



Berkeley Symphony Orchestra

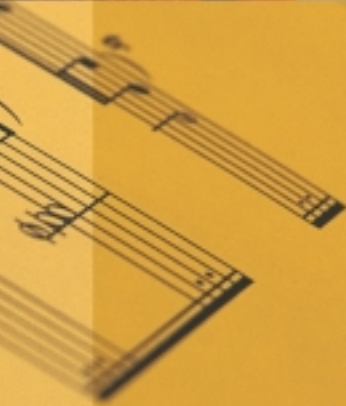
05 | 06 Season



Nagano and
Eaglen Together!
June 21, 2006

Campion
Berg
Mozart
Schumann

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley



BERKELEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

2005–06 SEASON

KENT NAGANO, CONDUCTOR/MUSIC DIRECTOR

GEORGE THOMSON, ASSOCIATE CONDUCTOR

8:00 pm, Wednesday, June 21, 2006

Zellerbach Hall

EDMUND CAMPION

Practice

For full orchestra and computer

Commissioned by the American Composers Orchestra
in association with the Center for New Music and Audio Technologies (CNMAT), UC Berkeley

ALBAN BERG

Sieben frühe Lieder (Seven Early Songs)

(1907; orchestrated 1928)

Nacht (Night), Carl Hauptmann

Schilflied (Song Amid the Reeds), Nikolaus Lenau

Die Nachtigall (The Nightingale), Theodor Storm

Traumgekrönt (Crowned in a Dream), Rainer Maria Rilke

Im Zimmer (In the Chamber), Johannes Schlaf

Liebesode (Ode to Love), Otto Erich Hartleben

Sommertage (Summer Days), Paul Hohenberg

Jane Eaglen, soprano

— INTERMISSION —

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Arias for Donna Anna from *Don Giovanni*, K. 527

Or sai chi l'onore (from Act I)

Non mi dir (from Act II)

Text by Lorenzo da Ponte

Jane Eaglen, soprano

ROBERT SCHUMANN

Symphony No. 2 in C Major, Opus 61

I. Sostenuto assai—Un poco più vivace—Allegro ma non troppo

II. Scherzo: Allegro vivace—Trios I & II

III. Adagio espressivo

IV. Allegro molto vivace

Program Notes

Practice

For full orchestra and computer

EDMUND CAMPION (b. 1957)

Edmund Campion was born in Dallas in 1957. Practice was composed (in Berkeley) in response to a commission from the American Composers Orchestra in 2005. Practice is scored for 2 piccolos, 2 oboes, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, bassoon, contrabassoon, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, tuba, 2 harps, timpani, percussion, MIDI keyboard controlling a Macintosh computer running the Max/MSP application, and strings. Duration: ca. 15 minutes.

The composer has provided the following comments:

Pactice opens with a cinematic flare as the orchestra explodes into a noise-filled scene. Old forms of expression wash by as the music cyclically erupts into new configurations. Fleeting and ungainly musical surfaces drown in a sea of rehearsing musicians (hence, *Practice*). Secretly bound by technological models, scientific analysis, and resynthesis of triangle sonority, the musicians in *Practice* gravitate around the din of metallic sound. The orchestra plays on, and like a terrible alarm, the triangles never fall silent.

The aesthetic foundations for this approach to music are found in what has come to be called “spectral music.” Spectral music is a wide-ranging compositional practice whose source can be tracked to the musical works of Gérard Grisey, among others. Grisey (one of my teachers) explored new musical forms that relied heavily on scientific models of sound. In *Practice*, the “scientific model” is only a rough guide, a container that holds a musical fantasy. Like many of the

spectral composers, what interests me is the total collection of sounds, the composite.

Conceptually, the musicians are unaware that the pervasive triangle noise is influencing them as they practice their parts. Nevertheless, they can't help but conform—they join with the spectral content of the electronics without completely being aware of it. As the piece progresses, the musicians become better adapted to the environment. They move within the din and they join with the spectral content of the triangles. This becomes their “practice.” The two percussionists who methodically walk on either side of the stage are playing the actual triangles that were used to create the electronic parts.

For me, technology is more than a complex tool, it is a totalizing force that changes thinking and action. Culturally, I am no more rooted in the history and practice of orchestral music than I am in the burgeoning digital age. But since the digital age is upon us and that is where I live, I allow my musical works and language to be formed by these momentous changes in culture and life.

