

INTRODUCTION

0.1 Listening to Schumann, playing Schumann

The front cover of Richard Leppert's *The Sight of Sound* confronts the reader with a well-known portrayal of musical reception by the symbolist painter Fernand Khnopff (**example 0.1**).¹ At the center sits a woman (the painter's own mother) amid a plush interior of deep, warm hues and golden tones. Her black dress looks lugubrious and not only by virtue of its color: superimposed on the fireplace, the hearth, the dress blends into a cavity, an abyss, where no fire presently burns. On the left is a section of an upright piano with a hand playing the upper register of the keyboard. The colors here rhyme with the vacant fireplace and the woman's dress. The player's forearm is likewise draped in black, blending with the casket-like instrument and lending the hand a phantasmagoric, even morbid, aspect, as if it were floating unattached to a limb.

For Leppert, these details express a bourgeois ideology that glorified music as metaphysical sound and denied the corporeal exertion and pleasure attending musical experience. "The performer is made sufficiently present only to remind us of his absence, the irrelevancy of his identity," he writes, "the listener in the painting herself refuses to acknowledge music's embodiment, preferring a meditative fantasy of music's

¹ Richard Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

transcendent, utopian promise.”² In his view, the woman’s covered gaze is a dramatic repudiation of seeing or being seen during the performance. “The body of the listener is immobilized and functionally reduced to the singular organ of the ears. The vitality of music as an enlivener of the body is surrendered to an act of meditation.”³

For me, the pianist creeping in from outside the frame recalls Robert Schumann’s invitations to play *wie aus der Ferne* in his compositions; in turn, the listener’s pose is redolent of the *innere Stimme*, a Schumannesque quirk that plays a central role in this dissertation. The illusion of distance in the former and the interiorized music in the latter are two traits that have rendered this composer’s persona susceptible to becoming aligned with the idealist aesthetic Leppert critiques. While the two expressive markings approach from opposite directions (from afar and within), both thematize the faculty of listening by hinting towards barely audible or inaudible sounds which are not “given” but available to someone with an especially attuned aural imagination.

Leppert goes on to contrast the reception history captured here with that of Roland Barthes’s. In a short essay titled “Loving Schumann,” Barthes remarks that “Schumann lets his music be fully heard only by someone who plays it, even badly. I have always been struck by this paradox: that a certain piece of Schumann’s delighted me when I played it (approximately), and rather disappointed me when I heard it on records:

² Leppert, 232.

³ Ibid. Leppert almost sets ear and body in opposition to each other here, a move with a long history. For context on this opposition and how the ear became associated with the soul and interiority, see Holly Watkins, “From the Mine to the Shrine: The Critical Origins of Musical Depth,” *Metaphors of Depth in German Musical Thought: From E. T. A. Hofmann to Arnold Schoenberg* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 22-50.

then it seemed mysteriously impoverished, incomplete.”⁴ Performance here is the privileged mode to access Schumann’s piano music, not the unfortunate but necessary condition for listening that Leppert believes to be for the woman in the painting.

Barthes reiterated his intuition elsewhere. Even when he adopts a listening standpoint, corporeality takes center stage, as when he says about *Kreisleriana*, Op. 16, in another essay titled “Rasch”:

[W]hat I hear are blows: I hear what beats in the body, what beats the body, or better: I hear this body that beats. Here is how I hear Schumann’s body (indeed, he had a body, and what a body! His body was *what he had most of all*):

in the first variation, it curls up into a ball, then it weaves,
in the second, it stretches out; and then it wakes up: it pricks, it knocks, it glows,
in the third, it rises, it extends: *aufgeregt*,
in the fourth, it speaks, it declares: someone declares himself,
in the fifth, it showers, it comes undone, it shudders, it rises: running, singing, beating,
in the sixth, it speaks, it spells out, what is spoken intensifies until it is sung,
in the seventh, it strikes, it beats,
in the eighth, it dances but also it begins snarling all over again, beating...⁵

As others have noted, Barthes’s writing is striking for its erotic undertones and the slippage between Schumann’s body and the music’s.⁶ Compared to the stillness of

⁴ Roland Barthes, “Loving Schumann,” in *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), 294-95.

⁵ Barthes, “Rasch,” in *The Responsibility of Forms*, 299-300 (emphasis original).

