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Schumann's Op. 25: Finding the Narrative Within

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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Brian Harker  
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School of Music

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## ABSTRACT

### Schumann's Op. 25: Finding the Narrative Within

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Many of the song cycles written by Schumann have been studied over the years and it is well known that his most prolific time of song production was the year 1840. *Myrthen*, Op. 25, has been studied less than some of his other cycles because it calls into question the modern view of the song cycle and for this reason is difficult to classify. What is most difficult about the classification of Op. 25 is that there is no immediately apparent narrative. In addition, the musical relationships which exist are usually considered to be of little consequence. What scholars are left with is a group of songs that in Schumann's mind constituted a song cycle but to the modern eye seems to be anything but. The most prevalent view concerning the organization of Op. 25 is that it is a collection of songs. Given his view of Lieder and his compositional process, in addition to the fact that it was presented to Clara as a wedding gift, I believe that Schumann had a specific organization in mind for this work. In this thesis I argue that due to the way in which Schumann conceived of and composed song cycles, the musical relationships are not what bind Op. 25 together although these relationships do exist. Instead, the organization hinges mainly on the text which represents a narrative of the relationship between Robert and Clara, which differs from the modern view of what classifies a group of songs as a cycle.

Keywords: Robert Schumann, Clara Schumann, song cycle, collection, *Myrthen*, Op. 25, Goethe, Rückert, Heine

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Many of the song cycles written by Schumann have been studied over the years and it is well known that his most prolific time of song production was the year 1840. *Myrthen*, Op. 25, has been studied less than some of his other cycles because it calls into question the modern view of the song cycle and for this reason is difficult to classify. What is most difficult about the classification of Op. 25 is that there is no immediately apparent narrative. In addition, the musical relationships which exist are usually considered to be of little consequence. What scholars are left with is a group of songs that in Schumann's mind constituted a song cycle but to the modern eye seems to be anything but. The most prevalent view concerning the organization of Op. 25 is that it is a collection of songs. Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau describes *Myrthen* as a collection of songs with diversity of subject material that reflected on a variety of matters including love and religion. Peter Ostwald analyzes Op. 25 as a collection of twenty-six Lieder with each song representing or standing in place of each letter of the alphabet. Jon W. Finson argues that the cycle was a "sumptuous" wedding gift because it was titled "Myrtle" which represents the traditional flower used in a bridal bouquet. He believes that each song represents a flower in the bouquet and serves to tie all twenty-six songs to an artistic tradition that reaches back into the eighteenth century. Eric Sams corroborates Ostwald's idea that the songs could be symbolic of the alphabet:

Is it likely to be just coincidence that this cycle has as many songs as there are letters in the alphabet? Thus Nos. 5 and 6 are Eusebius and Florestan to life (just as those numbers are in *Carnaval*, which was also planned to have twenty-six pieces); and there is no doubt at all that No. 3 or C, is meant very specifically for Clara. Nor will it just be coincidence that so many adjacent songs are in related keys; nor that the music offers so many Clara-themes in various guises and disguises. No doubt all this was what Schumann meant by saying [in a letter to Clara dated Leipzig, February 1840] that this Opus 'certainly offers a closer insight into the inner workings of my music.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Sams, *The Songs of Robert Schumann*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 49.

Although these views have merit, the relationships presented in these analyses only address the most basic aspects of Op. 25 such as the number of songs in the cycle or general themes presented in the poetry.

Schumann viewed the lied as a recreation of the essence of the poet's text and achieved this through continuity between voice and piano and the Romantic designation of what constitutes a song cycle was not defined in the same way that it is today. Given his view of the art form and his compositional process, in addition to the fact that it was presented to Clara as a wedding gift, I believe that Schumann had a specific organization in mind for this work. In this thesis I argue that due to the way in which Schumann conceived of and composed song cycles, the musical relationships are not what bind Op. 25 together although these relationships do exist. Instead, the organization hinges mainly on the text which represents a narrative of the relationship between Robert and Clara, which differs from the modern view of what classifies a group of songs as a cycle.

### **Schumann's Literary Background**

Schumann had a very strong literary background which directly influenced his opinions on music and his compositional process. In order to help establish the plausibility of literature guiding the organization of Op. 25, Schumann's literary background should be explored. By the time Schumann was of the age to go to school, his family had become relatively affluent. Schumann Brothers Publishing Company's pocket editions of the classics not only were a source of good income, but called attention to the best European writers including Goethe, Schiller, Scott, Byron, and Cervantes. In addition to this, Schumann's father insisted that all of his sons be very well educated, and their schoolwork was regularly supplemented with books from the

family's private library, reputed to contain 4000 volumes. This may explain why Robert was far more cultured and learned than many other musicians of his time. It also explains why there was such a wide variety of poets employed in Op. 25. As a supplement to reading and studying the best poets and authors, he collected quotations all his life and was still working on *Dichtergarten*, an anthology of passages on music drawn from the great poets of all ages, while in the mental asylum.<sup>2</sup>

Having grown up surrounded with books, Schumann viewed the world through the eyes of a poet. Schumann developed the habit of focusing on one writer at a time in his personal literary studies. He devoted phases of intense study to Schiller, Jean Paul, Shakespeare, Byron, Heine, and Rückert among others. This literary familiarity was reflected in his esthetic sensitivity as well as his deeply introspective nature. Experience and pleasure were defined and conditioned by literary models. As a young man, he espoused the ideals of self-denial, world-weariness, and the transitory quality of life.<sup>3</sup> In an autobiographical sketch circa 1840, Schumann relates an overview of his earliest artistic activity,

I had no instruction in composition until my twentieth year. I began to compose early, among other things in my twelfth year Psalm 150 with orchestra, a few numbers of opera, many pieces for voice, many things for piano...Many poetic attempts fall right at this time (before my twenties). The most significant poets of all countries were familiar to me. In my eighteenth year I developed an enthusiasm for Jean Paul; I also heard of Franz Schubert for the first time...<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ronald Taylor, *Robert Schumann: His Life and Work*. (London: Granada Publishing Ltd., 1982), 99.

<sup>3</sup> Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, *Robert Schumann Words and Music: The Vocal Compositions*. Translated by Reinhard G. Pauly. (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1988), 11.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Jon W. Finson, *Robert Schumann: The Book of Songs*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 8.

There is a strong literary link in Schumann's work and he saw the activity of writing about music as an extension of the creative musical process itself. He had a firm grounding in literature reaching back to his early knowledge of Latin and Greek, his reading in early German literature and the entire world of books in which his father lived. Once he was at the University of Leipzig his desire for music prevailed over his love of literature. He didn't feel as if he was rejecting one field of study for another, but rather that it was a natural intensification of the artistic experience. Schumann himself made the point that he had learned more counterpoint from Jean Paul than from any of his music teachers.<sup>5</sup> Throughout the late 1840s and 1850s Schumann recorded his persistent rereading of Jean Paul in his journals. The last references to this are in the spring, summer, and fall of 1853 when he reported that together he and Clara read *Die Flegeljahre*, *Die unsichtbare Loge*, *Hesperus*, *Siebenkäs*, and *Titan*.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Song Cycle as a Romantic Genre**

Whenever analysis is applied to a piece of music by someone outside of the period of composition, it is important to consider how the piece was defined or perceived within the period. Because Op. 25 was designated by Schumann as a cycle, a review of the song cycle as viewed in the Romantic era will be helpful to a large-scale formal analysis. When studying the song reviews in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* during Schumann's tenure as editor, it becomes clear that he and his colleagues considered the expression of the emotional truth of the text to be the most important aspect of Lieder composition. Carl Banck, who was a regular reviewer during

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<sup>5</sup> Taylor, 97.

<sup>6</sup> Leon Botstein, "History, Rhetoric and the Self: Robert Schumann and Music Making in German-Speaking Europe, 1800-1860." In *Schumann and His World*, edited by R. Larry Todd, 3-46. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 7.

the early years of the *Neue Zeitschrift*, wrote that the composition of Lieder requires “deep contemplation and feeling, the penetration of the language of nature and the human heart.” He adds that a composer who has “never really considered the roots of his own feelings” and “who cannot use his powers of intellect to keep hold of life’s onrushing emotions, will also be incapable of truly representing them.” He makes no reference to the means through which the representation should take place and goes on to describe the lied as the child that is born from the love affair of music and poetry. When the *Neue Zeitschrift* critics discuss the creation of a song cycle out of a series of Lieder, they emphasize the literary aspect and evaluate it in terms of how sensitively the composer expresses both the emotional and spiritual contents of the text versus an individual analysis of each song. In their view, the primary purpose of the composer is to faithfully express the emotional truth of the poetry, and the selection and arrangement of songs into a cycle is another means to this end.<sup>7</sup>

Schumann and his contemporaries had a more flexible conception of the genre of a song cycle than we do today. When a group of pieces were put together for publication they may have been related to one another in a variety of ways. The use of the term “cycle” implied a close relationship between a set of short pieces in the nineteenth century. Modern scholars identify differences in kind between cyclic relationships and those found in other published collections but to a nineteenth century composer or critic these supposed differences would be minute. For these reasons the song cycle is the perfect example of the Romantic style. The songs of which a cycle is composed tend to have an open ended quality which is a result of their extreme brevity and the way they destabilize the conventional patterns of musical structure. Formal organization

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<sup>7</sup> David Ferris, *Schumann’s Eichendorff Liederkreis and the Genre of the Romantic Cycle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 195-8.

is also open ended and depends on the implied relationships between constituent pieces more than on concrete structural connections. This allows for a wide range of variability in terms of order and the number of pieces included in a cycle. This also means that cycles are not as clearly distinguished from other collections of songs and character pieces in the nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup>

What we find when referring to nineteenth century sources is that the organic model of musical form is inadequate to explain Schumann's song cycles. It begs the question as to what Schumann was viewing as organicist. Ferris breaks down the idea of organicism into what he calls two types of "methaphors," dynamic organicism and formal organicism. Dynamic organicism has to do with the belief that Romanticism is a philosophy predicated on a belief of infinite growth and emphasizes the importance of imperfection and change. In formal organicism, all of the elements of a work of art are completely integrated and interdependent which leads to the belief that the work must be in a state of perfection. By this reasoning, the alteration of a single detail would destroy the integrity of the work as a whole. Yet Op. 25 challenges the idea of formal organicism with the songs not displaying interdependence. It is also important to note that Schumann did not write a theory of musical aesthetics and we can only assume that there are many underlying premises in his works left unstated.<sup>9</sup>

