo indication, cascading Florestan-esque thirty-second notes, the 2/4 time signature with an upbeat, and bass-line notes of short duration.

However, at 72 bpm per eighth note, the music plays steadily and slowly. The eighth-note bassline creates sparsity in the sound highlighting the juxtaposed melodic phrase that starts at forte each time followed by an immediate diminuendo. Taking the tempo, dynamics, and balance factors into consideration, the cascading thirty-second notes resemble more of an aeolian harp that effortlessly follows the melodic notes. To achieve this, not much rubato or phrasing is necessary for the thirty-second notes.

Interestingly, despite the third movement in the dominant key being more lively than the fourth movement in minor mediant, it is likely that Schumann intended the fourth movement to serve as the emotional peak of the cycle. In an 1834 article, "Characterization of the

Keys,” Schumann writes: “Simple feelings demand simple keys; the more complicated ones require those which are less frequently heard. Thus one might observe the rising and falling [of the temperature of feeling] in the interwoven succession of rising and falling fifths, and accept F-sharp—the middle point in the octave, the so-called tritonus—as the highest point...”⁸⁰ Regarding major and minor, Schumann also writes that the “former is the active, virile principle; the latter, the passive, the feminine.”⁸¹ This sense of passivity aligns with the movement’s thin texture, subdued surface motion, and restrained tempo. Viewed through a lens of lateness, this helps explain the unusual pairing of a seemingly passive movement with the cycle’s most emotionally complex key. Through this choice, Schumann sets inward, introverted expression as the larger expressive goal of the work.

Musical Characteristic 5. Mixed Genre for Abstraction and Retrospection

One characteristic of Schumann’s matured compositional style is his resistance to confining to one singular genre style. In *Gesänge der Frühe*, Schumann fuses together characteristics from different genres that he wrote during his lifetime. As mentioned previously, the beginnings of the first and last movements have textures that allude to choral or small string ensembles; the four or more parts, that are spread between registers, move in a parallel motion (See Ex. 4.9).

⁸⁰ Schumann, *On Music and Musicians*, 60–61.

⁸¹ Schumann, *On Music and Musicians*, 60–61.

Example 4.9. Choral texture in op. 133/1, mm. 1–4 and op. 133/5, mm. 1–3. Adapted from Schumann, *Complete Piano Works*, vol. 6, 155, 159.

I

Im ruhigen Tempo ♩. 73 Opus 133

V

Im Anfange ruhiges, im Verlauf bewegteres Tempo ♩. 68

Both are in gentle, slow tempo, and the notes are mostly quarter notes or longer. This chorale texture immediately invokes intimacy while at the same time demanding humility and introspection for the performer. As explored earlier, the opening of the fifth movement (mm. 1–8) establishes a hymn-like atmosphere that frames the cycle, reminiscent of late Beethoven’s Piano Sonata op. 109’s last movement.

Gesänge der Frühe’s second movement is written like a chamber work, transcribed for the piano. In fact, it shares the same theme as *Märchenerzählungen*, op. 132, a trio written for clarinet, viola, and piano from the same year, 1853. The main theme, that appears as counterpoint between three different instruments in op. 132, is applied to different voices in the piano. The fourth movement is most straight-forward in terms of voicing; the melody is

vocal, with clear phrase structures, and the distinction between melody and accompaniment is clear.

The nods to various genres and textures across the movements increase the difficulty and the scope of this compact cycle, further supporting Straus's description of late style as a paradox of miniaturized and experimental, or technically advanced. At the same time, the resistance to genre-constraints is a Romantic-style trait that foreshadows *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total art work), an artistic synthesis later seen in performance arts.

Musical Characteristic 6. Distilled Motivic Unity

Most of the characteristics discussed so far reflect only singular movements of the cycle.

However, Schumann uses a very simple motivic unity across the movements to create cohesion while playing with aural memory. The shared motif is a two-note horn-call, which aligns with two of Straus's late style metaphors for compressed: distilled and economical.

Despite the pithiness of this motif, Schumann marks it deliberately with *sforzando* or *forte* markings. In the second movement, the motif appears at the end of the chivalric rhythmic interjection at m. 16, marked *sforzando* (see Ex. 4.10).