Practice was commissioned by the American Composers Orchestra and composed in partnership with The Center for New Music and Audio Technologies (CNMAT), in the Department of Music at the University of California, Berkeley. The principal software programmer was Matthew Wright, working to specifications provided by the composer. The goal was to build a new computer-based instrument whose core sound is born from hybrids of the orchestral triangles. The new digital instrument is played in real time using a MIDI keyboard.

—Edmund Campion

Sieben frühe Lieder
(Seven Early Songs)
(1907; orchestrated 1928)

ALBAN BERG (1885–1935)

Alban Berg was born in Vienna on February 9, 1885, and died in Vienna on December 23/24, 1935. Berg wrote the Seven Early Songs for voice and piano in Vienna between 1905 and 1907. Three of the seven songs were first performed in public in a concert by Schoenberg's students on November 7, 1907. He revised and orchestrated the songs in 1928, finishing the work in November of the same year. The orchestrated versions of the songs were first performed on November 6, 1928, in a concert presented by the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde (The Society of Friends of Music) in Vienna, Robert Heger conducting. The versions of the songs for voice and piano were published in 1928, but the scores of the orchestral versions did not appear in print until 1959 (both versions were published in Vienna by Universal Edition). The orchestrated songs are scored for 2 flutes (second doubling on piccolo), 2 oboes (second doubling on English horn), 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, trumpet, 2 trombones, percussion (timpani, bass drum, snare drum, triangle, tam tam, and cymbals), harp, celesta (ad libitum), and strings. Duration: ca. 17 minutes.

Alban Berg has long been recognized as one of the great 20th-century masters of the art of composing for the voice. His two operas, *Wozzeck* and *Lulu*, are among the rare examples of 20th-century operas that have entered the permanent repertory. When he first began to try his hand at composition, he wrote only songs. In fact, for a long time the full extent of his output of songs was not known. He published only a dozen or so during his lifetime; but it was revealed some time after his death that he had in fact written some 70 songs, mostly youthful works. His widow, Helene, prevented their publication or performance, but after her death the songs

were allowed to see the light of day.

Berg, remarkably enough, had had little formal musical training when he began writing songs as a teenager. He had received a few piano lessons, and had grown up in a cultured household in which music was an important part of life. One has to admire, then, the combination of naïveté and courage that led him, at the age of 19, to gather up a collection of his early attempts at composition and present them to Arnold Schoenberg in hopes that the older master would take him on as a pupil. The date of this historic meeting was 1904; Schoenberg recounted the story in early 1910 in an oft-quoted passage:

[Alban Berg] is an extraordinarily gifted composer. But the state he was in when he came to me was such that his imagination apparently could not work on anything but *Lieder* [German art songs]. Even the piano accompaniments to them were songlike in style. He was absolutely incapable of writing an instrumental movement or inventing an instrumental theme. You can hardly imagine the lengths I went to in order to remove this defect in his talent.*

Berg did not compose the *Seven Early Songs* as a set. As with so many of Berg's works, there is a hidden biographical story behind the genesis of the collection. In 1927, to commemorate 20 years of life with his wife, Helene, Berg gathered together ten songs he had composed in 1907, the year of their meeting (although there is evidence that some of them are revisions of earlier works). He copied them into a presentation manuscript as a gift for her (Helene was a singer). In the process, he realized that some of the early songs were worth publishing, so in 1928

*From *Arnold Schoenberg Letters*, translated by Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser. Quoted by Mark DeVoto, "Berg the Composer of Songs," in *The Berg Companion*, Douglas Jarman, ed., 1989.

he selected six of those ten songs and added a seventh to create the *Seven Early Songs*, which he dedicated to "Meine Helene" ("My Helene"). That seventh song (Rilke's *Traumgekrönt*), which he placed at the center of the collection (Berg was particularly fond of bilateral symmetry), was also one with personal associations: Berg had quoted it in a letter to Helene, also in 1907. He orchestrated the set and had that version performed in November of 1928, but published only the version for piano and voice; the orchestral version was published posthumously.

The *Seven Early Songs* are very much in the mainstream of the 19th-century German art song tradition. Their musical idiom is that of late Romanticism: the text settings are intensely, sometimes pathologically emotional; the harmony is still tonal, but sufficiently inflected with chromaticism that tonality is often a bit frayed around the edges. Although the set calls for a large orchestra, Berg uses it more for color than for massive sound.