Something that is prevalent in Friedrich Schlegel's writings which directly relates to the idea of organic growth is the concept of the fragment. The nature of the fragment was never clearly defined, but the Romantics had a view of literature as being fragmentary in nature—it was an open-ended process of continuous and gradual growth. Romantic poetry was in a "perpetual state of becoming," contrary to the Classical style which exhibits completeness, order,

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 77-9.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 59-62.

and unity. The idea of the fragment was most often applied to the individual work, that it was at once complete and fragmentary with the intentionality of its fragmentary state being its most essential characteristic. Schlegel explains this with a comparison, saying that a “fragment, like a small work of art, must be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and complete in itself like a hedgehog.” In other words, when a hedgehog rolls itself in a ball it has a shape that is well defined but blurred around the edges and it projects itself into the universe by the way in which it cuts itself off from it. Although, in the Romantic view, a work of art is discrete and self-sufficient its individuality depends on its limitless potential for growth. The gaps and openings within the work are what create a sense of completeness. Due to this, the relationships between the parts and the whole are more flexible. In addition, the collection or cycle of musical fragments is also open-ended and depends on the reader’s imagination for it to become completely comprehensible and presents a structure in which implicit relationships are left to the reader to be realized. This suggests an aesthetic that is incompatible with the views of formal organicism. It is within this idea of the fragment that I believe Schumann was working when composing and organizing Op. 25.<sup>10</sup>

Ferris argues that the modern definition of the Romantic song cycle seems to be out of sync with the actual works that it is intended to explain. This is because it was not formulated until many years after the works were composed. In the meantime, the aesthetic creativity that had initially motivated the creation of the genre had waned. It is no secret that there is a gap between theory and practice. For example, sonata form was first defined in a series of treatises in the 1840s but compositions had been composed in sonata form long before then. Treatises and dictionaries of the early nineteenth century contain no formal definition of the terms

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 62-5.

*Liederzyklus* or *Liederkreis* in addition to containing no descriptions that even remotely resemble anything like a song cycle. For this reason it would be more accurate to say that the Romantic conception of the genre of song cycle was more pliable than it is now. The sense in which the cycle functioned as a genre for a composer like Schumann is different from the way it functions for a composer today.<sup>11</sup>

As the song cycle began to be a public genre and in turn became accessible to a large audience, listeners wanted to understand what they were hearing. Arrey von Dommer, in his 1865 edition of *H. C. Koch's musikalisches Lexicon*, defines the cycle as follows:

*Liederkreis, Liederzyklus.* A coherent complex of various lyric poems. Each is closed in itself, and can be outwardly distinguished from others in terms of prosody, but all have an inner relationship to one another, because one and the same basic idea runs through all of them. The individual poems present different expressions of this idea, depicting it in manifold and often contrasting images and from various perspectives, so that the basic feeling is presented comprehensively. As far as the music is concerned, it is certainly typical for each individual poem to be through composed. A main melody would essentially be retained for all of the strophes (of the same poem), and only altered and turned into something else where it seems suitable or necessary. Naturally, however, the melody and the entire musical form change with each poem, and so does the key, and the individual movements are typically bound to one another through the ritornelli and transitions of the accompanying instrument. The accompaniment is essentially developed so that it portrays and paints the situation in a characteristic way, and also supplies, in regard to the expression, what the voice must leave unfinished. In comparison with the dramatic solo cantata, the *Liederkreis* is actually missing nothing more than recitative and the aria form of the songs instead of the lied form. Otherwise one finds it is rather close to the cantata, or regards it as a middle genre between through-composed lied and cantata.<sup>12</sup>

Dommer's definition can essentially be divided into three parts: a description of the text, a description of the music, and a comparison with the genre of the solo cantata. He begins with the text and seems to be defining the cycle as a poetic genre. This is one way that his definition connects to the critical tradition of the earlier nineteenth century in which the poetic text is

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Ferris, 8-9.

considered to be of equal, or even greater, importance than the accompaniment. He emphasizes the need for coherence and describes the tension between the integrity of the original poem and its relationship to the larger whole in addition to the balance within the whole between variety and unity. One thing that is omitted, which seems striking when compared with our view of the cycle today, is any reference to a narrative that runs through the poems and determines their order. He ends by comparing the song cycle to the dramatic genre of the solo cantata. He tells us that the only difference between the two is that the cycle consists of Lieder whereas the cantata alternates recitative and aria—essentially one is lyrical and the other is dramatic. The last point to be made is the most striking aspect of his definition. His description of the music in a song cycle bears no resemblance whatsoever to the cycles of Schumann, Schubert, or any of the great Lieder composers. The reason for this is due to the fact that he was using Beethoven's *An die ferne Gelibte* as a model which is one of the earliest and most anomalous cycles written. In comparison, Schumann's cycles derive much of their expressive force via setting up irreconcilable tension between the part and the whole. Tonal ambiguity and open ended formal structures characterize the songs and imply that they are incomplete parts of a larger form while discontinuity from one song to the next prevents the cycle from becoming a unified entity.<sup>13</sup>

When looking at structure of a song cycle, in contrast to Classical works which are complete wholes, many Romantic works are inherently fragmentary and unfinished. With this difference in structure came a change in the role of audience perception as well. Instead of remaining a passive receptor that merely soaks up the meaning inherent in the work, the audience was expected to become engaged in the creation of the meaning. Schumann experimented with the question of aesthetic coherence by leaving it up to the listeners to realize and develop the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 9-11.

unifying meanings that the songs of the cycle might imply. The expectation that their audience would play an active role in creating aesthetic meaning inevitably led the Romantics to circumscribe their audiences sometimes to the point where it disappeared altogether. This may have been a contributing factor for Schumann's turn to Lieder in 1840. He had the desire to publish in a more marketable genre, and his songs would have been easily within the grasp of the amateur market. On one level, Schumann intended his song publication to be a practical way of selling music and making a reputation for himself as a marketable composer. On the other, his songs take their place among his most artistic creations that are accessible only to the refined with the most poetic of sensibilities.<sup>14</sup>

There is no evidence that Schumann made distinctions between cycles and collections. He was casual about the way in which he designated his sets of songs, often using *Liedercyclus* and *Liederkreis* interchangeably. For example, he changed the designation of *Frauenliebe und Leben* from "Cyklus in acht Liedern" on the piano drafts to a simple "Acht Lieder" on the title page of the published edition. There were both practical and aesthetic reasons that the cycle was congenial for Schumann. Many of his songs are brief and needed to be placed within larger collections for publication, and he tended to compose in concentrated bursts which made it natural to publish the entire group as a whole.

In his book, David Ferris presents an alternative conception to analyzing Schumann's song cycles. He proposes that the cycle is not generically opposed to the collection, but is a particular kind of collection itself which is composed of pieces whose forms tend to be fragmentary, whose meanings tend to obscure the cycle rather than create overarching unity, and as a result is discontinuous and open-ended. The cycle sets up a provocative context where it

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 6-8.

implies structural connections and hints at larger meanings but never makes them explicit or definitive. Daverio points out that writings of contemporary critics do not provide much help in determining which collections should be considered cycles because they typically limit their reviews to a song-by-song description as well as using a wide range of criteria to characterize a cycle with very little consistency.<sup>15</sup>

It is also important to discuss the differences and similarities apparent in the songs of Schumann and of his contemporaries. The composer who I believe exemplifies this best and who Schumann had much in common with is Franz Schubert. It is often claimed that the German lied was born 19 October 1814 with the composition of Schubert's *Gretchen am Spinnrade* which employed the "new feature" a polyrhythmic combining of accompaniment and differently structured vocal line. In Schubert's songs, the piano parts are no longer structured as simple, subordinated supplements to the more important vocal line. Instead, the accompaniment frequently sets the tone for the entire lied. It is not merely background music or just sound painting—it symbolizes the poetic "self" of the text. When the piano and vocal lines are closely matched the text is bolstered with a type of empathetic unanimity. In addition, contradiction and skepticism are most often manifested in the piano line with a turn toward the minor mode.<sup>16</sup>

There were specific expectations on the part of the listener in relation to the melodic and harmonic conventions employed in a nineteenth century lied. Since the sixteenth century, major and minor were associated with the affects of joy and sadness respectively. Both Classical and Romantic composers relied heavily on the association of higher and lower chords and keys within the circle of fifths. Schubert used these expectations by inserting cadences strategically so

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>16</sup> Marie-Agnes Dittrich. "The Lieder of Schubert." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Lied*, edited by James Parsons, 85-100. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 85-8.

as to punctuate the musico-dramatic context. For example, in *Erlkönig* the tonic chord abruptly terminates a chromatic passage that earlier was allowed to flow into other keys (measures 129-31) which announces the death of the child a significant amount of time prior to the narrator uttering the decisive word “tot,” in measure 147. Schubert was also famous for sudden major to minor changes, the juxtaposition of chords a chromatic mediant apart, chromaticism, and shifts between chords a half-step apart. This bold harmonic experimentation was something that was not lost on his contemporaries and music critics. In 1827 the critic for the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* observed:

Herr Schubert is far-fetched and artificial to an excessive degree—not in melody, but in harmony. In particular he modulates so oddly and so unexpectedly to the most remote regions as no composer on earth has done, at any rate in songs and other small vocal pieces...But equally true is the fact that...he does not seek in vain, that he really conjures up something, which, if performed with complete assurance and ease, truly speaks, and communicates something substantial, to the imagination and sensibility. Let us therefore try ourselves on them, and them on us!<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the unexpected handling of harmony in many of Schubert’s songs, form was something that he manipulated differently compared to his contemporaries. During the nineteenth century, the term “lied” suggested a strophic song in which deliberate simplicity, both textually and musically, guaranteed its tuneful primacy. The text’s regular meter was matched by the music’s symmetrical form most often using major-key harmonies with minimal accompaniment. This resulted in a text-dominated sensibility. In 1816, Schubert created a synthesis of form that combined the uniformity of strophic songs with the expressiveness of ballads. His earlier songs included recitative passages used in a new way in order to gain a singular result. This vivid expression was also translated into moments of word painting. For example, in “Am Meer” (No. 12 from *Schwanengesang*,) the piano tremolo serves to comment on

