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**Analysis of Robert Schumann’s “Fantasy Pieces for Clarinet and Piano”, opus 73,
for a Greater Understanding of a Standard in Western Classical Solo Repertory**

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors Studies
in Music

By

Kaleigh Alwood

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Music

J. William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences

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Introduction

In February of 1849, over the span of merely two days, Robert Schumann composed “Fantasy Pieces for Clarinet and Piano”, Op. 73, a duet which would later become a lasting symbol of romanticism in chamber music. The work has become not only a standard in clarinet studios, but also a frequently discussed piece in the fields of musicology and music theory. It has also been arranged, by Schumann himself and others, for a broad array of other solo instruments including cello, alto saxophone, french horn, euphonium, violin, and more, and it has become a standard in those studios as well. Performance is a key method through which one can join a musical conversation about a specific work. By preparing a clearly defined interpretation of a work, the performer can contribute something new to the conversation. In this paper, I will explore the notable features in Robert Schumann’s “Fantasy Pieces for Clarinet and Piano”, Op. 73, to demonstrate how historical and theoretical knowledge of a musical work can inform performance decisions and academic conversations regarding a work.

I will begin by exploring Schumann’s life and work history, and thus put the piece into context. Then, I will discuss the findings of my harmonic analysis and its interaction with the form, particularly at significant moments. It is important to note that harmony is not the only lens through which a musical work can be examined. The decision to primarily focus on harmonic analysis stems from the early findings in analysis focusing on harmony, form, and rhythm and meter, which found that the harmony, and at times the harmony’s relationship with form, contained the most unexpected features, thus indicating that the harmony is what truly makes this piece unique. Therefore, my analysis primarily focuses on harmony. Finally, I will discuss how this information

impacted decisions within my own performance of the work and how it relates to a modern academic understanding of the work and its place in the repertoire. I will thus demonstrate that the result of such detailed and multi-faceted examination is a well-informed interpretation that can be readily communicated in performance, conversation, academic writing, and education.

Biography

Robert Schumann was born in 1810 as the youngest child in a family that highly valued knowledge and literacy. Growing up in a wealthy family in Germany, Schumann's childhood consisted of studying literature and the piano in school, as was standard practice at the time. Upon reaching maturity, Schumann attended the University of Leipzig as a law student, but later found that music was to be his true calling. He left law school to hone his musical talents, and quickly began to feel pressure to perform exceptionally well. During this time, he injured his hand, likely with a then-popular finger strengthening and stretching device, which left him unable to play as a concert pianist. To save his music career, he turned his talent and focus to composition. His upbringing, his love of music, and his injury would come to impact his relationships, his career, and each piece of music he composed.¹

Schumann went on to transcribe, arrange, and compose numerous works while also writing and editing for one of the first journals of music criticism known as *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. He fell in love with Clara Wieck, the daughter of his music

¹ John Daverio and Eric Sams, "Schumann, Robert," *Grove Music Online*, (2001), <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.40704>.

teacher and colleague Friedrich Wieck.² After a now infamous battle with her father for her hand in marriage — which consisted of the couple writing letters behind his back, sneaking moments to see each other, and many attempts at persuasion Robert Schumann and Clara Wieck married in 1840. Clara Wieck Schumann was a renowned composer and concert pianist, everything that Robert Schumann himself had aspired to be at the beginning of his career. Schumann continued to compose and frequently experimented with new genres and styles of composition. Many of his works included a piano part for Clara Wieck Schumann, if they were not written solely for piano to begin with. However, his work ebbed and flowed with his mental illness, something he frequently battled during his lifetime. He commonly struggled with bouts of depression that were later interrupted by periods of extreme productivity. In 1844, the Schumann family settled in Dresden. There, Schumann came to find peace and enjoyed what he considered to be one of the happiest times of his life.³

1849 marked what Schumann considered one of the most productive years of his career. He hit his stride and began consistently and quickly producing musical works that he found to be of high quality. This was a time of growth, of discovery, of constant evolution, and of unending motion for Schumann. It is during this year that he composed “Fantasy Pieces for Clarinet and Piano”, Op. 73. In February, he composed all three movements under the original title *Soireestücke*, or “Evening Party Pieces”. He invited clarinetist Johann Gottlieb Kotte to his home to rehearse and likely aid in revisions of the

² Schumann and Wieck were colleagues on the board of *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. Daverio and Sams, “Schumann, Robert,” *Grove Music Online*, (2001), <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.40704>.