Example 4.10. Two note motif, op. 133/2, mm. 14–18. Adapted from Schumann, *Complete Piano Works*, vol. 6, 149.



In the third movement, the assertive two-note motif occurs at the end of the piece, in a different rhythm, but stressed with a sforzando again (see Ex. 4.11). Like in the second movement, the motif emphasizes tonic chords.

Example 4.11. Two note motif, op. 133/3, mm. 58–63. Adapted from Schumann, *Complete Piano Works*, vol. 6, 154.



Finally, the two-note theme returns, this time the rhythm in augmentation, in the last movement, mm. 14–17 (See Ex 4.12). Schumann stresses the motif by accenting it with *forte* indications. The augmented version of the motif is used to navigate a harmonic modulation with expressive weight—befitting for the movement that’s centered around a chorale-like melody.

Example 4.12. Two note motif, op. 133/5, mm. 12–18. Adapted from Schumann, *Complete Piano Works*, vol. 6, 159.

The musical score for Example 4.12 consists of three systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system (measures 12-13) shows the right hand playing a two-note motif (G4-A4) with a forte (f) dynamic. The second system (measures 14-15) shows the left hand playing the same motif with a forte (f) dynamic. The third system (measures 16-18) shows the right hand playing the motif with a forte (f) dynamic. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

The simple motif creates structural cohesion and a thematic recognition across movements, adding to the narrative effect of the cycle, ultimately supporting the hypothesis that the cycle can be heard as a Ballade. This extreme simplicity, while achieving a sense of a whole, is a product of maturity, which can also be heard as an example of the lateness paradox. This understanding is not unique to this cycle.

In his article, “Songs of Dawn and Dusk: the Late Music,” Daverio cites several music scholars who noted the motivic economy of Schumann’s late style, including Harold Truscott, Michael Struck, and Reinhard Kapp. From different angles, they argued that late Schumann’s works are simpler, more transparent, and have a monothematic approach after 1849, which they consider as the height of Robert’s creative powers.⁸²

Gesänge der Frühe is precisely that—centered around a singular theme of dawn, motif unity, solo instrument, refrains, and a I–V–I structure—the overall impression is simple, transparent, and monothematic. However, the detail underneath is very complex, affecting timbre, rhythm, and texture across a full range of expression and experimentation. Perhaps this concept has a place in thinking about late style in general. The complex compositional technique is second nature to the composer, and he now envisions an art form that appears simple from a bird’s-eye view, yet to the interpreter, the layers of complexity make the piece enigmatic, if not sublime.

Musical Characteristic 7. Introspection through Harmonic Suspensions

In *Gesänge der Frühe*, Schumann delays harmonic resolution to create a sense of withdrawal, a late style characteristic of introversion. Harmonic uncertainty occurs in the forms of suspension, retardation, and delayed cadences.

While introversion—duality and anonymity in relation to it—is a symbol of late style, applying it to Schumann’s late music is complicated because Schumann’s earlier composition style already uses introversion through a juxtaposition of extroversion against introversion via Florestan and Eusebius. Hence, I argue that Schumann’s expression of

⁸² Daverio, “Songs of Dawn and Dusk,” 275–76.

introversion changed from his earlier works to his later works through the use of harmonic suspension that leads to dissonance. Introversion shifts from a music of thinner texture with contemplative melody, like an innocent and poetic dreamer, to a fuller texture with clashing harmony with more intention, thus expressing late style.

The example of harmonic suspension from the first movement sounds less like suspension and more like dissonance. This harmonic overlap appears early in the very first phrase of the piece in mm. 5–8 (see Ex. 4.13).

Example 4.13. Dissonance in op. 133/1, mm. 5–8. Adapted from Schumann, *Complete Piano Works*, vol. 6, 146.