Nacht, the opening song, is the longest and most elaborate. It is framed by passages of shimmering whole-tone harmony that evoke a chilling moonlit scene. In the central portion of the song the opening up of the expansive landscape is mirrored by a switch to a passionate melodic style, underlain by rich, chromatic harmony. Berg creates an intimate atmosphere in *Schilflied* by reducing the orchestra to a single instrument per part. The lilting 6/8 meter and the rather sweet melody provide a macabre accompaniment to the gruesome text, which concerns a man making nocturnal visits to a pond in which his lover drowned. Berg uses a unique tone color for *Die Nachtigall*: the song is scored for strings alone, and each string part is divided in two, with half of each section using mutes and half without. Stylistically, it is the most Romantic of the set, reminiscent of the songs of Richard Strauss. The musical setting echoes the A-B-A form of the poem, and the central B section is accompanied by the muted

string sections with interjections by soloists from among the unmuted strings.

Strategically positioned at the center of the set, *Traumgekrönt* pairs a deep undercurrent of eroticism with intensely chromatic harmony—tonal resolution is only attained at the very end (and all of the instruments that can be muted are). Formally, the setting observes the strophic nature of the poem, but at the start of the second verse the voice takes the melody used by the accompaniment at the start of the first verse, and vice versa. And speaking of autobiographical connections in these songs: the first four notes heard in the accompaniment at the start of the song—two half-steps separated by a fourth—are identical to the first four notes of Berg's second opera, *Lulu*. Berg began *Lulu* in 1928, the year in which these songs were published, but it was left only partially complete at his death. The material needed to finish the opera remained hidden under Helene Berg's bed until her death in 1976.

The imagery of *Im Zimmer* is typical of the poetry of *fin de siècle* Vienna: autumn sunshine at the end of the day; a fire casting a red glow; a reference to the passage of time. Strings are banished from the score. Probably the earliest song of the set, its harmony is closest to traditional tonal practice and supports the relaxed scene depicted in Schlaf's poem. Berg sets the heady, erotically charged poem *Liebesode* in a rich chromatic style; undulating arpeggios in the harp mirror the waves of sensuality that wash over the scene. The set closes with a rash, impetuous setting of *Sommertage* (the poet, Paul Hohenberg, was a childhood friend of the composer). Like *Traumgekrönt*, it begins with the tonality-obliterating collection of notes that was to open *Lulu*. Soon, however, a cadence in C minor is reached, and the intense chromaticism of the rest of the song is heard as stretching the boundaries of conventional harmony rather than breaking them. That break would come, a decade later . . .

**Arias for Donna Anna from
Don Giovanni, K. 527**

**Or sai chi l'onore (from Act I)
Non mi dir (from Act II)**

**WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART
(1756–1791)**

Text by Lorenzo da Ponte (1749–1838)

Johann Chrysostom Wolfgang Amadè Mozart (he only used the form "Amadeus" when in a mock-pompous mood) was born on January 27, 1756, in Salzburg, at that time an independent archbishopric within the Austrian Empire. He died on December 5, 1791, in Vienna. Mozart received the commission for Don Giovanni from the management of the Nostic Theater in Prague during his visit to that city in January of 1787. Upon his return to Vienna in early February, Mozart informed his collaborator, Lorenzo da Ponte, of the commission, and the two set to work soon thereafter, probably in March. Il dissoluto punito ossia il Don Giovanni (The Libertine Punished, or Don Giovanni, to give the work its full name) was not completed until two days before the first performance. This took place in the Nostic Theater on October 29, 1787, under the composer's direction, and had a run of several performances. The role of Donna Anna was created by Teresa Saporiti. After some revision, Don Giovanni was given its first Vienna performance on May 7, 1788, at the Burgtheater (the theater attached to the imperial palace). In all, the opera enjoyed 15 performances in Vienna during 1788. Or sai chi l'onore is scored for pairs each of oboes, horns, bassoons, and strings; in Non mi dir, a solo flute and a pair of clarinets replace the oboes. Duration ca. 8:00.