³ Daverio and Sams, “Schumann, Robert,” *Grove Music Online*, (2001), <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.40704>.

clarinet part.⁴ After this meeting, he renamed the piece *Drei Fantasiestücke*, often referred to in English as “Fantasy Pieces” and sent the work to be published. The original title, which specifies a genre and audience, implies an intimate and enjoyable atmosphere. This specificity was replaced by a title that leaves much up to the nearly limitless possibility of the imagination and provides the setting for a more abstract interpretation of the work.

Growth and Discovery

In analyzing the work, a common thread of nearly limitless growth, discovery, continuousness, and motion quickly became apparent; this romantic concept greatly parallels Schumann’s belief that the period in which he wrote the piece was the best in his career. This continuous movement is supported by harmonies that move through multiple tonicizations without cadencing in a new key, even in places where a cadence would be highly expected.

Movement One

The work opens in A minor on a tonic chord (see Example 1).⁵ At first glance, the melody and harmony progress through what appears to be a period. Upon closer

⁴ Benjamin Reissenberger and Eric Hoeprich. “Deconstructing Robert Schumanns ‘Fantasiestücke’, Op.73.” *Early Music* 42, no. 3 (2014): 452.

⁵ Analytical notes by Kaleigh Alwood on a copy of the G. Henle Verlag urtext. Robert Schumann, *Fantasiestücke Opus 73 für Klavier und Klarinette*, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2005), 2.

examination, however, it becomes evident that the work does not maintain the structure

Example 1: Schumann's "Fantasy Pieces", Movement One, mm. 1-12

The image shows a musical score for Schumann's "Fantasy Pieces", Movement One, measures 1-12. The score is for Clarinet in A and Piano. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The tempo is marked "Zart und mit Ausdruck" with a quarter note equal to 80. The score includes handwritten annotations for harmonic analysis, such as Roman numerals (Am, i, ii⁶, V⁷, iv, VI, ii⁶, d: ii⁷, F: vi⁵, b⁶, J⁷, V⁶, Add 9, I, V⁶, V⁵) and dynamic markings (p, fp, pp). The score is divided into three systems, each with a treble and bass staff for the piano and a single staff for the clarinet.

of a period. A key feature of a period is that there are two cadences of unequal strength, with the second cadence being stronger than the first. This period-like structure defies this because both cadences are of equal strength; they are both imperfect authentic cadences. What would be the antecedent ends with a motion from the dominant seventh chord to a tonic chord in the original key, creating the first imperfect authentic cadence. The consequent that follows defies expectations by tonicizing D minor and then ending with what could be seen as both an imperfect authentic cadence in D minor and a pivot to tonicizing F major through a common chord, beginning the tonicization of F on the

submediant chord or triad. This defiance of expectations is subtle, thanks to the use of common chords and stepwise motion when changing what note is being tonicized, but it results in an underlying drive forward to new and unexpected places.

The transition from the A section to the B section in this movement is ambiguous. Typically, the transition to the B section would consist of modulation marked by a cadence in a new key. This does not happen. Instead, there is a half cadence in the

Example 2: Schumann's "Fantasy Pieces", Movement One, mm. 17-24

opening key in m. 19 (see Example 2).⁶ Following this, mm. 19 – 20 provides a quick transition into the new key. In m. 20, there is notable cadential motion in the key of C major that resolves on the downbeat of m. 21, signifying the end of the A section. However, this cadence is weakened by the sudden absence of the clarinet. As the B section continues, with multiple instances of the tonicization of other chords, the lack of

⁶ Analytical notes by Kaleigh Alwood on a copy of the G. Henle Verlag urtext. Schumann, *Fantasiestücke Opus 73 für Klavier und Klarinette*, 3.

clear tonality becomes apparent. In fact, the B section does not reach a clear cadence in any key until m. 37, where a tonicized half cadence marks the end of the B section and the beginning of A' (see Example 3).⁷ Now the opening melody is harmonized by a dominant chord instead of the tonic chord found in m. 1. The constant motion through different points of tonicization in the B section of this movement are another example of how Schumann utilizes unclear harmony that results in a state of constant growth.