Khnopff's mother, the figure described here indulges in mercurial and exaggerated gestures, much like the fictitious character created by E. T. A. Hoffmann that gave this composition its name. Most of the deeds he lists are physical actions, while only two of them (numbers four and six) could signal cognitive or propositional content. Like the literary Kapellmeister Kreisler's gestures and ramblings, the verbs that *Kreisleriana* calls up for Barthes seem directed not at his fellow human beings but rather at the ether: one hardly knows whether this "body" is trying to communicate at all. Indeed, his broad argument is that Schumann's music resists semiotic treatment; it is not a language that expresses and beckons for interpretation.⁷

A consequence of this emphasis on the body is that it spotlights immediate and first-hand experience. Thus a further contrast to draw from the painting (or at least Leppert's interpretation thereof) is that in place of an invisible or absent performer, Barthes concretizes this figure as much as possible: "Schumann's music goes much farther than the ear; it goes into the body, into the muscles by the beats of its rhythm, and somehow into the viscera by the voluptuous pleasure of its *melos*: as if on each occasion the piece was written only for one person, the one who plays it; the true Schumannian

⁶ See Stephen Rodgers, "'This Body That Beats': Roland Barthes and Robert Schumann's *Kreisleriana*," *Indiana Theory Review* 18, no. 2 (1997): 75-91. This article tries to secure more analytical precision for Barthes's evocative descriptions of the various movements.

⁷ This argument recalls the "incomprehensibility topos" that John Daverio traces in Schumann's reception among his contemporaries. Daverio views the source of the issue as having to do with the fleeting and fragmentary forms of so much of his piano output, which resist traditional notions of coherence and intelligibility. See his "Schumann's Systems of Musical Fragments and *Witz*," in *Nineteenth-Century Music and the German Romantic Ideology* (New York: Schirmer, 1993); and his seminal biography, *Robert Schumann: Herald of a "New Poetic Age"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), *passim*.

pianist—*c'est moi*.”⁸ What perspective could be more particular, more subjective, than one's own?

For Leppert, Barthes's gain is Khnopff's loss. Yet there emerges a common denominator between Khnopff and Barthes which Leppert does not remark on: both of them portray solitary musical experiences and ascribe an antisocial disposition to Schumann's music. Engaging with it unleashes a centripetal force whereby listeners and performers cave into their own selves. According to Leppert, in Khnopff's painting, “Schumann is thus disembodied, or almost so, and music itself is desocialized—sociability fails when backs are turned.”⁹ Then, to underscore Barthes's sensuality, Leppert picks the following quote, but he does not see the figurative turned back implied therein: “Loving Schumann... inevitably leads the subject who does so and says so to posit himself in his time according to the injunctions of his desire and not according to those of his sociality.”¹⁰

To be sure, what counts as social or antisocial varies with the context. Aware of the painting's late nineteenth-century setting, Leppert notes that the space conjured up in it is private, bourgeois, but socially conforming. The desocialization pertains specifically to the notion that music is a vehicle for transcendent contemplation. Meanwhile, Barthes's late twentieth-century image of Schumann and the Schumann lover is that of a transgressive or marginalized figure who cannot conform to the strictures of society. His

⁸ Barthes, “Loving Schumann,” *The Responsibility of Forms*, 295.

⁹ Leppert, 230.

¹⁰ Barthes, “Loving Schumann,” as quoted in Leppert, 233.

antisocial stance is countercultural. Nevertheless, later on in the essay from which Leppert quotes, Barthes makes a statement that could serve as a fitting caption for the painting: “Schumann is truly the musician of solitary intimacy, of the amorous and imprisoned soul that *speaks to itself*.”¹¹ This statement has found ample resonance in later Schumann research and been cited in support of just the ideology Leppert critiques via Barthes.¹²

I have reconstructed Leppert’s interlocutors at some length because they help delineate this project’s conceptual boundaries. At a general level, I reconcile the solitary, antisocial, and anti-communicative qualities that have been evoked by and projected onto the composer and his music with his well-documented impulse to connect and communicate with others through evocative titles, quotations, and other means of reference. (More personally, we know from his correspondence with Clara Wieck Schumann that he at times longed for affirmation of his works’ communicative intentions, notwithstanding their often mysterious and esoteric character.) This tension has been broached by scholars. What is distinctive here is that I tease out the mechanics

¹¹ Barthes, “Loving Schumann,” *The Responsibility of Forms*, 293 (emphasis original).