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 89-90.

demonic love at the heart of Heine's poem. In Schubert's later songs, these recitative-like elements are fused almost imperceptibly with the lyrical elements to create a high level of uniformity. These later songs also reveal a tendency toward formal simplification while the rhythm, melody, and harmony are anything but.<sup>18</sup>

According to Marie-Agnes Dittrich, contrary to the general belief among scholars that Schubert was not discerning between poets, we see in his Lieder that there are patterns which can be observed. As a student Schubert presumably received guidance toward his choice of Lieder texts. In addition to Latin and Greek he came into contact with the poetry of the Enlightenment and *Empfindsamkeit*, including many works by Schiller and Goethe. After the political restoration following the Congress of Vienna in 1815 he turned to contemporary Romantic poetry. What we see is that Schubert was motivated more by topics rather than author. Recurring themes that are often present in his Lieder include social and aristocratic freedom, the joys of friendship, absorption with nature, earthly delight in life, fascination with death, sympathetic bonding with social outcasts and misfits, and love in all of its multifarious permutations.<sup>19</sup>

### **Schumann's Compositional Process**

Keeping in mind Schumann's tie to literature and the way the song cycle was viewed as a Romantic genre, a review of Schumann's compositional process will allow us to see how these affect the conception of Op. 25 as a cycle. Based on the other cycles in his oeuvre, a two-stage compositional process emerges. Many scholars have a view of the way in which Schumann composed his song cycles that stands to be reevaluated. The Eichendorff *Liederkreis*, Op. 39, gives us an opportunity to do this because there are two related circumstances concerning the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 91-4.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 98-9.

way Schumann engaged in the writing of it that challenge our assumptions about how he composed—which is similar to the way Op. 25 was composed. The first assumption is that the poems Schumann set in Op.39 were selected by Clara from Eichendorff's collected edition and were never intended by the poet to be a cycle. The other is that the only complete set of manuscripts that exist for this work indicate that the order in which they were composed bears no relationship at all to the order in which they were published. For these reasons the long standing belief that the poetic texts of a cycle should create a straightforward narrative with a clear beginning and end, such as in *Dichterliebe*, is seriously called into question.<sup>20</sup>

Traditionally, Schumann's song publications are divided into two categories: cycles and collections. This presupposes a distinction between the two compositional processes. In the case of collections, Schumann composed a number of songs and then arranged them into a particular order when he was ready to publish them. The current belief that order is of critical importance has led to the assumption that in these collections he conceived of the arrangement as he composed the songs. With this in mind, the way in which he composed Op. 39 is more in line with the procedure used for collections rather than song cycles. If we step back and consider all of his song publications from 1840-41, we find that it is more typical for him to compose the songs first and then decide on an order afterward whether or not the final product is a designated cycle or a collection.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to *Liederkreis*, Op. 39, *Myrthen*, Op. 25, seems to lie outside of the parameters that currently exist for what defines a song cycle. In his recent Schumann scholarship, Rufus Hallmark has excluded Op. 25 as a song cycle because he believes that it

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<sup>20</sup> Ferris, 171.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 171-2.

lacks many of the defining characteristics of a song cycle such as the use of a single poet, a shared poetic theme or mood, narrative linkage, and prominent shared motives. In addition, the work is almost never performed in its entirety and the composite range of the cycle makes it extremely difficult for a single singer to do so. Notwithstanding these things, it is clear from both the public announcement for the work in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* and the title page of the first published edition that Schumann intended it as a song cycle by designating it as a *Liederkreis*. Schumann's designation of Op. 25 provides at least some evidence that our understanding of the genre is different than his.<sup>22</sup>

One of the best tools that we have today to provide a look into Schumann's compositional process are three volumes of manuscripts that reside in the Berlin Deutsche Staatsbibliothek known as the "Berlin Notebooks." They contain all but two drafts of the 139 solo songs that were composed during the *Liederjahr*, as well as three duets from the same year and four later songs. For most of the songs, the drafts therein are the only surviving manuscript copies in existence. Most are designated with dates of composition which allow us to extrapolate the order of composition. While the notebooks cannot provide definitive proof of Schumann's compositional intentions, they serve as an important reference to the ways in which Schumann conceived of his works. David Ferris has organized the drafts into four different categories:

1. The drafts appear in the exact order of publication, and they are clearly separated off as a unit, complete with a title page. The category includes three published sets of songs: the Heine *Liederkreis*, opus 24; *Dichterliebe*, opus 48; and *Frauenliebe und Leben*, opus 42.
2. The drafts appear either in the exact order of publication or very close to it, but they do not have a title page and are not set off as a separate unit. This category includes five sets of songs: *Fünf Lieder* on texts by Hans Christian Andersen, opus 40; and *Drei zweistimmige Lieder*, opus 43, both of which appear in their published order; as well as *Drei Gedichte von E. Geibel*, opus 30; *Drei Gesänge von A. von Chamisso*, opus 31; and *Sechs Gedichte von Reinick*, opus 36, for each of which there is a single discrepancy between the order of the drafts and the published order of the songs.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 172-3.

3. There is no discernible relationship between the order of the drafts and the published order of the songs, but they still appear together in the same section of the notebook. This category includes four sets of songs: *Myrthen*, opus 25; the Eichendorff *Liederkreis*, opus 39; the Kerner *Liederreihe*, opus 35; and *Zwölf Gedichte aus F. Rückerts Liebesfrühling*, opus 37.
4. There is no discernible relationship between the order of the drafts and the published order of the songs, and the drafts are scattered throughout the notebooks. This is the largest single category, containing seven sets of songs: the first two volumes of *Lieder und Gesänge*, opp. 27 and 51; the first three volumes of *Romanzen und Balladen*, opp. 45, 49, and 53; *Fünf Lieder und Gesänge*, opus 127; and *Vier Gesänge*, opus 142.<sup>23</sup>

If the complete contents of the Berlin notebooks are considered this way, it is clear that the assumption that Schumann adopted two different procedures when composing (one for cycles and another for collections) is an oversimplification. Ferris' first category consists of publications that are universally accepted as song cycles and his fourth category contains publications that are clearly collections. The middle two categories fall in between these extremes and suggest a relationship that is the inverse of what is expected. The publications that Schumann gave the title of *Liederkreis* or *Liedercyclus* to are among the most out of order in the notebooks, and those that were published simply as *Lieder* or *Gedichte* (and rarely performed as complete cycles) were composed in what is essentially the published order. The fact that there are different levels of "completeness" for each draft leads me to believe that this is something that Schumann ordered and compiled himself rather than something that was compiled posthumously.<sup>24</sup>

When Schumann composed his early piano music, he generally worked at the keyboard improvising and sketching ideas that he gradually transformed into finished pieces. In a letter written to Clara on February 24, 1840 shortly after he turned his focus to song composition, he explained that the new genre required a different procedure of "mostly... walking or standing,

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 173-5.

not at the piano,” and stated that it was a different type of music that came “more directly and melodiously.” Knowing this, Hallmark has designated the drafts in the Berlin Notebooks as “piano drafts” and analyzes them as representing the second stage of Schumann’s song composition as opposed to the first stage which is entitled “vocal drafts” and include only the vocal sketches. The first stage consists of vocal sketches that contain the vocal melody, usually complete, without accompaniment. The third and final stage is what he designates as the “fair copy” used as a *Stitchvorlage*, although Schumann sometimes sent a set of piano drafts directly to the publisher. This final stage helps to explain the appearance of the drafts for the cycles outlined in Ferris’ first category of the drafts in the Berlin Notebooks, because they were indeed used as *Stitchvorlage*. The fact that they were set off as separate entities and given title pages suggest that their drafts represent a later stage in the compositional process than the other drafts in the notebooks. By the time he compiled them, he had already decided on which songs would be included in these cycles as well as their published order. In the case of *Liederkreis* and *Frauenliebe und Leben*, the published order was predetermined before the music was written because they set groups of poems that were published as integral lyric cycles. This two-stage compositional process allows us to see that the relation of one song to the next was of supreme importance to Schumann and helps give plausibility to the argument that Schumann adopted what modern analysts would consider to be a non-traditional organization for Op. 25.<sup>25</sup>

The most extreme example of a cycle that was composed first and arranged later is Schumann’s *Zwölf Lieder aus F. Rückerts Liebesfrühling*, Op. 37. This is the only musical work that was published as a joint opus with Clara as her Op. 12 in September of 1841. It includes the last songs of the *Liederjahr* and appears at the end of the Berlin Notebooks. After Robert

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 175-6.

completed the drafts for this cycle, he put them aside for several months until Clara was finished composing the three songs that she was supposed to contribute. She presented these to Robert as a birthday gift on 8 June. The fair copies for this cycle are in Clara's hand and show Robert's seven songs to be in the same order as in the Berlin Notebooks. To Hallmark, this suggests that she was copying from these notebooks. This indicates that the process of ordering the cycle began after the fair copies had been completed. Clara's manuscript served as the *Stitchvorlage* and the correct publication order was indicated to the engraver by a series of red roman numerals at the top of each song. Through his research, Hallmark has discovered that the red numerals were written over partially erased numerals in black which he has used to reconstruct two other earlier orderings.<sup>26</sup>

There is evidence that Schumann used a similar two stage process when composing *Myrthen*, Op. 25. In addition to the piano drafts contained in the Berlin Notebooks, there are four vocal sketches and an incomplete fair copy that survive for this work. Schumann first proposed the publication of Op. 25 in a letter to Franz Kistner dated 7 March, 1840. In it he suggests that the title page read "*Myrthen: Liedercyclus in vier Heften von R. Schumann,*" and then lists the poets whom he set along with the contents of the first book. In the letter he names the poets who were ultimately set in the published cycle minus Julius Mosen and Thomas Moore. What is interesting about this correspondence with his publisher is that his description in the letter of what ultimately became the first book of the cycle differs greatly from the published version. It is evident that Schumann considered Op. 25 to be a complete cycle at the time that he contacted Kistner and he even expresses some impatience to get it into print, perhaps due to the fact that it was intended as a gift for his soon to be bride. Although Schumann altered the arrangement of