There are multiple instances of harmonic suspensions here. First, the G₃ and D₄ in m. 6¹, which belong to an E minor chord (supertonic), are suspended while the harmony changes to A7 (dominant 7). This A7 chord lasts for three beats with a suspended E₄ in the treble line as the harmony changes to D major (tonic). Similarly, the A₃ and C#₄ in m. 7¹ belong to that D major chord from m. 6, while the rest of the harmony shifts to G major (subdominant). This overlap of harmony happens once more as a descending sequence in mm. 7⁴–8², where the D₄ in m. 7⁴ in the treble comes from the previous subdominant chord superimposed on C#dim7 (leading-tone). Finally, the G₃ and B₃ are suspended in m. 8¹ while the harmony is F#7—the dominant 7 chord of the subdominant chord on the following beat.

Through overlapping harmonies, dissonance is carefully crafted and repeats sequentially. This differs from the use of dissonance in his earlier introverted works, for example, the beginning of *Carnaval*, op. 9's "Eusebius," where bass notes overlap but do not create dissonance because they remain chord tones. Daverio reads the dissonant suspensions in *Gesänge der Frühe* as serving late style, producing a reverberant effect that imitates sound in a large church or cathedral creating a space of awe—retrospective or perhaps spiritual.⁸³

Another notable example of a non-chord tone used to create dissonance is at the conclusion of the piece, as shown in m. 40 in Ex. 4.14. The cycle winds down—marked *Verhallend nach und nach*—from a rare *forte* climax to *pianissimo* in the final seven measures, while lingering in a plagal cadence; the slowing down of tempo is indicated through an augmentation in the melodic top line. The very final chord is unusual; the tonic is preceded by a C#₄ retardation. Aurally, the piece resists a firm ending through multiple traits: plagal cadence, retardation, diminuendo, unresolved I₄⁶, and fermata.

⁸³ Daverio, "Madness or Prophecy?" 192.

Example 4.14. A dissolved ending of op. 133/5, mm. 35–40. Adapted from Schumann, *Complete Piano Works*, vol. 6, 161.

35

Verhallend nach und nach

38

pp

Fine

D: I 6/4

Unresolved I_4^6 chords are common in *Gesänge der Frühe*, contributing to the cycle's contemplative and unreconciled character, and they occur both throughout and at the conclusion of each movement.

Musical Characteristic 8. Fragmentation as a Romanticism Aesthetic

Fragmentation, which is one of Straus's late style characteristics, also appears throughout the cycle and manifests through different devices. First is a deliberate interruption, like this example (Ex. 4.15) from the second movement. The contrapuntal melody is suddenly interrupted in m. 14 by a different homophonic and rhythmically driven material marked *sforzando*. This interjecting material heard in mm. 14–16 appears twice in this movement but does not lead to any formal or thematic continuation; in other words, these are fragments.

Example 4.15. Fragments in, op. 133/2, mm. 12–18. Adapted from Schumann, *Complete Piano Works*, vol. 6, 149.

The musical score consists of three systems of piano music. The first system (mm. 12-13) is marked *sf* and features complex fingering. The second system (mm. 14-15) is marked *sf* and *p* and is labeled "interjecting material". The third system (mm. 16-18) is marked *sf* and *p* and is labeled "return of the theme".

In the popular disability reading, one could hear this sudden interruption and shift in mood as proof of Schumann’s bipolar disorder, or the arrival of Florestan. As a lateness trait, the fragmentation creates a discontinuous experience of time.

Simultaneously, one could read these interruptions as simply a part of the Romantic aesthetic style that mirrored a literary technique appearing in the last years of the eighteenth century.

According to Friedrich Schlegel’s definition, quoted in Charles Rosen’s *Romantic Generation*, the Romantic Fragment was paradoxical, incomplete, yet perfect. Rosen follows: “Each Fragment is, or should be, a finished form: it is the content that is incomplete—or,

rather, that develops further with each reading.”⁸⁴ The interruptions create instability in the oneness of the piece, preventing it from being insulated, and open the possibility for wider interpretation. In literature, the Romantic Fragment took the form of maxims and poetry influencing writers like Schlegel, Goethe, and E.T.A. Hoffman, which likely influenced Schumann’s aesthetic style.