¹² Two recent writings about the piano music by Watkins and Alexander Stefaniak quote it to represent two related sides of the composer’s profile: his anti-virtuosity stance and reputation for depth, respectively. See Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth*, 86; and Stefaniak, *Schumann’s Virtuosity: Criticism, Composition, and Performance in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 6.

of performance whereby certain musical experiences can simultaneously bring about solitary introspection and interpersonal communion.¹³

On another level, I endeavor to bridge between the two contrasting snapshots of Schumann reception summoned by Leppert. What interests me are the manifold possibilities for social interaction that arise in the grey area between Barthes's corporeality and Khnopff's aurality, between the former's solipsistic and the latter's anonymous performer. Taking Schumann and his immediate circle as my focus, I argue that they communicated through music, often with specific persons in mind, in ways that are contingent upon neither the metaphysical nor the purely physical but a complex coordination between the two realms. The relation between embodiment and disembodiment is hence not one of either/or, a dichotomy sometimes invoked by musicological discourse for rhetorical purposes, but one of both/and.¹⁴ As we will see, the dichotomy does not correspond accurately to the phenomenology of playing or hearing the piano in the nineteenth century.

¹³ David Ferris articulates this tension in terms of private and public domains, or *Kenner* and *Publikum*. See his "Public Performance and Private Understanding: Clara Wieck's Concerts in Berlin," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 56, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 351-408; and "Was will dieses Grau'n bedeuten?" Schumann's 'Zwielicht' and Daverio's 'Incomprehensibility Topos,'" *Journal of Musicology* 22, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 131-53. Following Daverio, he enlists Friedrich Schlegel's theory of the fragment to explain the more esoteric aspects of Schumann's compositions, which (in his mind) pertain to their form. My concern is wholly within the private domain and performance parameters rather than questions of form.

¹⁴ An especially totalizing example appears in Susan McClary, "This Is Not a Story My People Tell: Musical Time and Space According to Laurie Anderson," *Discourse* 12, no. 1 (Fall-Winter 1989-90): "Western culture—with its puritanical, idealist suspicion of the body—has tried throughout much of its history to mask the fact that actual people usually produce the sounds that make music. As far back as Plato, music's mysterious ability to inspire bodily motion has aroused consternation, and a very strong tradition of Western musical thought has been devoted to defining music as the sound itself, to erasing the physicality involved in both the making and the reception of music" (108-09). She qualifies this statement somewhat in a footnote.

0.2 The piano as ideal instrument

The solo piano medium presents an especially fruitful site of investigation into the various communicative means exercised by Schumann's circle. This is not least because the dissertation's protagonists were highly proficient pianists, but it also owes to the affordances and limitations that were associated with the instrument during much of the nineteenth century. In his tome on the life and works of Beethoven, A. B. Marx wrote:

Other instruments give what they can completely and are, precisely in their one-sidedness, perfectly complete beings whose deliveries we receive without desiring anything else. The piano, by contrast, can never completely sustain its sound, although that is what it wants to do and, in a general sense, ought to do; its tones lack sustain and willing life, its melodies cohesion and meltingness. Hereby it awakens the imagination, however. It prompts mental fulfillment and completion and points to the realm of the ideal. The piano, which gives nothing but material sound, or the listener, who does not get beyond that material sound, are both as far removed from the true life of art as prose is from poetry.

Therefore, the *piano* is also *the ideal instrument*.¹⁵

¹⁵ Translated by Hamish Robb in "Imagined, Supplemental Sound in Nineteenth-Century Piano Music: Towards a Fuller Understanding of Musical Embodiment," *Music Theory Online* 21, no. 3 (September 2015). Original German in A. B. Marx, *Ludwig van Beethoven: Leben und Schaffen* (Berlin: Otto Janke, 1859), 1:119 (emphases original):

Diese geben, was sie können, vollständig her und sind eben in ihrer Einseitigkeit vollkommen abgeschlossene fertige Wesen, deren Ansprache wir aufnehmen, ohne noch etwas zu begehren. Das Klavier dagegen kann, was es eigentlich will, und nach dem allgemeinen Musiksinn sollte, nie vollständig austönen; seinen Tönen fehlt Dauer und quellendes Leben, seinen Melodien Zusammenhalt und Schmelz. Hiermit aber weckt es die Fantasie, regt zur geistigen Erfüllung und Ergänzung an und weiset in das Reich des Ideals. Das Klavier, das nichts als das materiell Hörbare giebt, oder der Hörer, der darüber nicht hinauskommt, sie sind beide von diesem eigentlichen Leben in der Kunst so weit entfernt, wie Prosa von Poesie.