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 178-9.

the first book he proposed in the letter, he retained “Widmung” as the opening song and kept the last three songs consecutive in the same order. He ultimately placed the second and third Rückert songs, “Mutter, Mutter” and “Lass mich ihm am Busen hangen,” at the end of the second book followed by the Burns song, “Mein Herz ist im Hochland,” at the beginning of the third book. The arrangement Schumann proposed on 7 March bears no relationship at all to the order of composition based on dates assigned by Schumann or their placement in the Berlin Notebooks. (See figure 1.) This shows that as Schumann composed and compiled the drafts he was not thinking about the order in which he would publish them (or if he did have an order in mind it was not conceived of as concrete) thus exemplifying his two stage process.<sup>27</sup>

At some point after he composed the Moore settings but apparently before the final Rückert song, Schumann sketched out what is essentially the final arrangement of the cycle, which contains twenty-six songs and was ultimately published in four books. This notation of the arrangement is preserved on an undated sheet that is found between two of the drafts in the Berlin Notebooks. It lays out the contents of all four books, listing the titles and approximate number of pages that each would take up. In some cases, the key and name of the poet were also included. The only discrepancy between this and the final published version is the substitution of Rückert’s “Aus den östlichen Rosen” for “Jasminenstrauch.” From the letter to Kistner and the undated page we are able to see that in the case of Op. 25, Schumann did not decide on the order of the songs early in the compositional process, did not compose the drafts in the order that he intended to publish them, and he did not compile the drafts in his notebook in published order.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 179-80.

He began the arrangement of the songs into a cycle only after he had essentially finished composing them.<sup>28</sup>

It is also important to note that it is modern day scholars who have suggested that *Myrthen* is unique among Schumann's cycles. Op. 25 was published with the same designation (*Liederkreis*) that he gave to both his Heine and Eichendorff cycles. In terms of the appearance of their drafts, *Myrthen* is most similar to the Eichendorff *Liederkreis*. A majority of the drafts are consecutive in the order that they were composed, but several of the songs in *Myrthen* and one of the Eichendorff drafts have been placed farther back in the Berlin Notebooks than their dates suggest. Schumann placed the songs of Op. 25 in an arrangement which the drafts suggest were composed in his typical manner. He composed the songs that eventually became Op. 25 by taking one volume of poetry at a time and setting small groups of selected poems over a period of a few days. The order of the drafts reinforces that the composition of songs and their arrangement into a cycle were two distinct stages in Schumann's compositional process. It appears that Schumann wasn't even considering the latter stage at the time that he was engaged in the first. There is also a clear logic to the way in which he composed the songs—he took up different poets in turn and set a group of poems by each of them. The assumption that he simply set a group of poems in the order that he found them or set them in the order he intended to publish in reality sets up a false dichotomy. It is true that it is difficult to generalize about Schumann's cycles and to distinguish a norm and even more so deviations from it. When considering how Schumann conceived of Op. 25, one finds that it is not as unusual as it first appears.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 180-2.

When looking through Schumann's oeuvre, it becomes clear that he didn't have a single typical procedure for arranging songs into cycles, but when reviewing the Heine *Liederkreis*, *Myrthen*, *Frauenliebe und Leben*, the Rückert *Lieder*, and *Dichterliebe*, there is a general principle that applies to all of them. The first stage was to take a book of poetry and set a group of poems over a period of a few days. The next stage was the arrangement of songs into a cycle, which usually began after the songs had been composed. The contrasting ways that Schumann engaged in these stages exemplify the split in his personality between impulsiveness and compulsiveness. This was a dichotomy that Schumann recognized and tried to cope with by creating the alter egos of Florestan and Eusebius. The incredible rate at which he composed most of the songs in the *Liederjahr* and the fact that he usually revised very little, normally only minor details, suggests that this process was almost improvisational in nature with major compositional decisions coming intuitively. In comparison, the arrangement of the songs into a cycle was relatively labored and involved many changes. In the most extreme example of this, Schumann composed nine Rückert songs in the span of twelve days in what is essentially their final form and then spent more than two months determining their published order. The fact that the composition of songs and their arrangement into a cycle were two separate stages also helps to explain the heterogeneous mixture of drafts in the Berlin Notebooks.<sup>30</sup>

### **Op. 25: A Literary Organization**

I have spent considerable time discussing the Romantic song cycle and Schumann's compositional process so as to establish the fact that the parameters and criteria set in place today for defining a song cycle were not present in the nineteenth century. In addition, through the

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 182-94.

Berlin Notebooks we have seen that Schumann composed first and then when arranging groups of songs into cycles, he carefully considered how to enhance the relationships among them. At times, he spent more time deciding on the contents and order of a song cycle than he did composing. He typically began the process of arranging songs into a cycle after he had finished composing them, often changing his mind so many times that it makes clear how mutable the order and contents of his songs cycles are. The final order of the songs in the published cycle convey the various levels of poetic and musical meaning the most effectively in Schumann's mind. What is important to glean from this information is that the order of the songs was not concretely set in Schumann's mind until he was ready for publication. The Berlin Notebooks do not provide definitive proof of Schumann's intent, but they do beg the question as to what was significant to Schumann about the final published order of Op. 25. Were the musical relationships the most important aspect or was the text? Based on the cycle as a Romantic genre and, more importantly, Schumann's two-stage compositional process I argue that the aspects that bind this cycle together are the relationships present in the literature, and the musical relationships are secondary in nature.<sup>31</sup>

Regarding cyclic unity within Op. 25, in the first edition of his book, Eric Sams points out that there will “always be a unifying theme underlying” all of the song cycles that Schumann composed—“namely the composer himself.” He goes on to present a possible narrative of Op. 25, written as if he were Schumann addressing a letter to Clara:

Dear Clara, I confess that I have my faults. I may have been something of an adventurer (the two Venetian songs). Both Eusebius and Florestan like a drink, too (the two drinking songs from the *Westöstlicher Diwan*—and in this there is a certain irony, since it will be old Weick's accusation of drunkenness that will delay the wedding). But I have more positive qualities; a trust in my fate and my star (the other mood of the Goethe songs, in *Freisinn* and *Talismane*), a

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 20-4.

sturdy independence (*Niemand*) and a sense of fun (*Rätsel*). It's true that I tend to get depressed and lachrymose (*Mein Hertz ist schwer, Was will die einsame Träne*) but is that any wonder when we are apart (*Jemand*) and the strain of separation (*Hochländers Abscheid, Ich sende einen Gruss*) is so grievous for me, as well as, I believe, for you (the women's songs of separation—*Lied der Sulieka; Weit, Weit; Im Western*). It may be that I have nothing more to offer you than a woman's ordinary lot in life; as a girl waking to love (*Der Nussbaum*), as a fiancée (*Lieder der Braut*), as a wife grappling with life's problems (*Hauptmanns Weib*), as a mother (*Hochländisches Wiegenleid*), and even, it may be, as a widow, in poverty and grief (*Die Hochländer-Witwe*). But, my dear Clara, I do love you so very much, near worship (*Die Lotosblume, Du bist wie eine Blume*); and I hereby offer you my entire and dedicated devotion (*Widmung*, the first song in the cycle) and with it perhaps a share of immortality (*Zum Schluss*, the last); alpha and omega in twenty-six songs.<sup>32</sup>

I agree with the interpretation that Sams presents and believe that it can be developed further. I believe that a narrative is presented representing the relationship between Schumann and Clara. This was accomplished by splitting the cycle into four books, with each book representing a different sentiment or mood that correlates to an event or series of events within their relationship. Due to the nature of the cycle, namely that it was a gift to Clara for their wedding and in this sense was very personal, it makes sense that the relationships I will present are not immediately apparent.

The first book includes a series of conflicting sentiments, and represents the past relationships and issues that Robert experienced before deciding to settle down with Clara. I believe it also demonstrates the issue of split personalities that Robert struggled with his entire life. Schumann had various affairs and relationships with women before deciding to commit himself to Clara. The most notable are his relationships with the woman he gives the pseudonym Christel (from whom he contracted syphilis,) Ernestine von Fricken (whom he was engaged to before Clara,) and Robena Laidlaw, whom he only cut off a relationship with once he knew for certain that Clara was committed to marry him. None of these relationships can be considered

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<sup>32</sup> Eric Sams, *The Songs of Robert Schumann*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1969), 50.

very healthy. He also battled with overindulgence of many things including alcohol. Schumann experienced an increase in anxiety when he was alone as well as when he was seeking to establish a relationship, resulting in his social behavior fluctuating between periods of isolation and periods of intimacy. The fact that he often felt love and hate simultaneously toward the same person added to his disturbance. As a result, Schumann made an effort to treat his disorder through the creation of his other poetic personalities in addition to using music as a way to bring some inner harmony to what he was feeling.

Schumann's critique in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* of Chopin's variations on Mozart's 'Là ci darem,' published in December of 1831, introduced the figures of Florestan and Eusebius. They were projections of different sides of Schumann's own personality and enthused over Chopin, the newly-discovered composer, and in their excitement sought out the opinion of yet a third character, Master Raro.<sup>33</sup> The name Florestan is taken from Beethoven's *Fidelio* and represents the part of Schumann that is the passionate idealist: impulsive, with a mind that is overflowing with ideas. In contrast, Eusebius is introspective: a retiring soul who honors tradition and ponders the consequences of actions before following through with them. His name is from the saint whose feast day falls on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February two days after the feast day of Saint Clara. Master Raro's role is that of the mediator between these two "personalities" through his rare wisdom between the extreme positions each personality holds. Initially, Raro embodied Schumann's mentor Friedrich Weick, but as the relationship between the two men began to sour, Raro acquired a broader, independent character.

In the second book, Schumann expands on the decision to commit to Clara. It has been documented by various biographers that the first time that Clara acknowledged her feelings for

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<sup>33</sup> Taylor, 95.