Mozart's mature operas represent the pinnacle of his achievement as a composer, and the three works he produced during the late 1780s in collaboration with Austrian Imperial Court Poet Lorenzo da Ponte stand out as particularly impressive examples of his genius: *Le Nozze di Figaro* (*Figaro's Wedding*, 1786),

Don Giovanni (1787), and *Così fan tutte* (*They all do it*, 1789–90). The success of the first of the series provided the direct impetus for the second: six months after its Vienna premiere on May 1, 1786, *Figaro* was performed in Prague to wild applause. The orchestra of the opera theater invited Mozart and his wife to visit Prague in early 1787. He stayed in the Bohemian capital for a month, composing, performing, conducting, and enjoying being the toast of the town (the symphony in D major, K. 504, which now bears the nickname "Prague," dates from this sojourn).

While Mozart was in town, the managers of the theater, grateful for the huge hit they had on their hands, were eager to commission another work from the same team. They suggested the subject, the old Spanish story of Don Juan, and it seems that they later provided a libretto: Giovanni Bertati's *Don Giovanni, o sia Il convitato di pietra* (*Don Juan, or The Stone Guest*). Bertati's *Don Giovanni*, set to music by Giuseppe Gazzaniga, was new, receiving its premiere in Venice at the same time that Mozart was in Prague. Bertati and Da Ponte, both Venetians, were fiercely competitive rivals (indeed, Bertati succeeded Da Ponte as Court Poet after the latter was run out of town in 1790), and Da Ponte took it upon himself to expand and develop Bertati's libretto (with considerable input from Mozart).

Da Ponte retained Bertati's choice of genre: *Don Giovanni* is a *dramma giocoso*, which is described by UC Berkeley Professor Daniel Heartz as "A frolic with serious elements."^{*} The *dramma giocoso* was invented by Carlo Goldoni (yet another Venetian playwright) in the middle of the 18th century and synthesized the two separate traditions of early 18th-century musical theater: the *opera seria*, which depicted aristocratic characters

^{*}"Goldoni and the *dramma giocoso*," in *Mozart's Operas*, Thomas Bauman, ed., University of California Press, 1990.

and serious, high-minded themes, and the *opera buffa*, populated by lower-class characters in farcical situations.

Donna Anna is one of the *opera seria* characters. At the opening of the opera, we see her vigorously fending off the advances of a masked Don Giovanni (whether rape or seduction was his intention is one of the many mysteries surrounding the work). Her father (the Commendatore) enters and challenges the Don to a duel, which he loses. The Don escapes, then Donna Anna enters with her fiancé, Don Ottavio, only to find her father's body, and the two swear vengeance on his murderer. Throughout the rest of the opera, Don Giovanni attempts to ply his art of seduction on various women, but is thwarted at every turn. He gathers a growing crowd of offended parties bent on retribution, but in the end justice is carried out not by human agents but by otherworldly powers: the stone statue of Donna Anna's father comes to sup with Don Giovanni, and between courses drags him physically down to Hell. Da Ponte's major innovation was to expand the role of Donna Anna (who disappears from the story early on in older versions) and to make her thirst for revenge the "driving force that unites the work," as Professor Heartz has pointed out.

Donna Anna's first aria, *Or sai chi l'onore*, comes in the middle of Act I. She and Don Ottavio have just met up with an old family friend, Don Giovanni (no longer in disguise) and have begun to ask his aid in avenging her father's death. Their conversation is interrupted, and Don Giovanni takes his leave. At that moment, Donna Anna recognizes his voice as that of the man who killed her father. In an impassioned orchestrally accompanied recitative, she tells Don Ottavio the story of Don Giovanni's attack on her. In the aria proper, she exhorts Don Ottavio to avenge the murder (though she is curiously silent on the subject of the assault on her honor).

With its dramatic, wide-leaping vocal line and long-held high notes, *Or sai chi l'onore* uses many of the stock musical gestures of the 18th-century vengeance aria, and in form follows the ABA plan of the *da capo* aria of the older *opera seria*. The orchestration, relying heavily on double reeds, supplies an old-fashioned sonority. At this point in the action, she is still a noblewoman reacting to the shock of her father's murder, and expresses herself in formal (if somewhat antiquated) language.

By the time of her second aria, *Non mi dir*, late in Act II, Donna Anna's emotions have become more complex. The aria follows a conversation with Don Ottavio in which he tries to offer his love as consolation for the loss of her father. Donna Anna reacts with horror, then when Ottavio accuses her of cruelty, she tries to explain herself. Anna's conflicting feelings pour out in a brief accompanied recitative (which introduces the main theme of the aria), then she composes herself for the following aria, in which she tries to comfort Ottavio and promises that if he will be patient, one day she may be ready to accept his love.