Deshalb ist das *Klavier* auch *das ideale Instrument*.

This bit of generalization is embedded within Marx's discussion of Beethoven's chamber music with winds. There is an ambiguity regarding whether "der Hörer" refers to every listener (as "das Klavier" presumably refers to every piano) or some "poetic" listeners can "get beyond that material sound." My

Marx echoes the familiar binaries of the material and the ideal, the embodied and the disembodied, further characterized here as prose versus poetry. The pendulum swings toward the latter element in each as his description of the piano invokes the idealism that Leppert saw captured by Khnopff's painting. (This idealism becomes more acute in a hagiography of Beethoven, a composer whose deafness isolated him from the rest of the world and led him to musical aspirations that transcend material concerns—or so the myth goes.)

The binary with which Marx characterizes the piano—it “gives nothing but material sound,” yet it is also “the ideal instrument”—helps illuminate an intrinsic paradox, a paradox that is central to the techniques I explore. On the one hand, the nineteenth-century piano became capable of projecting a broad textural and dynamic range that rivaled the organ, encompassing from the most solitary to the most public, the softest and thinnest to the loudest and thickest of sounds. Significantly, its range could be amplified still more with the presence of multiple players at the keyboard. It was thus an ideal domestic vehicle for approximating orchestral and chamber forces. Yet at the same time, the piano left much to be desired. Its very ability to render the repertoire of other instruments and performance forces escalated the demand that it approximate those instruments and performance forces. In particular, the piano must operate on the familiar

point here is simply that the piano was singled out in the nineteenth century for requiring a marked degree of aural gymnastics. For an extensive contemporary rumination on this and related properties of the instrument, see Adolph Kullak, *The Aesthetics of Pianoforte-Playing* (1861), especially 2-7 in the 1893 edition translated by Theodore Baker.

conceit that “it can never completely sustain its sound.” Connections between tones—and by extension, musical events—are therefore as much inferred as they are materially projected. It could be said that the instrument’s development toward greater projection across the century aimed in part to bridge over this gap that is its inherent premise.¹⁶

Nestled within this paradox lies the dissertation’s field of inquiry. Given that making connections between musical events relies in equal measure on pianists and listeners to imaginatively “fill in” the gap, I argue that Schumann, and later Brahms, at times deliberately exploited this need for co-creative inference to serve communicative ends. Put provocatively, I claim that there are moments in their solo piano music which appear to summon the presence of a co-performer. Such moments simulate for the soloist notions, memories, and actual acts of collaborative music making that can unleash highly charged private experiences when viewed in light of surrounding biographical and other circumstantial evidence. In this dissertation, I hone in on two techniques: the *innere Stimme* and what I call “four-handedness.” The former draws on internal vocalization and comes into play in elusive melodic entities. The latter refers to the importation of textures and gestures from four-hand into two-hand settings and constitutes the dissertation’s primary contribution. These techniques, I believe, remain unexplored vehicles for the musical exchange of personal meaning that we know was central to both composers.

¹⁶ Charles Rosen writes eloquently about this gap in the chapter “Music and Sound” from *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998). The article by Robb cited in the previous footnote outlines some strategies that pianists and listeners have developed to make sense or fill in the gaps of “real” sounds. These include “reaching,” “splitting,” and changing levels of voicing to create the illusion of “singing.” Drawing on the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, he argues that these strategies entail metaphors rooted in embodied experience, in this case, the “fluidly traversing” mode of embodiment.

I locate the techniques' potential to facilitate social communion in their shared intimations of a second performer. One way to think about them is indeed as two manifestations of duetting dynamics. To be sure, there is a long tradition of duets in solo piano music (usually of a melodic sort and inspired by opera), not to mention the innumerable occurrences when a piece contains multiple lines, each justifiable as a musical agent in its own right. Although these common scenarios certainly have the potential to carry out interpersonal communication (Felix Mendelssohn's *Duetto in A flat major*, Op. 38, no. 6, comes to mind, which I discuss in Chapter 2), they are typically confined within more "normal" two-hand practices. The examples I focus on, on the other hand (pun unintended), invoke performative contexts that lie outside the solo piano medium. This arouses a feeling of insufficiency within the player, who must grapple with music that hints towards additional embodied presences and invites the soloist to experience modes of performance that call to mind actions or events, past or imagined, with other people. Schumann appears to have been especially attracted by this communicative potential, complicating the associations of reclusiveness that have adhered to his artistic profile.