Robert was when he was engaged to Ernestine von Fricken and Clara realized that she might lose him. They both drew closer as the engagement between Robert and von Fricken dissolved. From the moment that he moved into the Weick household, Robert had marveled at Clara's talent and enjoyed her company, which he had come to take as a matter of course. In the early months of 1835 Clara went on an extended concert tour of north German cities with her father, and when she returned to Leipzig in April Schumann saw her in a different light. He thought that she seemed to have grown and saw in her eyes the "secret ray of love." This moment sparked the determination to take her as his wife.<sup>34</sup>

For many scholars, the songs in the third book seem to make no real sense and disprove the idea of a narrative. I see this book as symbolizing the period in Robert and Clara's relationship where all communication was cut off and there was some question as to whether the relationship would progress or end. It is also reminiscent of the time that Schumann spent in the country in 1833 with his brother and sister-in-law in Schneeberg. He described it as idyllic and writes of the simplicity and purity that the country holds in his journal. Between February 1836 and August 1837, there was no contact between Clara and Robert due to the controlling wishes of her father. Her father's behavior toward Clara could be perceived as odd and no doubt led to her abject submissiveness. For example, he sought constantly to travel with his daughter, to control her every move, censor her mail, write in her diary, and to keep her away from other men. On their concert tours together, Friedrich would share Clara's room and supervise her. Schumann's name disappeared from her programs and she only rarely played his music in private gatherings. There were no letters between the two and in effect there was no relationship. This is the most pointed reason I find for the inclusion of this book in Op. 25. It disrupts the

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 121-2.

narrative and goes on a literary tangent,<sup>35</sup> just as the disruption in their relationship took them away from each other for a time. For Schumann, the pain of separation was indescribable and he found solace in music.<sup>36</sup>

Weick's ban concerning communication between the two was very destructive, and as a result both became doubtful of the other and extremely anxious. Even though they had sworn to be faithful to one another, Schumann was afraid that Weick was trying to find a more suitable husband for Clara. In turn, Clara feared that Schumann would resort back to his previous life of drinking and pursuing women. It was during this time that Clara deepened her relationship with Carl Banck, a composer and voice teacher that Clara fell in love with, who accompanied her and her father on a previous concert tour in 1834. Schumann reverted back to his previous habits, as Clara feared, and again had relations with Christel. Robert started trying to date in order to "give up" Clara, and began the relationship with Robena Laidlaw. In essence, there was real uncertainty in both Robert's and Clara's lives from 1833-37.<sup>37</sup>

The last book of the cycle deals with separation in various forms. In this book, Schumann expands upon the forced separation by Friedrich Weick that he and Clara had to overcome as well as the separation from family that one experiences by being united to another through marriage. This book ultimately addresses the choice that Clara made between her father and

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<sup>35</sup> The literary tangent is something that is used within the nineteenth century, most prominently in the writings of Jean Paul. Frequently in his novels he would insert metaphors, comparisons, allegories, illusions, and even novels within a novel. This forced a high level of concentration and involvement from the reader. Schumann felt that he was linked to Jean Paul in both personality and artistic ability. For this reason, a literary tangent is not beyond the realm of possibilities within the organization of the biographical narrative in Op. 25.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Ostwald, *Schumann: The Inner Voices of a Musical Genius*. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1985), 74,123.

<sup>37</sup> John Worthen, *Robert Schumann: Life and Death of a Musician* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 147.

Schumann. The relationship between Clara and Robert was back on course in August of 1837, and they both declared 14 August to be their engagement day and secretly exchanged rings. Schumann immediately drafted a letter to Weick—he was determined to go through the appropriate channels this time after his negative experience with Ernestine of secretly courting, becoming engaged to, and then calling off the engagement. In this letter to Weick, he included a statement of his current and hoped-for future earnings to prove how serious he was. Weick was vehemently against the proposal and refused to give his consent. He then tightened the restrictions on Clara and would not allow the two to see each other except in public, would not allow any correspondence unless she was on tour and under his watchful eye, and also told Schumann that he did not have sufficient income to support her. These reasons in conjunction with the realization that Weick would never change his mind on the matter led Robert and Clara to start the lengthy proceedings in court to allow them to marry.<sup>38</sup>

During this period of time Schumann directed his focus to composition with Clara as his muse. He wrote to her that he was “playing with forms. For the most part I’ve felt for the last year and a half as I had come into possession of the secret...If you stay faithful to me, everything will come to the surface...” The playing with forms is something that he continued to do throughout his career and serves as a point to help bring plausibility to a large-scale biographic form in Op. 25.<sup>39</sup>

On 11 August, 1840 Robert and Clara were given legal permission to marry after the nearly four year-long battle with her father. Prone to mystical and symbolic interpretation,

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

Schumann conferred special significance on this day of victory. The following day, 12 August, was the feast of St. Clara, the 13<sup>th</sup> was the feast of St. Aurora (or the new dawn), and the 14<sup>th</sup> was the feast of St. Eusebius, and he considered these to form a holy trinity. Their wedding took place on 12 September 1840 in the village church of Schönefeld outside of Leipzig. The following day, 13 September, was Clara's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, the moment when she would have become free to manage her money and make her own choices. With the time needed for the banns to be read, 12 September was the earliest Saturday that the wedding could be held. Schumann surely savored the irony and the poetic justice which united him and Clara on the last possible day left to them that they could assert their love in defiance of her father, who had done all in his power to prevent the union.<sup>40</sup>

This analysis of *Myrthen* may seem unusual to some, especially since scholars have come to regard the presence of an immediately recognizable narrative discourse as one of the defining criteria for Schumann's cycles. This comes as a direct result of the paradigmatic status of both *Dichterliebe* and *Frauenliebe und Leben*. However, when studying Schumann's other song cycles one sees other examples of this type of biographical or psychological narrative being used, notably in *Dichterliebe*, Op. 48.

The recurring idea in the secondary literature written on Op. 48 is that in the process of choosing which poems to set from Heine's *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, Schumann extracted a clear narrative that Heine only vaguely implies. He reduced sixty-six poems to sixteen and, according to Rufus Hallmark, in so doing avoided or downplayed a number of themes in order to condense the drama. A number of scholars agree with Hallmark's interpretation, most notably Barbara

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 179, 183.

Turchin and Christopher Lewis. Both Turchin and Lewis have elaborated on it by outlining Schumann's plot as a three-part structure similar to the four books that Schumann uses to delineate Op. 25.

There are a few issues with the aforementioned interpretation of *Dichterliebe* as a narrative discourse, which David Ferris addresses. It is his analysis of *Dichterliebe* that I believe to be most accurate and which bears the most resemblance to the organization of Schumann's narrative in Op. 25. Ferris uses the relationship between what narratologists refer to as the "narrative," which represents the discourse itself (in this case the 16 poems,) and the "story," which is the sequence of events that is the subject of the discourse. In *Dichterliebe* the story outlines first the poet falling in love, the romance carried on between the poet and his beloved, the beloved ending the relationship, and finally the beloved marrying another man. However, it becomes clear that the order of the songs is not derived from a chronological order. The real subject is the poet's emotional and psychological response to the story, and the sequence of the cycle does not depend on the logical conventions of storytelling, but rather on dream and memory. The poet starts off as if he is going to tell a story when in love, but then interrupts himself and immediately proceeds to plead with, express his love to, and then mock his beloved with bitter irony. It becomes apparent that these things are not occurring in the present and that the poet is talking to himself.<sup>41</sup>

For these reasons, Ferris analyzes the narrative as one in the metaphorical sense. It is not recounting a series of events but is instead an inner psychological narrative. The action takes place entirely within the poet's memory, which does not operate in normal time. The conflicting

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<sup>41</sup> Ferris, 204-5.

sentiments of love, desire, rage, and grief are all comingling in his memory throughout the cycle. This creates a level of tension that coexists with and works against a logical sequence of emotions. For example, in the fifth song the poet fantasized about an erotic union with a lily that reminds him of the kiss of his beloved. In the sixth song, a portrait of the Virgin ironically reminds him of the face of his beloved. Both songs are a product of the poet's imagination and serve to remind him of a past time when he felt differently about his beloved. There is no temporal relationship between the two events which means that our understanding of the two poems is not dependent on the order in which we hear them. Though different in size and sentiment, similarities can be drawn between the literary organization of Op. 25 and Op. 48.<sup>42</sup>

### **Op. 25: Musical Considerations**

Although the unity in this song cycle is achieved primarily through the literary methods discussed in the previous section, there are still significant unifying musical aspects between the twenty-six songs of which it is comprised. There are specific tonal and motivic themes presented in the first song which are then made apparent in subsequent songs of the cycle. Op. 25 as a whole displays characteristics of what constitutes a song cycle to the modern scholar. In addition, Schumann uses word painting as a technique to help unify the cycle in similar fashion to Schubert.

The idea that the first song of a cycle contains significant tonal, motivic, and poetic themes which are then made apparent in the subsequent songs of the cycle is presented in Barbara Turchin's article "Schumann's Song Cycles: The Cycle within the Song." She argues that to Schumann and his contemporaries, a poetic relationship among the songs achieved either

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 206.

by a narrative design or a grouping a poems that share a central idea in monologue or dialogue format was the basic concept of the song cycle. Schumann also equated the song cycle with the idea of variation. He conceived of it in the broadest sense to include not only the idea of a discrete theme followed by variations related closely by outer design and inner musical content, but also involving motivic associations among individual parts of a composition. The coherence then is guaranteed by the presence of a basic thematic core which is afforded great flexibility and freedom in its treatment. The kinship between parts of the whole is sensed yet elusive. The features of this “variation” thinking are then presented in his song cycles as a theme—either a full-fledged melody, structural bass line, or condensed motto—which is presented either explicitly or (more often) implicitly in the opening statement with its identity and full potential unfolding through the ensuing “character variations” of the subsequent songs of the cycle.<sup>43</sup>

In Op. 25, Schuman presents nine themes or mottos that are then represented and developed in the subsequent songs of the cycle. These include: 1) an opening arpeggiated A-flat major (tonic) chord in first inversion (Figure 2) which also acts as a prominent recurring figure, 2) the quotation of Schubert’s *Ave Maria* (Figure 3), 3) the presence of a prelude and a postlude which translates to moments where the piano is in the forefront which in turn would also include interludes, 4) common tone modulation (to this theme I also include modulation to the parallel or relative major or minor,) 5) arpeggiated movement in the vocal line, 6) the presence of two distinct accompanimental styles, 7) the presence of what Sams refers to as the “Clara motive”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Barbara Turchin, “Schumann’s Song Cycles: The Cycle within the Song.” *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 8, no. 3 (Spring, 1985): 231-3.