This time, Mozart and Da Ponte give her a more modern vehicle for her feelings: a specific type of two-section aria called a "*rondò* in two tempi." Such an aria begins with a slow, lyrical section, and concludes with a faster section that provides plenty of opportunity for the display of vocal fireworks. The simple, yet very beautiful, melody of the first part is just the thing to allay Ottavio's distress. The slight nod in the direction of C minor just before the repeat of the opening tune underscores the words "don't be sad, unless you want me to die." The melody of the fast part is clearly related to that of the opening, but the vocal line quickly dissolves into elaborate coloratura when Anna expresses hope for the future.

The *rondò* form is the ancestor of the *cavatina-cabaletta* pairing that came to be the standard showpiece in early

19th-century opera, in the works of composers such as Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti. In the Vienna of Mozart's time, every prima donna considered it her right to have her own *rondò* immediately before the finale of the last act, and Mozart and Da Ponte were happy to oblige, demonstrating their ability to meet the demands of convention while still exercising their creative genius.

Symphony No. 2 in C Major, Opus 61

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810–1856)

Robert Schumann was born on June 8, 1810, in Zwickau, in Saxony, approximately equidistant from the great German cultural centers of Weimar, Leipzig, and Dresden. He died on July 29, 1856, in an insane asylum in Endinich near Bonn, in the Rhineland. Schumann composed the Symphony “No. 2” in Dresden (it is in fact the third symphony in order of composition; the work now known as the fourth symphony was written soon after the first in 1841, but was not published until after Schumann revised it a decade later). He sketched the work between December 12 and December 28, 1845. Fleshing out the score took a little longer, requiring ten days in February 1846, a week in May, and five weeks in September and October. The work was completed only on October 19, less than three weeks before its premiere. The symphony was first performed at a subscription concert of the Leipzig Gewandhaus orchestra on November 5, 1846, conducted by Felix Mendelssohn. Schumann devoted several weeks in October and November of 1846 and again in June and July of 1847 to “correcting” the score. Publication (in score and parts) followed a year later, by Friedrich Whistling of Leipzig. The work is scored for pairs each of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, trumpets, and horns;

*3 trombones, timpani, and strings.
Duration ca. 38 minutes.*

Mental illness had plagued Robert Schumann throughout most of his adult life, but the summer of 1844 brought the first hints of the severe mental and physical breakdown that was to come. By August, his situation had deteriorated; he wrote to a friend, “I couldn’t listen to music at all; it cut into my nerves as if with knives.” The episode lasted, to varying degrees of intensity, for more than a year. On Schumann’s doctor’s advice, he and his family moved from Leipzig to Dresden in December. (Dresden was considered desirable because of the many therapeutic mineral springs in the area.)

After the new year Schumann began a slow recuperation. In January 1845 he started to give lessons in counterpoint to his 26-year-old wife, Clara (already one of the most famous pianists in Europe). Together, they studied the works of Bach, and they each wrote a series of fugues, including a set on the name B-A-C-H (in German musical notation, B = our B-flat and H = B natural). The exercise seems to have had a salutary effect on Robert, and was to leave its mark on the C Major Symphony. By the summer of 1845, he had revived sufficiently to return to the single movement *Phantasie* for piano and orchestra from 1841 and add two movements to the work, producing the A minor Piano Concerto, Op. 54. Unfortunately, the labor involved seems to have brought on another debilitating attack, which forced Schumann to abandon a planned trip to Bonn for the dedication of a memorial to Beethoven.

In the autumn of 1845, Schumann’s spirits revived once again, and this time he took on an even more ambitious project: a new symphony. Beginning in December, sketching the work went quickly, taking just over two weeks. Completing the score took much longer, dragging out through most of the following year. This was due partly to other

projects that competed for Schumann’s time, but also to the sporadic return of his mental and physical ailments.

Mendelssohn conducted the premiere of the work on November 5, 1846. The audience gave the symphony a lukewarm reception, but a contributing factor was the work’s position in the second half of an overlong program. Having heard the symphony in performance, Schumann decided to put the work on a diet. A second performance, this time of a sleeker version of the piece, elicited a more enthusiastic reaction.