0.3 Recent literature

The impetus for this dissertation comes from recent developments in Brahms studies, where scholars have shed new light on the complex symbioses between composition and performance. My immediate interest was kindled by Paul Berry's

Brahms among Friends.¹⁷ The book probes the composer's well-known penchant for allusion and argues that he often employed it to recast his personal relationships. An allusion's effect upon its intended audience would have greatly depended on the knowledge and experiences shared by the parties involved. These Berry painstakingly and empathetically reconstructs through careful attention to the documentary evidence available and sensitivity to the shifting dynamics between the persons in question, weaving an intricate tapestry of Brahms's inner circle in the process. Since most of them were professional performers or accomplished amateurs, he further posits that kinesthetic experience would have been integral to the affective power of his allusive gestures. A case study of the song "Alte Liebe," Op. 72, no. 1, for example, revolves around an allusion to the Capriccio, Op. 76, no. 1, in its postlude, music that at the time would have been exclusively available to Clara Schumann.¹⁸ Berry interprets the postlude as enacting the effort of long-term recollection described by the song's text: while the melody and accompanimental figuration conjured up her memory of the Capriccio, the allusion's transposition from F sharp minor to G minor reversed the pattern of black and white keys, simultaneously effecting a tactile defamiliarization.

Similarly, I am interested in how Schumann tailored expression to specific persons through performance parameters in his compositions. By extending Berry's work backwards in time, the dissertation adds to our understanding of the stylistic history and

¹⁷ Paul Berry, *Brahms among Friends: Listening, Performance, and the Rhetoric of Allusion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹⁸ See Berry, 217, for a musical example summarizing the allusion.

performance practice of the more intimate forms of nineteenth-century piano music, and contributes to a larger picture of how music operated in the private sphere to forge social relationships in nineteenth-century German musical culture.¹⁹ In contrast to Brahms scholarship, Schumann studies have not yet benefitted from comparably deep reconstructions of his social network, except for Clara and Brahms himself. Schumann was not as public a figure. He was also not in the habit of pre-circulating his new pieces among a small circle of friends before publication and, as a result, we do not have as rich a paper trail registering the participation of others in his creative process. Moreover, Schumann scholars' longstanding and continued fascination with his literary inclinations and positions in aesthetic debates from the time have reinforced his image as a reclusive champion of interiority.²⁰

Of course, there is one person whose impact upon his works has been amply evidenced and speculated about: Clara Wieck Schumann. Yet scrutiny of this impact has

¹⁹ There has been a spate of recent studies that focus on musical practices in the private sphere. See, for instance, the volume *Brahms in the Home and the Concert Hall: Between Private and Public Performance*, eds. Katy Hamilton and Natasha Loges (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). The following foreground the roles of albums in personal relationships: Carolyn Carrier, "Memory and Commemoration in Robert Schumann's Album Leaves," (PhD diss., Indiana University–Bloomington, 2019); and Halina Goldberg, "The Topos of Memory in the Albums of Maria Szymanowska and Helena Szymanowska-Malewska," in *Maria Szymanowska and Her Times: 2nd International Symposium, Paris, 2014*, 98-114. A parallel tension to that outlined in this Introduction via Leppert arises in Jennifer Ronyak, *Intimacy, Performance, and the Lied in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018). There the tension arises when the pressures of outward-facing performance exert upon the inward-facing German Lied.