<sup>44</sup> In Eric Sams’s article [“Did Schumann Use Ciphers?” *The Musical Times* 106, no. 1470 (August 1965): 584-91.], he points out that with Schumann the concept of music and letters was profoundly unified. He asserts that Schumann used the motive of C—B-flat—A—G-sharp—A to spell out Clara’s name and then used it throughout the cycle. From what we know about

(Figure 4), 8) word painting, and 9) the alteration of the original text to suit Schumann's musical and narrative needs. It is important to note that all themes or mottos need not be present in every song. As long as each song contains one or more of these in common with the first song, "Widmung," the relationship can be established. (A comprehensive chart of these relationships in each song can be found in Figure 5.)

One of the first things that one notices when listening to "Widmung" is the series of rising phrases in the accompaniment which is then taken over by the voice, and together voice and accompaniment achieve the effect of sailing up to the apex of the song in measure 9 on "schwebe" or "float." The vocal line is inherently set up for more emphasis on the words "joy," "pain," and "float," and the active accompaniment moves the song along in a steady legato stream. At measure 13 the mood of the song changes as Schumann moves from A-flat major to E major—an enharmonic chromatic median relationship. Instead of a fluid accompaniment, we are given triplet block chords over a sustained bass which serves to stretch the metrical line into four, and exemplifies the lover expressing his reverence for his beloved. This same reverence is expressed in the postlude, where Schumann quotes Schubert's *Ave Maria* from measures 40-44. It is also within this section that we are presented with the Clara motive, though it is spelled enharmonically and chromatically altered from measures 14-16. Measure 30 resumes the initial mood with a burst of energy and the opening theme is returned to in both vocal and piano lines. In his analysis of the song Gerald Moore adds that the "postlude is not fashioned to support the

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Schumann's compositional process, personality, and eccentricities the use of ciphers was within the realms of possibility and in this case works in conjunction with the other themes and mottos presented in "Widmung" to add emphasis and continuity throughout the cycle.

hot vein of passion but should surely be an echo of it.”<sup>45</sup> As has been previously stated, Schumann manipulates the meter of the original poem. Rückert set the text in iambic tetrameter, which plays on the dichotomy of “du” and “mein”. Instead of following this model, Schumann emphasizes “du” at each entrance and deemphasizes the “mein”. He also changes the lines within his triple meter such as in measure 10 where he runs two and a half lines together to form a single line.<sup>46</sup>

The second song in the cycle, with poetry written by Goethe, is “Freisinn.” This song carries forward the uneven rhythms of “Widmung.” In “Freisinn,” the male speaker is thinking of his freedom, more specifically freedom from domestic constraints. Schumann uses Goethe’s setting of the verse freely and repeats the first stanza to create the song’s ternary form. Part of this may have been due to the irregularity of the poem itself, with its first verse being in trochaic pentameter, and the second in irregular tetrameter. If Schumann would have set the text unaltered, it would have resulted in a difference of declamation altering the conclusion and making it less satisfying to the listener. According to Gerald Moore we see through the way that he set the poem that Schumann was taking it literally without expressing a deeper meaning. Harmonically, Schumann stays within the tonic and dominant keys, except from measures 14-22 where he is briefly in the relative C minor. The melody is luxurious and is full of the joy of life which Schumann expresses via the use of the semi-quaver to introduce a repeated tone (measures 2-4.) This rhythmic figure lends itself to a halting movement which does not allow for any suspension of the tonic or a sustaining pedal. It also serves to distort the listener’s perception by

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<sup>45</sup> Gerald Moore, *Poet’s Love: The Songs and Cycles of Schumann* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1981), 65-7.

<sup>46</sup> Finson, 24.

emphasizing the weak beat and sounding as if it is in 2/4 rather than 4/4. This rhythmic figure also acts as both an introduction and interlude.<sup>47</sup>

For a composer who mostly set only the best known poets the fact that Schumann set “Der Nussbaum”, a text by his little known acquaintance Julius Mosen, begs the question of why. Eric Sams points out that the choice and treatment of poets in Schumann’s works was self-expressive. He liked poets to be well known to him personally and to share his liberal and agnostic views. He tended to choose poems that either directly mirrored his own feelings or were easily adjusted to reflect his feelings.<sup>48</sup> The question of why Schumann chose a less popular and established poet is also answered in the irregularity of verse and the way that he sets the poem. Finson states that Schumann chose this “verse by a very obscure poet of no great stature” because “it’s picture of the walnut tree’s rustling branches whispering of a maiden, of her longing, and of the bridegroom in her future seems to be made” for the cycle. Ultimately though, Schumann alters the poem for his own musical convenience. He deemphasizes the urgency of the rhymed single words that repeat in each of the stanzas and melds them into a single line. The only exception to this is in the third stanza, due to its syntax. In addition, he substitutes the more expressive word “blatter” for the original “äste” and ignored the verse form of “leise” and its rhyming “weise.” These changes ultimately add to the dream-like mood of the entire song.<sup>49</sup> In “Der Nussbaum,” the opening figure (E—B—A—G) repeats itself over and over, most prominently when in the tonic key. It is meant to symbolize the leaves that are whispering of the bridegroom and is reminiscent of the ever-present hoof beats in Schubert’s *Die Erlkönig*. This

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 24-25, 67.

<sup>48</sup> Sams, 4.

<sup>49</sup> Finson, 25.

opening figure also plays the role of prelude, interlude, and postlude in the piano. The tonic is established from mm 1-2 via a IV—V—I progression that is both gradual yet elementary in nature. For this reason, the opening tonic arpeggio is presented in root position rather than the first inversion of the tonic chord presented in “Widmung.” Schumann still gives us the tonic in first inversion, but in this song it appears at the end of the vocal phrase rather than at the beginning. The phrases sung by the singer are shaped like the branch of a tree, rising and falling like the tapering of the branch. The word “flüstern” (whisper) occurs five times which leads into the tranquil mood of the final ten bars as the maiden smiles in her dream. This song displays the arpeggiated accompanimental style introduced in “Widmung” which in this case gives life to the drowsy atmosphere of the dreaming girl. Another aspect that directly helps to establish this atmosphere is the modulation to A harmonic minor from measures 31-41. This modulation is hinted at with the introduction of F-natural in measure 20, but is not fully realized until the chromatically altered opening figure (C-natural—E—F-sharp—B) in measure 31. We are presented with the relative minor of the subdominant, which allows Schumann to intersperse color into his phrases while at the same time disguise the fact that there has been a change in key to the listener. In order to return to the opening key of G major, he uses common tone modulation by way of B-natural in the voice from measures 40-42.<sup>50</sup>

“Jemand” is the fourth song in the cycle, and is an immediate juxtaposition to “Der Nussbaum” by implying a limited narrative progression, and typifies the conflicting sentiments presented in this first book. Schumann starts the song in E minor to express the young girl bewailing her separation from her loved one. He achieves this through using a simple tune over detached staccato chords. Also, whenever “jemand” (“someone”) appears in the vocal line it is

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<sup>50</sup> Moore, 68-9.

consistently set in a descending pattern of seconds. This adds to the feeling of despair and makes the mention of the departed “someone” seem to be more of a sigh than a statement. The key of E minor is also a small nod to the folkloric style of the poetry of Burns, though the setting eventually becomes declamatory in nature. It distantly hints at parallel strophes and the halting, uneven declamation mixes with the shifting accompaniment and melody, which is Schumann’s response to Burns’s persona. Schumann modulates to the parallel major in measure 26 and presents us with a chromatically altered *Ave Maria* quote in mm 8-9. A minor third replaces the major third of the original to match the gloom of the text. Finally, in order to have both block and fluid accompanimental styles present, there is a change in meter to 6/8 in measure 46 to allow the postlude to have the same character as both “Widmung” and “Der Nussbaum.”<sup>51</sup>

The fifth and sixth songs (“Lieder aus dem Schenkenbuch im Divan I & II”) are both taken from Goethe’s *West-östlicher Divan* and contain contradictory sentiments with juxtaposition of atmosphere. In “Lieder I,” a gentleman is comfortably settled in his armchair with a decanter of wine ready at hand. It is too elegant of a song to merely be described as a drinking song. Rather, it seems that the listener is sharing the thoughts of a connoisseur who raises the glass to appreciate the color before he savors the flavor. The short song, comprising only twenty five measures, is given variety through rapid change in meter with short piano interludes. This calm mood is immediately disrupted by the accompaniment in the piano, which mimics the heavy footsteps of the clumsy serving boy, who thrusts the wine on the table with a thud. The words and music are graphically matched at the beginning of this song and there is no effort made to produce an agreeable tone. Measures 2-5 are converted to the parallel major key and represent a softening of emotion as the patron learns that the serving boy will soon be

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<sup>51</sup> Finson, 25-6.

training to be the wine-bearer. The postlude is full of grace and warmth and is repeated twice before the song ends.<sup>52</sup> This song also uses short rhyming couplets and speaks about the joys of living life as a single person. Schumann sets these whimsically, and repeats the first couplet to create a ternary form. “Lieder II” was arranged by Schumann from two parts of Goethe’s original, with the subtitles from the poem omitted. The first part of the song is addressed to the landlord in a declamatory style that is commenting on his rudeness as a host, and the second part welcomes the company of a “handsome young youth” who is employed as the “cup bearer.” This episode is set lyrically and acts as a moral for the end of both the individual song and the first “book.” It is clear that these songs are meant to be a pair. Both display the two accompanimental styles that are presented in “Widmung.” The juxtaposition of sentiment is represented in “Lieder I” by the modulation to C major and change in meter to symbolize the character’s obstinance (and perhaps even Schumann’s own issues with drinking). In “Lieder II” the juxtaposition occurs via the modulation to the parallel major in measure 12. “Lieder I” contains a recurring opening figure that also serves as a small interlude between phrases and “Lieder II” has a substantial postlude, with a rhythmic pattern that disguises the downbeat, and represents the clumsiness of the young cup-bearer. Essentially what Schumann gives us with these last two songs in Book One is a reiteration of the sentiment of conflicting emotion.<sup>53</sup>

“Die Lotosblume” marks the beginning of the second book of the cycle which deals with firm commitment and all that it entails. It is from Heine’s *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, and speaks of the depth of chaste love. The voice acts as the thread of this song with the accompaniment subsisting of block chords over a slow, sustained bass, representing the calm lake on which the flower is

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<sup>52</sup> Moore, 70-2.