Indeed, during the 19th century, it was the most highly esteemed of Schumann’s symphonies. Several years ago, UC Berkeley Professor Anthony Newcomb surveyed a century and a half of changing attitudes toward Schumann’s C Major Symphony in a landmark article, “Once More Between Absolute and Program Music: Schumann’s Second Symphony.”* Schumann’s contemporaries tended to interpret the work not as a formal structure (as modern writers often do), but as a depiction of an unfolding series of ideas or emotions—as a story, in other words.

The critics of Schumann’s time noted that this kind of symphony resembled a novel. In a novel, a character develops over time and evolves in response to his or her experiences, feelings, and actions. In the end, the character’s personality may change drastically—yet because we’ve witnessed all of the stages of the metamorphosis, the change is not incongruous. It is a similar process of transformation, worked out in musical themes, that provides the thread—the story—that holds Schumann’s second symphony together.

Schumann’s contemporaries recognized this particular story: they knew it from Beethoven’s 5th symphony (some also saw a kinship with his 9th as well).

*Published in the journal *19th Century Music*, vol. VII, No. 3 (April 3, 1984).

A noble soul struggles through hardship and adversity, reaches the depths of despair, but overcomes misfortune and attains victory or redemption. Of course, the C Major Symphony is not intended to be a literal depiction of any specific series of events, but it is difficult avoid seeing the work as informed by Schumann’s recent experience battling a crushing illness to rejoin the flow of everyday life.

The first movement of the symphony begins with a slow introduction. It opens with a simple fanfare motive sounded by the brass; this fanfare would probably have been recognized by Schumann’s audience as a quotation from the opening of Haydn’s last symphony (No. 104, from 1795), which was frequently performed in Schumann’s time. This fanfare recurs later in this movement and again at crucial moments in the second and fourth movements, helping to unify the symphony thematically on a superficial level. However, the fanfare motto plays a more fundamental role in the work’s structure: hardly a “tune” itself, this simple gesture serves as the germ from which much of the melodic content of the rest of the symphony develops. Often the end results of this development bear no obvious relationship to the original motive, but because we have heard the individual steps of the process, we sense the relationship.

We are actually presented with two themes here, one the confident, diatonic (using plain vanilla harmony) brass fanfare (motive A), the other a low, slithery chromatic (using exotic notes, not in the key) line in the strings (B). The latter will also be transformed through the course of the symphony, and though its progeny play a role in the first movement, they come to the fore in the second and third movements.

The salient features of A that will be exploited by Schumann are the bold upward leap and the jagged dotted rhythm of that leap. The first variant

of A comes almost immediately, its character altered ever so slightly by a half-step motion (showing the influence of B) and a rhythmic alteration. As the tempo accelerates, a new theme is heard, which moves the dotted rhythm to the start of the tune but minimizes the leap. Schumann isolates the dotted rhythm, and when the main fast section of the movement begins, it is dominated by a new bouncy melody that is dominated by the dotted rhythm. On the other hand, Schumann bases the second (contrasting) theme section on B, producing several linear (but chromatic) melodic ideas.

The first movement goes on to derive several more themes from A in the development section, but in many cases their character is so far removed from A that their lineage is obscured. As Newcomb points out, the use of themes marked by irregular phrases and harmonic rhythms but that were developed from the square and stately motives we heard at the start of the movement produces the “atmosphere of internal uneasiness and struggle” that characterize the movement. As the movement comes to a close without entirely dispersing the accumulated tension, the brass fanfare (A) rings out again in its original form to remind us of how far we’ve come.

In a break with convention, Schumann places the Scherzo immediately after the first movement, trading places with the slow movement (Beethoven did the same in his 9th symphony). Another unusual feature of this Scherzo is its meter: it is in duple meter, rather than the traditional triple. The Scherzo is ripe with nervous energy and rarely comes to rest, intensifying the atmosphere of agitation already present in the first movement.

Its form is Scherzo–Trio I–Scherzo–Trio II–Scherzo, and the two Trios could not be more different in character. The first is playful, with woodwinds in spiky triplets (perhaps a nod to the traditional Scherzo triple

meter) juxtaposed with elegant lines for the strings. The second Trio dramatically interrupts the frantic activity of the Scherzo: for a moment, the mood shifts to sheer serenity as the strings play in hymn-like, note-against-note counterpoint. The winds enter, and Schumann employs more elaborate contrapuntal techniques, flexing the muscles he developed during those months of study early in 1845. And, as if representing the invisible presence of his muse, Schumann weaves the melodic motive B-A-C-H into the fabric of the passage. But, this moment of peace and tranquility cannot last; the Scherzo soon barges in, breaking the spell. As the movement swirls to a close, the brass fanfare (A) rings out once again, as if to try to restore sanity to the proceedings, but to no avail.