To integrate this Romantic Fragment with a late style reading, one can read these interruptions as the poet (or the composer) interjecting, creating dual layers of consciousness. The fragmented writing thus suggests late style retrospection, expressing tension between Schumann’s creativity and his rational mind. This juxtaposition reminds listeners of Eusebius and Florestan, but with late-style simultaneity.

Fragments do not only show up through the interjections; they can also be applied to the harmonic structure—in particular, the open-ended harmony of the movements, as discussed in the previous section of harmonic suspensions.

Musical Characteristic 9. Counterpoint as a Compositional Technique

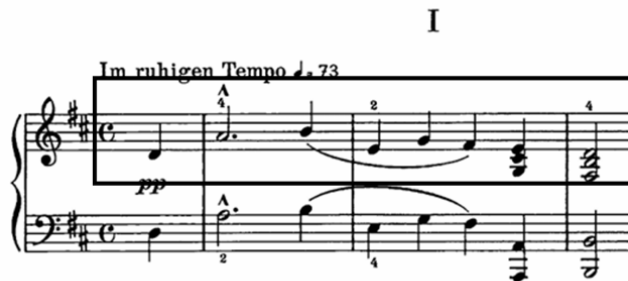
Schumann used a fugal writing technique throughout his compositional career. According to musicologist Yosef Goldenberg, who analyzed Schumann’s fugal writing in various instrumental and vocal compositions, Schumann’s fugato (or what is acknowledged as one) is typically discussed in terms of being *more fugato* or *less fugato*, as opposed to being complete, because it is “very brief and free.”⁸⁵ The fugato attributes in *Gesänge der Frühe*,

⁸⁴ Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 50.

⁸⁵ Yosef Goldenberg, “Tonality and Related Aspects in Schumann Fugues,” *Indiana Theory Review*, 28, no. ½ (2010): 17.

op. 133 are no exception to the above. The cycle contains a stretto of the theme at the end of the first movement. Yet, not all fugal components are included in the movement. The first movement's theme is shown below.

Example 4.16. Opening Theme, op. 133/1, mm. 1–3. Adapted from Schumann, *Complete Piano Works*, vol. 6, 146.



This opening motif, played in unison, is traditionally Schumann-esque: Ascending leap from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{5}$ scale degree, a fall from $\hat{6}$ to $\hat{2}$, and a simple melodic line that traces the notes of the diatonic scale using stepwise motion.

This simple opening is austere, a lateness attribute, and exposes all: the instrument, the pianist, and the tone. Schumann clearly intended a careful opening, as apparent in his markings. The marcato accent in m. 1, which may be considered “a slight prolongation in the time of the note,” is more introverted than a loud dynamic.⁸⁶

This motif of rising fifth occurs several times in this movement, making this slow and compact first movement into a fugato that culminates at the end with a stretto. The subject in D major (melodic skeleton is $\hat{1}-\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{2}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}$) appears in the submediant in mm. 10, and in the

⁸⁶ Hugo Riemann, preface to *Moments Musicaux Op. 94*, quoted in Brown, 227.

subdominant in mm. 19. In all three cases, the first note starts as an upbeat, then leaps by a fifth interval, which lands on the downbeat with the marcato accent (^), an audible marker.

The fugato technique, stretto, appears at the end in m. 33 where the two notes of the motif (1̂-5̂) and its inversions appear in a stretto form (shown in Ex. 4.17). Unlike every other instance of this motif's appearance, the stretto begins on the second and third beats. This clear change in the sense of meter affects the way the audience experiences the movement's pace—a sudden and unexpected increase in intensity.

Example 4.17. Stretto in the ending, op. 133/1, mm. 31–39. Adapted from Schumann, *Complete Piano Works*, vol. 6, 147.

The image displays a musical score for a piano piece, specifically the ending of Schumann's Op. 133/1, measures 31 through 39. The score is written for piano (p) and features a stretto section starting at measure 33. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The word "stretto" is written above the staff at measure 33. The score ends at measure 39 with a final chord marked "zurückhaltend" (retaining) and "pp" (pianissimo). The score is adapted from Schumann's *Complete Piano Works*, vol. 6, page 147.