²⁰ John MacAuslan's recent *Schumann's Music and E. T. A. Hoffmann's Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) and Erika Reiman's *Schumann's Piano Cycles and the Novels of Jean Paul* (Rochester: University of Rochester, 2004) follow in a long tradition of such work that harkens back to at least Daverio's biography and "Schumann's 'Im Legendenton' and Friedrich Schlegel's *Arabeske*," *19th-Century Music* 11, no. 2 (Fall 1987): 150-63. The chapter "Robert Schumann and Poetic Depth" in Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth*, is also in this vein.

been limited to musical ciphers and quotations, which are treated as reified objects designed to encode and represent, usually, her name or “voice,” but sometimes his or others’.²¹ There has been little consideration of her own participation in said ciphers and quotations, or of how they were intended to be communicative in the first place. Berry’s attunement to both composer’s and receiver’s interpretive horizons helps us fill this void and move beyond the quest to excavate and decipher Schumannesque codes. The allusions he analyzes do not freeze meaning; rather, they are more like ambiguous triggers that solicit the active engagement of their addressees. The intentions of composer and receiver may not always meet, or may shift with the passage of time—indeed, communicative failure occurs more than once in the dissertation’s case studies. Such misfires and shifts can themselves be illuminating. Following his cue, my emphasis is on open-ended, processual activity over fixing interpretation.

Although allusion and quotation figure prominently here as well, I focus on how the piano itself fosters modes of performance where a soloist can simulate the experience of interacting with others. Because the musical examples I analyze were all composed by and intended for very capable pianists, I contend that there is something about how they are written that calls for and enables such simulation. One avenue for thinking through more precisely how the keyboard might operate as a medium is offered by Steven Rings. In an essay titled “The Learned Self,” he highlights the frequent convergence of

²¹ The classic example is Eric Sams, “Did Schumann Use Ciphers?” *The Musical Times* 106, no. 1470 (August 1965): 548-91. For a thoroughgoing critique of Sams’s theory of ciphers, see Daverio, “Schumann: Cryptographer or Pictographer?” in *Crossing Paths: Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 65-102.

counterpoint and physical choreography in Brahms's late intermezzi. Equipped with a transformational lens, he is able to crystallize musical relations elegantly, especially that of canon and inversion. Crucially, he points out that many passages in these pieces are written in such a way that learned artifice can be experienced aurally, visually, and tactilely: "[the late intermezzi] do not merely signify as sounds taken in by a listener, they also signify as sets of actions—bodily and expressive—to be performed by a pianist. Such meaning emerges in and through first-person action."²² Two of Rings's examples encapsulate what this means and offer a taste of what is to come in this dissertation.

The opening of the Intermezzo in F minor, Op. 118, no. 4 (**example 0.2a**), contains a canon that is drowned amidst the *agitato* hustle and bustle of the triplets. That the soprano and tenor voices are in imitative relation does not become obvious until wisps of melody emerge towards the end of the phrase (mm. 8 ff.). The middle section brings a slower harmonic rhythm and distills the canonic process to a basic presentation (**example 0.2b**): a chord or single note per bar in the right hand (which later become pairs of dyads and chords) is mimicked by the left hand an octave below. The canon is not only to be heard; it is also to be enacted physically. The exaggerated lateral movements draw uncommon attention to the hand choreography, which in turn draw the performer and audience's attention to the contrapuntal procedure.

The Intermezzo in E minor, Op. 116, no. 5, engenders a different but equally marked embodied experience. The first chord in **example 0.3** features a gapped voicing

²² Steven Rings, "The Learned Self," in *Expressive Intersections in Brahms: Essays in Analysis and Meaning*, eds. Peter Smith and Heather Platt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 24.

that is typical of Brahms's piano writing. Instead of the more comfortable closed-triad position, he asks the hands to stretch and the thumbs to overlap. Rings emphasizes the resulting mirror configuration of the hands. While to a certain extent a single player's set of hands naturally generates inversional relations on the keyboard, he argues that Brahms drew deliberate attention to them by straying from the readily available default position, reinforced further by his own fingerings printed in the first edition.²³ Thus, in passages from both intermezzi, abstract structure and physical action are two sides of the same coin. Examples of such stagings of contrapuntal artifice, canon in particular, recur throughout this dissertation.

For whom, to what end might Brahms have devised his exquisite integrations of touch and idea? Rings's language implies that it is for self-satisfaction; the agents invoked by his article (Brahms, the analyst) relish these musical traits alone and for their own sake, as it were. Transformations of the opening theme in the Intermezzo in A major, Op. 118, no. 2, for instance, become "a moment of quiet, composerly achievement."²⁴ Like Berry, Rings cites reactions to Brahms's pieces from close friends like Clara Schumann and Elisabeth von Herzogenberg, but he does not share his aim of asking how these personal relationships inflected their engagement with his music. Instead, he underscores each person's independent and private pleasure, tracing a historical

²³ There is more nuance here than Rings describes. I engage with this example in greater depth in Chapter 2. A surviving autograph, unmentioned by Rings, raises interesting questions regarding Brahms's rationale for voicings of the kind seen here.