Example 3: Schumann's "Fantasy Pieces", Movement One, mm. 33-40

The image shows a musical score for Schumann's "Fantasy Pieces", Movement One, measures 33-40. The score is in 3/4 time and features a piano accompaniment with a constant eighth-note motion in the left hand. The right hand has a melodic line with various dynamics and articulations. Handwritten annotations include "F: I" at the start, "A: vii°6/V iv i° V7/V" below the first system, and "A: V (THC) ii°6 3/4 iv V7 iv" below the second system. A box labeled "A'" is placed above the second system. Dynamics include "cresc.", "f", "pp", "fp", and "f".

⁷ Analytical notes by Kaleigh Alwood on a copy of the G. Henle Verlag urtext. Schumann, *Fantasiestücke Opus 73 für Klavier und Klarinette*, 3-4.

At the conclusion of the first movement's ternary form, Schumann writes an unlabeled Coda beginning in m. 57 (see Example 4a).⁸ The piece could have ended at m.

Example 4a: Schumann's "Fantasy Pieces", Movement One, mm. 53-64

The image shows a musical score for Schumann's "Fantasy Pieces", Movement One, measures 53-64. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a piano part with complex rhythmic patterns and a vocal line. Handwritten annotations include chord symbols (A: i, VI, ii°6, V4, A: I, D: V7, ii°4/3, V7, VVI, V7/IV, V7, i, A: I+6, iv, iv, V6/5) and performance directions like "Neighbor", "pp", and "sf". A box labeled "Coda" is placed above measure 57.

57, but Schumann utilizes the Coda to delay that ending. The chordal structure of the Coda itself furthers the continuousness that has dominated the piece thus far. It follows a

⁸ Analytical notes by Kaleigh Alwood on a copy of the G. Henle Verlag urtext. Schumann, *Fantasiestücke Opus 73 für Klavier und Klarinette*, 5.

structural dominant chord first with cadential $\frac{6}{4}$ motion, then with m. 57 acting as the arrival of the tonic in the key of A, but the chord morphs into an applied chord with the addition of the seventh, making m. 57 simultaneously a place of ending and of beginning. The piece continues even further with that motion overtaking the tonic chord and indicating that Schumann still has more to say. The Coda features a brief tonicization of D before modulating back to A with an Italian augmented sixth chord (see Example 4b).⁹

Example 4b: Schumann's "Fantasy Pieces", Movement One, mm. 57-69

The image shows a musical score for Schumann's "Fantasy Pieces", Movement One, measures 57-69. The score is in A major and 4/4 time. It consists of three systems of music. The first system (mm. 57-60) is marked "Coda" and "pp". The second system (mm. 61-64) is marked "f" and "sf". The third system (mm. 65-69) is marked "p" and "dim". Handwritten annotations in red ink provide harmonic analysis: A: I, d: V7, ii04, V7, VII, V7/IV, V7, i, A: P4, A: I+6, Passing Chord, iv, iV, V6/5, A: I, and PAC. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

⁹ Analytical notes by Kaleigh Alwood on a copy of the G. Henle Verlag urtext. Schumann, *Fantasiestücke Opus 73 für Klavier und Klarinette*, 5.

This clear and repeated defiance of a potential ending is yet another example of seemingly unending growth before a final rush to a Picardy third that is also a strong and metrically highlighted perfect authentic cadence.