<sup>53</sup> Finson, 26.

floating. The simplicity of accompaniment in “Die Lotosblume” contradicts the complex treatment Schumann gives to Heine’s verse in the vocal line. At first glance, the poem seems to be a fairly regular iambic triameter, but in reality it is in *Langzeilenvers*, which is a special type of iambic tetrameter which was favored by nineteenth-century German poets. Over and over again the last two syllables of the first line both receive an accent, while a silent foot follows the syllable with an accented ending in the second line of each couplet. Schumann takes word accent into account, and that is the primary factor of the setting. This allows the silent foot to occur during a half measure of rest in the voice. Where it serves his purposes, Schumann ignores the iambic pattern by placing the first syllable of a line on an accented beat as opposed to an upbeat. This song shares the same intensity of message as “Widmung,” the first song in Book One and even shares common-tone modulation to a flattened mediant key.<sup>54</sup>

The first phrase that the vocalist sings contains the unaltered Clara motive. Presenting the motive unaltered emphasizes the commitment to Clara, and is a way to immediately and firmly establish the mood of the second book. When the motive was initially presented in “Widmung,” it was representing her as a child and in the light that Schumann saw her at that time. Now she is presented unmasked and in full womanhood in the role of a lover. For this reason, from measures 3-4 Schumann allows there to be a substantial silent gap of three whole beats between the words “ängstigt” and “sich,” which is something that is not usually seen in his vocal music. Here, at the very outset of the song, the vocalist needs to be in complete control over the sense of the music to be sure not to come in too heavily mid phrase on “sich.” Another important aspect to note is the way in which Schumann sets the first nine measures. The arrangement of melody to accompaniment aurally leads the listener to believe that the fifth scale degree is the tonic,

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 26-7.

primarily due to the fact that the phrases start on the fifth scale degree, and are supported by tonic block chords in second inversion in the accompaniment. In each phrase of the song, the interval from note to note is very close until measure 23. On “Liebe,” we are presented with the interval of a sixth and the rapturous phrase to which it is a part is sung twice.<sup>55</sup>

The eighth song, “Talismane,” is written in the key of C major which is a common key used for the glorification of God. It is from a male point of view and deals with the inevitability of God’s will.<sup>56</sup> Schumann alters the original poetry by repeating the first stanza and by omitting the fourth and fifth stanzas. The declamation of the text implicitly stands out against the accompaniment, but it is the forward march of the chords in the accompaniment that presses the song forward. This song also contains both accompanimental styles presented in “Widmung,” but presents them in opposite order from the first song of the cycle. The recurring opening figure from measures 1-4 that contains a C-major arpeggio acts as a prelude, postlude, and interlude. It is always presented as a declamation before new text is presented. The mood changes in measure 21 where there is a modulation to G major, and the rhythm becomes more pliable with a smooth moving vocal line. Similarly to the quotation of Schubert’s *Ave Maria*, this passage recalls the straying sheep of Handel’s *Messiah*. At measure 30, a detached chord marked *forte* brings us back to the main theme which makes “Gottes ist der Orient” more commanding in nature than

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<sup>55</sup> Moore., 73-5.

<sup>56</sup>Finson argues that “Talismane” and “Lied der Suleika” were meant to be a pair because Schumann believed them to both be written by Goethe when in reality it was penned by Goethe’s mistress, Marianne von Willemer, in a love letter to the poet. Finson also cites the indirect key relationship of E-minor in the middle section of “Talismane,” which is the minor dominant of A-major in which “Lied der Suleika” is set. Although both of these observations are true, I do not believe that the two should be considered a pair.

before. Two “Amens” conclude the song and are set low in the range almost forcing the singer to express Schumann’s wish for a reverent *piano*.<sup>57</sup>

“Lied der Sulieka” is one of the two songs (“Rätsel,” based on a riddle where H—B natural in German—is the answer, is the second) that Schumann included in the cycle under the impression that they were written by someone else. As has been discussed, the text had been attributed to Goethe in many anthologies of the nineteenth century but it was in fact written by his mistress. For this song Schumann also alters the original poetry to suit his musical needs. He repeats certain parts of phrases to add emphasis (measures 7-8, 23) and repeats part of the first stanza to achieve his modified strophic form. Through the interplay of the rapturous melody and the accompaniment with smooth legato passages and repeated chords Schumann paints a picture of love. The song opens with the same arpeggio presented in the first measure of “Widmung” and repeats at the start of each strophe. There is also a substantial postlude from measures 40-43 which fleshes out the sense of loss of conviction we are left with when the vocal line finishes in measure 40.<sup>58</sup>

Robert Burns penned the poem for the tenth song, “Die Hochländer-Witwe.” In this poem, a wife binds herself to the disastrous fortunes of her spouse, and the text gives retrospective poignancy to “Lied der Suleika.” The most dominant trait is the syllabic text setting in the voice. Schumann employs the unusual time signature of 6/16 to allow the singer to spout out the text in rapid succession. The accompaniment mirrors the emotion of the poem by using block chords in frantic repetition of an uneven rhythmic figure. Finally in the postlude (measures 67-73) we are given a more fluid right hand over the same uneven and frantic figure in the left

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<sup>57</sup> Moore, 75-7.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 77-8.

hand. As is to be expected due to the emotional tone of the poem, the song is in E-minor though there is a brief modulation to C-major at measure 45 when speaking of her husband's duty to his "Scot-country."

Just as with the conclusion of the first book, the next two songs are written as a pair, and take the sentiment of loss and woe and transfigure the female character's affections for others into determination to risk the uncertain in her future. "Lieder der Braut aus dem Liebesfrühling I" reemphasizes the commitment to the beloved while in "Lieder der Braut aus dem Liebesfrühling II" the female character is pleading for her mother's blessing. Again Schumann alters the text in both songs by repeating phrases for effect. In the first, this occurs in measures 23-26 and measures 38-41; in the second, he repeats the entire first phrase of the song from measures 29-32 and adds a small "echo" in measure 36. In "Lieder der Braut I," the Clara motive is presented in the accompaniment (measures 8-10) though it is chromatically altered with a B-natural instead of a B-flat to stay within the constraints of the key signature. In this song, Schumann chooses to start with a rolled root-position tonic chord instead of the first-inversion arpeggiated tonic chord presented in "Widmung." The fluid accompaniment is accentuated with a lengthy postlude (measures 41-49,) and in both songs the vocal line is highly ornamented and is reminiscent of an aria. In "Lieder der Braut II," Schumann plays with the expectation of the strophic verse by pausing mid-sentence and sets the text in a chorale-like texture with mainly block chord accompaniment. This song also contains a prelude and postlude. There are some very obvious instances of text painting—for instance, at measure 21 the fermata literally ends all music in response to "Enden" (end,) and the final "lass mich" in measure 36 is more of a final plea for the mother's blessing.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Finson, 27-8.

The third book predominantly features the British poets Robert Burns, Lord Byron, Catherine Fanshawe, and Thomas Moore. Burns's poetry contains many progressive political elements, as well as folklore, which Schumann may have found intriguing and fitting for what he was trying to convey within this book. The first song is "Hochländers Abschied," which was one of Burns's most famous poems in the nineteenth-century. Schumann sets this verse in a mild folkloric style by using the minor mode, heavy accents, hunting rhythms, and varied strophic form. Schumann uses both accompanimental styles first presented in "Widmung" in this song as well. The piano primarily plays block chords over a structural bass line, but in the B section (measures 25-40) where Schumann moves to the parallel major (B major) we are presented with the fluid accompanimental style presented in "Widmung." This is very fitting for the recollection of beauty and the arpeggios in the right hand from measures 25-31 represent the rolling hills both aurally and visually in the score. Though brief, Schumann also includes a prelude, interludes before each strophe, and a postlude. The 3/8 time signature helps to establish the fervency of the text, while the predominantly arpeggiated vocal line from measures 13-14 and measures 33-35 recalls what was established in "Widmung."

The next song, "Hochländisches Wiegenlied," is much more simplistic, and is strophic. This is primarily due to the fact that he is setting a lullaby. The accompaniment is in reality playing block chords over a structural bass line, but achieves fluidity by doubling the vocal line in the right hand for the entirety of the song. Schumann takes the folkloric syncopation of the text and uses "developing variation" and sequencing to move the ideas forward. Though the vocal line is not predominantly arpeggiated, Schumann uses a series of ascending skips of a perfect fourth followed by a perfect fifth followed by a major sixth to drive the line forward in measures 7-8 and measures 9-10. What is also interesting to note is that while the song is firmly

grounded in the key of D major, the voice centers around the mediant tone of F-sharp. The same material serves as both the interlude and the postlude (measures 11-12) with descending harmonizing D-major arpeggios. This helps to not only establish the tonic, but to create a “dream-like” atmosphere by luxuriating within the same chord.<sup>60</sup>

The fifteenth song, “Aus den hebräischen Gesängen,” with text written by Lord Byron, uses non-periodic phrases. It stands in stark contrast the preceding song and is afforded the most unusual musical treatment. The high level of chromaticism and contrapuntal figuration mixed with arpeggiated figures helps to bring out the mood of the text. Schumann uses the verse freely, and inserts words that undermine the regularity of the verse even further. This setting undeniably stands out as the most melancholy in the entire cycle. Schumann uses text painting throughout, most obviously in measure 9 where the voice jumps up the octave on “Auf” (up.) He modulates back and forth between the parallel major (measures 17-36,) and within the E-major section establishes the use of the tonic chord in first inversion presented in “Widmung.” The melodic line is straightforwardly eloquent. A descending passage of chromatic quavers (first presented in measures 5-6) runs through most of the song and represents the lute being tuned. After the ritard of the opening phrase, the accompaniment picks up the tempo in measures 8. From measures 7-10, the interval of an augmented fourth occurs four times and adds poignancy to the text, and is an interval that Schumann often uses in moments of deep emotion. In addition, the postlude ends on a major chord (E,) which is a symbol of hope.<sup>61</sup>