The heartfelt slow movement is suffused with despair. The angular principal melody is characterized by wide leaps and dissonant intervals; a more vivid depiction of grief is difficult to imagine. With those leaps and its chromaticism, the theme bears the marks of its lineage as a descendant of both motives A and B. In fact, the tail end of the melody quotes verbatim from one of the A-derived themes in the first movement. As in the second movement, a ray of hope is provided by a contrapuntal episode: a tiptoeing bass line supports a syncopated melody in the clarinets and first violins in antique High Baroque style. The passage seems to be a reference to the scene of the Armed Men in the second act finale of Mozart’s opera *The Magic Flute*; the style was already old-fashioned then. But the clouds descend again, and the movement ends in a mood of utter resignation.

A boisterous outburst shatters that mood—the celebration of the victory over despair has begun. But why? This is a point that has bothered many commentators: where is the progression from darkness into light? To pass so abruptly from sadness to joy is somewhat unsatisfying. But as Newcomb explains, this is

another example of transformation, applied on a larger scale. The jolly start to this movement leads us to expect a bubbly, Haydnish finale; but as the movement proceeds Schumann will transform it into a weightier Beethovenish finale at the same time that he transforms the opening flourish into a serene, majestic melody.

That opening gesture starts with an upward-sweeping scale and ends with a few longer accented notes that continue to rise (C). It is followed by a jaunty tune that recalls the main theme of the fast portion of the first movement. The opening gesture returns to mark the start of the development section, but this time C (the line of accented notes) is extended. After having some fun with the sweeping scale motive, Schumann turns his attention to C and begins to transform it into a melody, smoothing out its contour and removing the accents. Before he can get very far, however, things get nasty. We revisit the angst we passed through earlier in the symphony: we hear the poignant theme from the slow movement, played over a chugging accompaniment, into which the fanfare (A) intrudes. Alas, as before, we find no resolution but collapse, exhausted.

After a moment of silence, a new theme in the remote key of A-flat begins to take shape in the winds. It is not entirely new, of course; it’s the product of the transformations of C from earlier in the movement. Before it can get very far, the struggle begins again, but little by little the new theme asserts itself, first in the minor mode, then in the major. The upward sweeping gestures from the opening of the movement return, and the music comes to a halt, poised for the recapitulation. This would normally entail a repetition of the themes from the beginning of the movement, but instead we hear something different: yet another version of the “new” theme.

As we have seen, this theme evolved from a fragment of the opening gesture,

and to use it here, where traditional formal procedure would require the original theme to return, represents a radical rethinking of the function of recapitulation. Schumann has not only transformed the theme, but transformed the musical form of the movement as well. This transformation also provides us with a more satisfactory resolution of the large-scale emotional trauma of the symphony, for instead of a juxtaposition of despair and joy (at the start of the finale) we have a progression through a series of emotions to triumph, encapsulated in a melody expressive of “serene confidence” (to quote Professor Newcomb).

Schumann’s symphony contains a dense network of interlocking references, which work at multiple levels of meaning. This “final theme” is not merely the product of thematic transformation; it is also a quotation from Beethoven’s song cycle *An die ferne Geliebte* (*To the Distant Beloved*), specifically from the final song in the set: “Take, then, these songs, that I to you, beloved, sang . . .” It is significant that Schumann also used the same quotation once before, in his *Phantasie* for piano, Op. 17 (also in C major), another major work that he wrote after emerging from a long period of illness.

If we were to transcribe the “story” of this symphony into words, it might be something like this: Schumann is wracked by physical and mental afflictions that cause him anxiety and despair. He struggles to overcome these difficulties, and is aided by his awareness of his musical heritage and by his studies of counterpoint as exemplified by the works of J. S. Bach. Having endured this redemptive experience (perhaps equivalent to a trial by fire and water, as in the *Magic Flute*), Schumann is now worthy to stand in the company of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, the great triumvirate of the German symphonic tradition.

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