Schumann marks each instance of the motif with two types of accents: up-bow marking (v) and marcato (^). Riemann, cited in Brown, describes the up-bow marking as an indication for the “note to be struck sharply.”⁸⁷ This ending, due to the stretto, has the fullest texture, and is hence most intense. But at the same time, the dynamic marking is at piano. The first

⁸⁷ Hugo Riemann, preface to *Moments Musicaux Op. 94*, quoted in Brown, 227.

movement mainly consists of a simple and estranged atmosphere, yet in its last six measures, this stretto disturbs the metric continuity with fragments.

Adding further to this curious shift of ambience, the last two measures quickly bring the stretto back to *pp* while slowing down—indicated by *zurückhaltend* (holding back), and even further with the two fermatas on the last note as well as the last rest. The ending retreats into silence, emphasizing its introspective character. The first of the five movements ends almost passively even though the cycle of dawn has just begun. This melodic theme from the first movement plays an important role as a bassline in the second movement.

The use of counterpoint, a Baroque compositional style within a Romantic style, may be discussed as an attribute of late style—as is often taught with Beethoven’s late works.

Gesänge der Frühe’s fugato in the first movement contains late nineteenth- and twentieth-century characteristics as well, like an added octave in the bass and lack of true polyphony.

Daverio notes that Schumann referred to Bach’s fugue as “character pieces,” and hence infers that Schumann had the same mindset toward his own fugal technique.⁸⁸ Thus, in performance, it is natural to implement rubato and ritardando following the aligned phrase structures, creating a sense of retrospection through the counterpoint.

⁸⁸ Goldenberg, 19.

Conclusion

But as the ray of the morning light ignited the life of the earth again, I looked upward and sought the dreams of the night. They had disappeared like the beautiful stars, and only the joy of melancholy bore witness to them in my soul.⁸⁹

Dawn is not simply a beginning. It also marks the disappearance of what came before. The “dreams of the night” disappear in the light, yet their traces remain as “joy of melancholy.” This simultaneity of renewal and loss frames a central question of *Gesänge der Frühe*.

Composed in October 1853, *Gesänge der Frühe* (*Songs of Dawn*) is enigmatic, distant, and compelling both in its title and biographical narratives surrounding its creation. What does “Dawn” symbolize, and why Diotima? Schumann described it as an emotional expression of the approach and growth of the morning,⁹⁰ yet the sense of ennui wraps the piece with mystery, especially when considered along with Schumann’s mental health. Through this research, I have come to see that answers to these questions have been rewritten many times, remain highly complex, and will continue to invite active interpretation.

The symbolism of dawn lies in the coexistence of ending and beginning. The meaning of this duality shifts depending on perspective and context. *Gesänge der Frühe* represents the start of Schumann’s new musical explorations, his further engagement with literary references, and a dialogue with musical history. Performers will quickly realize that the cycle is highly

⁸⁹ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Hyperion or The Hermit in Greece*, trans. by Ross Benjamin (Brooklyn: Archipelago Books, 2008), 94-95.

⁹⁰ Akademie der Künste, 51.

intricate, and even its melancholy is carefully constructed so as not to suggest a simple narrative of exhaustion.

If we must associate a sense of loss with the symbol, it might be the obscuration of innocence, though this depends on the performer's understanding of late style. As illustrated in Chapter 4, harmony evades resolution and clarity, interruptions are insistent, refrains restart without clear conclusions, and a subtle sense of emotional distance pervades the music; the piece is inviting, yet not friendly. It demands to be encountered as it is. In Chapter 1, we saw how social and cultural biases shape the historiography. This knowledge, too, represents a loss of innocence: an end to an unquestioning, biased lens and the beginning of our new musical agency.

The question of whether it is the end of night or the beginning of morning represents a perspective that imposes a judgement on Schumann's mental health. Once applied to the music, this perspective shapes how one interprets and reworks the piece, as demonstrated in Chapter 3. The examples by Brahms and Holliger show how they engaged with their filtered image of Schumann, based on their subjectivity and the information available to them at the time. As Tadday observes, "the kernel of Schumann's understanding of music [...] describes the production and reception of music as a cohesive process, and rejects the formalist view of a supposedly 'absolute music' as a delusion."⁹¹ Within this wide scope of open processes, everything—from biographies written after Schumann's death to 1980s revisionist criticism and performance practices—contributes to the 21st-century image of "Schumann" with which we work today.