Movement Two

The second movement, in A major, would typically begin on a tonic chord. However, this movement begins on a dominant seventh chord, defying expectations from the very beginning (see Example 5).¹⁰ The delay of the tonic sets the tone for the entire

Example 5: Schumann's "Fantasy Pieces", Movement Two, mm. 1-6

movement by subverting expectations. In fact, the beginning of the movement delays the presentation of the tonic even further by following the dominant seventh chord with a secondary leading tone chord that tonicizes the dominant. When the tonic chord appears after this on the third beat of m. 2 as the clarinet enters, the harmonic meter continues the drive forward to a leading tone chord, and then a secondary leading tone tonicizing the major mediant. As the beginning of the work continues, the mediant is heavily featured

¹⁰ Analytical notes by Kaleigh Alwood on a copy of the G. Henle Verlag urtext. Schumann, *Fantasiestücke Opus 73 für Klavier und Klarinette*, 6.

and emphasized with repeated tonicization. As such, although it is clear that the work is in the key of A major, the beginning is destabilized ever so slightly by a general lack of the tonic, which enables the sense of continuousness and discovery. A stable cadence in the tonic key is finally reached in m. 18. This delay is at odds with the expectations of the time to establish the tonic at the opening (see Example 6a).¹¹ The presence of the

Example 6a: Schumann's "Fantasy Pieces", Movement Two, mm. 14-19

tonic does not last long, but rather is interrupted by the beginning of the B section in m.

Example 6b: Schumann's "Fantasy Pieces", Movement Two, mm. 27-30

¹¹ Analytical notes by Kaleigh Alwood on a copy of the G. Henle Verlag urtext. Schumann, *Fantasiestücke Opus 73 für Klavier und Klarinette*, 6-7.

27, which begins surprisingly in F major (see Example 6b).¹² This sudden key change is yet another example of growth and discovery.

Movement Three

In the third movement, the use of non-chord tones and ever-evolving tonicizations results in further instability of the key, even when it is expected that the tonic would be

Example 7a: Schumann's "Fantasy Pieces", Movement Three, mm. 1-13

A: I IV * 3 4 * 5 7 #5 V

A: I IV #5 V 3/V * 4/V #5 V

B: V7 #5 V/vi v: V⁶/₅ i :: 00

¹² Analytical notes by Kaleigh Alwood on a copy of the G. Henle Verlag urtext. Schumann, *Fantasiestücke Opus 73 für Klavier und Klarinette*, 7.

established. The third movement opens on a tonic chord in A major, but this tonality is quickly destabilized by the introduction of the sharp fifth to what would otherwise be dominant seventh chords (see Example 7a).¹³ From here, the key is further destabilized by multiple tonicizations in succession. The keys of E, D, and F# are all tonicized in the span of a handful of measures. However, there is not a cadence in any of these keys before the return to A major in m. 15 (see Example 7b).¹⁴ This is yet another case where the movement progresses through key areas without cadencing. Tonal ambiguity that the progressions create are a source of the music's constant growth and exploration. The

Example 7b: Schumann's "Fantasy Pieces", Movement Three, mm. 14-22

The image shows a musical score for Schumann's "Fantasy Pieces", Movement Three, measures 14-22. The score is in A major and features complex harmonic progressions and chromaticism. It includes handwritten analytical notes and performance instructions.

Handwritten notes below the score:

- *1) Besser ohne Legatologen? Siehe Bemerkungen.
- *1) Preferable without slur? See Comments.
- *1) Éventuellement préférable sans liaison de legato? Cf. Remarques ou Comments.

Handwritten chord symbols below the score:

A: $V^{7/IV}$ IV V^{7-4-3}

F#: V $V^{7/VI}$ VI

Handwritten chord symbols below the score (measures 15-22):

A: IV^{4-3} ii V^7 I^6 $vii^{04/ii}$ ii^6 7

¹³ Analytical notes by Kaleigh Alwood on a copy of the G. Henle Verlag urtext. Schumann, *Fantasiestücke Opus 73 für Klavier und Klarinette*, 10.

¹⁴ Analytical notes by Kaleigh Alwood on a copy of the G. Henle Verlag urtext. Schumann, *Fantasiestücke Opus 73 für Klavier und Klarinette*, 10.

tonicization of different areas is not jarring due to use of pivot chords and common tone chords, thus simply bringing the listener to new and exciting places.