²⁴ Rings, 20.

continuum from their approach to Brahms's music to his own as a modern analyst.²⁵

Their individual perspectives, memories, and bodies become inadvertently stripped of their specificity.

How could passages like those Rings examines be more than objects of “composerly achievement” and analytic contemplation to become prompts for interpersonal connection? The examples of canon and inversion cited derive their effect in part from suggesting two entities signified by the pianist's two hands, as well as from the way keyboard space intersects with pitch space. To echo a point I made earlier, these entities overlap considerably with Edward T. Cone's personae and the metaphorical agencies in analytical discourse that have received renewed theoretical scrutiny.²⁶ What distinguishes my case studies is that circumstantial evidence points to their being more than mere personae or metaphorical agencies by referring at times to specific persons and mutually shared events and knowledge. Moreover, they appear in a manner that creates a kind of vacuum, as adumbrated above. In his exhibits, Rings conceptualizes the relation

²⁵ Rings, 46: “The habitus of the professional music analyst has its historical, modernist roots in a tradition that leads directly back to Brahms via Schoenberg. It thus makes sense that the way of being with music encouraged by Brahms's works—and by Brahms's circle—would transfer, through a sort of historical transitivity, to the practices of the modern analyst. Though published analyses and conference papers have a decidedly social aspect, the analytical act itself is often a highly solitary pursuit, and a deeply inward one. Modern music theory as a research discipline is thus closely bound up with the *innig* musical behavior that we witness in the descriptions of Elisabeth von Herzogenberg and Clara Schumann as they come to know, and assimilate, Brahms's music.”

²⁶ See Edward T. Cone's classic formulation of personae in vocal and instrumental music in *The Composer's Voice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974). Seth Monahan has recently called for more awareness of how analysts, oftentimes unwittingly and as a matter of habit, invoke musical agency. See his “Action and Agency Revisited,” *Journal of Music Theory* 57, no. 2, (2013): 321-71. I should also acknowledge here that this dissertation shares the spirit of Edward Klorman's *Mozart's Music of Friends: Social Interplay in the Chamber Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). In accordance with the collaborative nature of chamber music, the book thematizes multiple agency as an analytical approach.

between idea and action as consisting of one-to-one mappings. There is a closed loop or self-sufficiency between what is on the page and what one does, which arouses a feeling of fulfillment within the performer: the hands follow each other along the keyboard in isomorphic relation to canonic imitation, the mirror image of the hands enacts the intervallic inversion. When intertwined with the *innere Stimme* and four-handedness, however, such piano writing calls for something that exceeds what a soloist is to manage with two hands. This opens an additional dimension, a field of play, where the pianist conjures up a co-performer who is somehow both present and absent. It is precisely through this vacuum, or excess, that I propose Schumann and Brahms staged interactions with others in some of their works.

In speaking of fields of play set off by the piano's affordances and limitations, I invoke Roger Moseley's *Keys to Play*, which interrogates the historical centrality of keyboard interfaces in general as a "means of generating, processing, relaying, storing, and accessing information. At the keyboard, play becomes apprehensible as a primary means by which musical behavior can be materialized, embodied, performed, and communicated."²⁷ Many of the interfaces he assembles function as an entry point to connect with other individuals or wider communities. (This is most obvious in certain telegraph devices and digital games.) Although my dissertation is not archaeological in Moseley's Foucauldian sense, his media-theoretical perspective reminds us of how the layout of the piano keyboard is the technological precondition for the relation between

²⁷ Roger Moseley, *Keys to Play: Music as a Ludic Medium from Apollo to Nintendo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), 1.

contrapuntal and physical inversion in Rings's example or the defamiliarization a semitone shift causes in Berry's study of "Alte Liebe." Here, too, the piano emerges as an interface that disseminates information, connects persons who are only notionally present, and orients modes of behavior around it through culturally acquired techniques.