⁹¹ Tadday, 45.

Lateness—a way of thinking about music through temporality—is the method through which we can connect with Schumann, his history, and his historiography, without resorting to a normal-versus-abnormal binary. Timeliness encompasses Schumann’s lived era, the timing of the composition within his biographical timeline, our individual musical sensibilities, our relationship to social and cultural parameters, and the limitations of the performer’s physical body. It is a style in which all these factors coexist “as they are.” Caught between completeness and incompleteness through self-criticism, yet continuing to pursue idealism, the essence of this cycle’s temporality emerges here.

Schumann’s inscription “An Diotima” points to an artistic tradition in which Diotima represents the elevation of beauty and love beyond the material, from Plato’s *Symposium* to Hölderlin’s *Hyperion*. In the *Symposium*, Diotima teaches a theory of love that culminates in the “Form of Beauty,”⁹² whereas in *Hyperion*, Diotima functions as a distant, departed beloved, present only through letters, and the narrative centers on the hermit protagonist’s self-critique and mediation of solitude. *Gesänge der Frühe*, with its tension and inwardness, can be understood as part of this pursuit: both composer and performer orient themselves toward ideals that cannot be fully attained, yet that give meaning to the music. In this way, the work links Schumann’s creative striving to the performer’s own experience of striving and legitimacy, suggesting that the desire for beauty and love transcends social and cultural boundaries.

⁹² Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff, introduction to *Symposium*, by Plato (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1989), xxv.

Assessing legitimacy—judging something’s relevance or timeliness—became an embodied experience during my DMA program, as I began to realize how deeply performance is shaped by cultural narratives of ability and authority. The distinction between Schumann’s earlier and late periods is tied to his biographical timeline, assuming there was a “prime.” For performers, however, a sense of untimeliness can be imposed by factors beyond one’s control—such as race, gender, or educational background—where there may be no “prime” at all.

“How shall we reconcile unity with diversity, permanence with transiency?”⁹³ Hölderlin’s Diotima advises to Hyperion to recognize change as the fundamental law of life: “the permanence of life and beauty in change, the necessity of change to their permanence.”⁹⁴ Applied to *Gesänge der Frühe*, unity is the work’s legacy, in its historical reception and in the biases it carries, and diversity is the evolving interpretations; permanence is found in the notes, and transiency in the various reinterpretations. Performing is a way of participating in this constant change. Through this research, I have come to understand that this sense of self-criticism may be inseparable from the pursuit of ideals and from Romantic-era aesthetics: a yearning for a distant beloved, where the beloved is not a person but a form of love and beauty. Such longing is the common thread, transcending musical hierarchies and socially defined identities. It is this shared striving, sustained through change, that allows *Gesänge der Frühe* to be continually renewed.

⁹³ Walter Silz, *Hölderlin’s Hyperion; a Critical Reading* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), 55-56.

⁹⁴ Silz, 55-56.

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Appendix

A. Recording Analysis, Comparison of Movement Durations

Movements	Demus (2007)	Martin (1992)
I	2:35	4:25
II	2:00	3:00
III	2:20	2:20
IV	2:20	2:35
V	2:56	3:46

B. Recording Analysis, Comparison of Approximate Tempi

Movements	Tempo marking (Henle, 2009)	Demus (2007)	Martin (1992)
I	$\text{♩} = 73$	$\text{♩} \approx 72$	$\text{♩} \approx 40$
II	$\text{♩} = 190$	$\text{♩} \approx 96$	$\text{♩} \approx 45$
III	$\text{♩.} = 93$	$\text{♩.} \approx 96$	$\text{♩.} \approx 78$
IV	$\text{♩} = 72$	$\text{♩} \approx 102$	$\text{♩} \approx 90$
V	$\text{♩} = 68$	$\text{♩} \approx 53\text{--}76$	$\text{♩} \approx 40\text{--}48$