Even at the very end, Schumann continued the piece where he could have finished it through an extended Coda. The end of the work features a strong cadence followed by several measures of prolonged tonic. After such a journey through different tonalities and key areas via tonicization and modulation, and after many weak cadences, the final cadence must be strong for the audience to truly understand the ending as the end. A powerful cadence is prepared in m. 88 with a German augmented sixth chord that moves to a two-measure long dominant chord (see Example 8).¹⁵ As the cadential chord finally

Example 8: Schumann's "Fantasy Pieces", Movement Three, mm. 88-98

The image shows a page of musical notation for Schumann's "Fantasy Pieces", Movement Three, measures 88-98. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a piano accompaniment with a treble and bass clef. The tempo is marked "Schneller". The score includes handwritten annotations for harmonic analysis, such as "A: V/V 4-3", "Ger +6", "CT 07", and "I App. I". A note "Tonic Prolongation" is written in the left margin. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat signs.

¹⁵ Analytical notes by Kaleigh Alwood on a copy of the G. Henle Verlag urtext. Schumann, *Fantasiestücke Opus 73 für Klavier und Klarinette*, 15.

resolves to the tonic, the marking “Schneller” indicates the beginning of a fast and final Coda. Here, the tonic is prolonged through the entire Coda until ending with powerful tonic block chords in the piano and clarinet. The appearance of this Coda continues the surge forward one final time, indicating that even in the ending of the work, there is still positive and continuous growth.

The Entire Work

Throughout the entire work, near constant tonicization is utilized, with very little time to rest within any specific key. In fact, over half of the twelve potential pitch classes are tonicized at some point. Common tone chords, pivot chords, secondary chords, and augmented sixth chords are utilized to move through so many tonalities in a way that is not startling, but rather hides beneath the surface, unidentifiable to the listener, but ever present. This creates a powerful harmonic drive forward to new and exciting places, and thus strongly demonstrates constant growth and discovery.

Performance Decisions

Awareness of that driving force of perpetual growth allows me as the performer to better understand the mood and extramusical themes of the work. This, in turn, influences the way that I interpret style and phrase markings (or lack thereof). I translate this interpretation to the decisions that I make regarding where I breathe, how I shape phrases, how I emphasize or deemphasize certain moments with articulations and dynamics, how I utilize dynamics and dynamic contrasts, what I do with repeated phrases, and how I utilize rubato. In forming this greater understanding of the work, I can make specific decisions that allow me to perform the work with precision while also providing a truly expressive and musical experience. For example, I chose to play the

first movement at a slightly faster tempo than is marked on the urtext because I believe that the increased tempo supports and strengthens that feeling of continuousness throughout the work, which in turn helps to make the audience more aware of that sensation without any prior discussion regarding how to listen to the piece or what to listen for. Within the first movement, my awareness of the function of the two-bar transition in the first movement between the A and B sections informs my decision to emphasize this moment by utilizing rubato to slightly increase the tempo during this section, driving the music even further forward.

With the same analytical evidence, another performer could choose different methods to emphasize the same features. While I may choose to utilize rubato in the aforementioned method during the two-bar transition from the A section to the B section of the first movement, another performer may choose to emphasize that transition and the sense of continuousness it provides by methodically slowing the material just before the transition or by performing a crescendo throughout those measures. Regardless of how the performer chooses to emphasize or deemphasize certain moments within the music, it is vital that a performer holds well-founded beliefs in how the music should be performed and why it should be performed that way. Holding such convictions always allows for a more complete, certain, and clear performance of a work because they inform consistent decisions on the part of the performer. The same is true of academic discussions of the work or the composer.

Conclusion

By analyzing Schumann's "Fantasy Pieces for Clarinet and Piano", Op. 73, I have been able to glean a fuller and personal understanding of the complexities of the work.

Such an understanding has informed the musical decisions that I make in my performance of the work. Beyond my performance here, knowledge of these notable features of the work can inform my future teaching. For future educational and academic discussions, this piece is a prime example of how different methods of tonicization can be used to discreetly create a constant drive forward to new and exciting places. It can also be used to demonstrate how slight variation in expectations regarding form can create such a drive.

This analysis is an example of an in-depth undertaking that not all performers and educators participate in. However, an analysis such as this is an excellent way to become intimately aware of the piece with which one is working, and thus it is a wonderful method by which an individual performer and/or an educator involved in the preparation of the performance can ensure that informed, thoughtful, and grounded decisions are being made regarding the way in which the piece is rehearsed and performed.

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