0.4 The course ahead

The dissertation is in two parts. Part I introduces the two strategies I propose underpin special modes of interpersonal communication whereby a solo player is invited to simulate acts of collaborative music-making: the *innere Stimme* and four-handedness. **Chapter 1** takes as its starting point a notated yet unplayed melody labeled *innere Stimme* in Schumann's *Humoreske*, Op. 20. This instance of *Augenmusik* has attracted strong associations of disembodiment and secretive interiority, but I view it rather as an invitation to encompass two modes of musicking: piano playing and vocalization. This is the only known usage of the term in Schumann's works. However, the chapter cites other compositions that I believe partake in the same impulse and relates the *innere Stimme* to common procedures that play with melodic presence and absence, especially variation. The *innere Stimme* hence performs a range of work, as it goes from being a unique instance of idiosyncratic notation, to a prompt for musical perception and performance, to becoming a form-generating principle.

Chapter 2 submits that, given the ubiquity of four-hand piano playing, compositional and performance techniques from such duets seeped into solo repertoire as

well. This cross-pollination is pursued through little-noticed intersections of two-hand and four-hand literature in music by Schubert, Felix Mendelssohn, Czerny, Chopin, Robert Schumann, and Brahms. In the process, I develop the concept of four-handedness, or the evocation of four-hand textures and gestures in two-handed discourse. I position the interplay (whether real or implied) between two and four hands (or one and two players) as a rich expressive resource. Solo piano music could channel the social meanings of four-hand piano playing through marked textures and biographical details, a latent possibility that becomes overt in the chapters that follow.

Although the *innere Stimme* and four-handedness may seem like distinct phenomena—the former a locus for reflections on interiority, the latter prompting discussions of embodiment—both harbor the potential that a soloist might summon the presence of a co-performer. By teetering on the edge between the possible and impossible, the explicit and implicit, the real and imagined, Schumann and Brahms created a delicate field of play where intensely personal communions could take place. To cite Moseley again, the means through which the *innere Stimme* and four-handedness achieve this are analogical: the exertion to coordinate and hear or play something that exceeds the soloist’s comfort zone recreates the process of collaboration when making music with others, to play “as if.”²⁸

The two conceptual chapters in Part I develop new contexts for the two case studies that form Part II. Both feature variation sets with references to Clara Wieck

²⁸ Moseley, 2-3: “Analogical play relies on correspondences and oscillations, on one object or action echoing, tracing, or indexing another.”

Schumann: Robert Schumann's *Impromptus on a Romance by Clara Wieck*, Op. 5, and Brahms's later *Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann*, Op. 9. The network of the two works and her variations on themes shared with them (Opp. 3 and 20) has long been recognized for its extraordinary interconnections. **Chapter 3** centers on Schumann's *Impromptus*, Op. 5. On the basis of internal and contextual evidence, it argues that two known sources of influence—J. S. Bach and Beethoven—were filtered through the lenses of four-hand piano playing and early manifestations of the *innere Stimme*. Meanwhile, contemporary correspondence between Schumann and Clara Wieck (some of which touches upon his *Impromptus* and her *Romance variée*, Op. 3) mentions the figure of the *Doppelgänger* in highly suggestive ways. Schumann implies that playing the piano and exchanging letters are two media which can provide access to the imaginary reunion of their virtual selves. Letter correspondence thus emerges as a loose analogue for four-handedness.

This discussion sets the stage for the dissertation's culminating case study in **Chapter 4**. I reconstruct some of the complex ways in which Clara Schumann, Brahms, and others navigated trauma and disability in the wake of Schumann's transfer to an asylum in 1854. Two facets of everyday life—music-making among friends and the exchange of flowers—acquired heightened significance under these circumstances. In his efforts to provide Clara with emotional support, Brahms prepared two musical gifts for her in that year: the *Variations*, Op. 9, and a piano arrangement of Schumann's *Piano Quintet*, Op. 44, for four hands. While Clara and Brahms coped with Schumann's absence musically, she also tried to bridge their distance by sending her husband flowers.

I discuss this evolving floral exchange in conjunction with the compositional histories of the Op. 9 Variations and Quintet arrangement. I argue that Brahms evoked both flowers and the *innere Stimme* in a well-known musical quotation within one of Op. 9's variations, a doubled reference calibrated to stir the memory and facilitate the recognition of shared experience. Drawing on music analysis, primary sources, and personal artifacts, I elucidate the emotional power of this musical quotation at a particular moment during the year 1854.