What is most interesting about “Aus den hebräischen Gesängen” is the way in which it is set. Essentially Schumann uses recitative and aria to get the point across. These contrasting

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 29-30.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 30.

sections help to establish the dual personalities of the text. From measures 7-16 and measures 45-57 we are presented with what could be considered “recitative” passages (another trait borrowed from Schubert seen in his later Lieder). These sections are more declamatory and the text at these points is more frenzied and pleading in nature. The “aria” sections (measures 21-36 and measures 61-77) describe hope and then sorrow. Schumann uses the same interlude material before both sections, with the exception of an A-minor chord at measure 59 in place of an A-major chord to signify sorrow as well as hint at the following presentation of the material in the minor mode. The material in the second aria section (measures 61-77) is essentially the same as the first (measures 21-36) except that it is presented in the minor mode and has a few rhythmic alterations due to text setting. It is also important to note the difficulty of range that Schumann presents to the vocalist in measures 45-49. In these measures, the vocal line descends below the range of a soprano and into the alto or even the tenor range. It is not outside of the realms of possibility that a soprano or mezzo soprano could sing this song—what it indicates is that this song is meant for a skilled musician.

The next song is “Rätsel” and is a riddle on the letter H. When Schumann was setting the text he believed it to be penned by Lord Byron because it erroneously appeared in several nineteenth-century anthologies of his poetry. In reality, it was written by Catherine Fanshawe who was a relatively obscure British poet. In order to fully comprehend how Schumann is employing the riddle itself, one must see the score. He leaves the text blank under the last vocal pitch and the answer is written as a B-natural, which is an unvoiced pitch. At this point the piano usurps the role of the vocalist by answering the riddle in the last measure which is in contrast to its primary role of playing mainly block chords over a structural bass line. Schumann employs the use of text painting in measures 10-11 and measures 27-28 by using fanfares to symbolize

battle and heroes and in measure 43 by writing out ornamentation in the vocal line to represent flowers. While on the surface this song seems to present few of the motives presented in “Widmung,” Schumann includes a chromatically altered Clara motive in measures 4-5, 21-22, and 40-41. It was fitting placement—its very nature brings attention back to the sentiment of the third book itself.<sup>62</sup>

The last two songs are settings of poems by Thomas Moore, “Zwei Venetianische Lieder I & II.” The first song appears to be a traditional gondola song which is interrupted with parlondo style for the second couplet of each stanza. The second is prefaced by a prelude and is a romantic vignette from Shrovetide. The second half of the stanza is dispelled by a postlude and ends the book with an air of lightheartedness.<sup>63</sup> The first song tells the story of a shadowy passenger who is urging his gondolier to make no sound with his oar as they sail over the water. He wants no one to perceive their presence except for his lover to whom they are rowing. The gondolier appears to have no interest in the interaction other than professional, and plays the role of the confidant. In this song, the role of the gondolier is given to the piano, which is represented by a soft swaying figure that stays at a controlled *piano* sustained by the soft pedal.

The second song in this pair finds the listener in the company of a lady whose charms have drawn her enthusiastic lover out into the night, thus preventing the gondolier from returning home to his bed. A plan is made for later that night for them to run away together—she in a mask, and he dressed as a gondolier. (One can’t help but notice the similarities to the secret rendezvous that were planned between Robert and Clara during their courtship.) The lover seems to be more enthused about the adventure than his female company though. This gaiety and gusto

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 30-1.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 31.

is represented in the syncopated left hand of the piano. The fact that the third book ends with a set of songs just as the first and second books shows consistency of format.<sup>64</sup>

The last book deals with the issues of separation and setback and begins with two songs penned by Robert Burns which also act as a link between the third and fourth books. It is important to note that this book includes songs that either reiterate or are in contrast to songs contained in other books which in turn help to recapitulate the ideas previously presented and to conclude the cycle as a whole. In addition, each song in this book is brief and all but one are either through composed or strophic in form with no significant or sustained modulation to another key. “Hauptmanns Weib,” which shares sentiments with “Die Hochländer Witwe,” concerns the distant beloved. Schumann sets the theme of the warrior with aggressive block chord accompaniment reminiscent of the B section of “Widmung” interspersed with an interlude that is more brooding in nature. The poem is not rearranged and falls neatly into a ternary form (the only song in this book to be in this form) due to the fact that the last four lines of the second stanza repeat the poems opening four lines. The Clara motive is presented in the vocal line from measures 22-24 and stands out via the ritard and straightforward rhythm. It also holds symbolic significance due to the fact that it is used when describing a kiss between the vocalist and her beloved. We are then given a substantial eight measure postlude to end the song.

In “Weit, Weit!,” where the female persona is speaking in iambic tetrameter, Schumann takes liberties with the amount of poetic repetition there is in each stanza. In Gerhard’s version, the poem falls into sestets of which the last two lines repeat the third and fourth lines. Schumann reduces these to stanzas of quintains that repeat only the final line and cut out the third stanza altogether. Finson argues that this may have to do with the nature of the stanza because it speaks

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<sup>64</sup> Moore, 82-7.

about the persona being thrown out of her house with only “one man” who “took my part.”<sup>65</sup> The song is in strophic form and, similarly to “Widmung,” opens with an arpeggiated tonic chord. Schumann uses a fluid accompaniment throughout, and a prelude, interlude, and postlude that all share the same material. There is no modulation to another key and the meter is firmly grounded in 6/8 for all but one measure. In measure 8, the time signature changes to 9/8 to rhythmically emphasize the text. The aspect that fully ties this song to the rest of the cycle and more specifically “Widmung” is the overlapping presentation of the chromatically altered Clara motive in the voice and right hand of the piano from measures 12-13.

The twenty-first song “Was will die einsame Träne?” is cast in the parallel major mode to “Weit, weit!” and introduces the notion of a final lone tear from disappointed love and shares similarities to “Freisinn.” Schumann ignores the irony that Heine intended and instead focuses on the thought that grief has “flown.” With this in mind, it is understandable that he set the poem to a lyrical melody that is supported by block-chord accompaniment in through composed form. Similarly to “Hauptmanns Weib” it contains only a postlude. Within the postlude from measures 36-37 Schumann prolongs the tension by sustaining the dominant harmony before a brief resolution to the tonic in measure 38 with two short, staccato A-major chords.<sup>66</sup>

The next song, written by Burns, is “Niemand” and is given instruction that it is the companion piece to the fourth song, “Jemand.” Contrary to the female persona of “Jemand” contemplating the unknown, the male persona in “Niemand” knows exactly what he wants. Both fluid and block chord accompaniment styles are presented. Just as in “Weit, Weit!” Schumann includes a prelude and an interlude and postlude that contain the same materials. The song is

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<sup>65</sup> Finson, 31-2.

<sup>66</sup> Moore, 32-3.

strophic in form and employs a predominantly arpeggiated vocal line. The similarity to “Jemand” is most clearly expressed by the interval of a descending major second whenever the vocalist sings the word “niemand.” This is the exact treatment that the word “jemand” receives in “Jemand.”

The next song in the fourth book is “Im Westen,” in the female point of view, which shares similar ideas with “Talsimane.” Schumann emphasizes the optimism of the second stanza with an arpeggiated pattern in the vocal line which corresponds to a change in accompanimental style. Again Schumann decides to use through composed form and uses the same arpeggiated figure (minus the repeated top note) presented in the first measure of “Widmung” at measure 9. From measures 9-16 Schumann goes back and forth between supertonic and tonic harmonies instead of using dominant to tonic progressions as one might expect to conclude the song.<sup>67</sup>

The last three songs in this book also serve to conclude the cycle in the succession of keys in which it began (A-flat major—E-flat major—A-flat major.) The persona of “Du bist wie eine Blume” looks to the beloved and says things that on the surface appear to be in praise or worship, but which are in reality the opposite of their meaning. “Du bist wie eine Blume” recalls “Die Lotosblume” in treatment of accompaniment with pulsing block chords over a steady bass to which the voice enters quietly and both songs also share a flexible treatment of Langzeilenvers, making it sound almost as if it were in iambic trimeter. Schumann alters the text of Heine’s second line by repeating the word “so.” This missed rhyme is puzzling and may have resulted from transposing the last line of the poem. The diffidence of the lover is expressed in long notes on “Wehmut” (measure 7) and “mir ist” (measures 9-10) which serve to hold up the melody. At measure 12 there is a fall of a seventh as the man thinks of laying his hand on the

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 33.

young girl's head while at the same time fervently praying that God will keep her sweet and pure. It is at this point (measure 16) that the piano joins in with its own melody and carries the sentiment of the vocal line to the end of the brief postlude.<sup>68</sup>

The text of the second to last song, "Aus den östlichen Rosen," is written by Heine and Schumann chooses not to use the actual title of the poem ("Ein Gruss an die Entfernte") as the title of the corresponding song. It is arguably the most graceful and lovely out of the remaining three songs of the cycle and opens with a tonic arpeggio in first inversion. Schumann sets the poem's iambic pentameter over an arpeggiated accompaniment with an interlude between each line. This, in conjunction with the through composed form, allows the five feet of the poem to unfold within the space of two and a half to three measures with the interlude serving to complete the expected four-measure phrases. In the fourth couplet Schumann embellishes what Rückert wrote by using intricate meters.

The final song, "Zum Schluss" acts as a companion to "Widmung" and stays true to Rückert's syntax. In this song, melisma is used in almost every vocal line. This is a technique that Schumann usually used sparingly, but in this case it helps to shape each phrase. "Zum Schluss" opens with block chords containing the notes of the first arpeggio of "Widmung." It behaves like a hymn for the first ten bars with the block harmony and the soprano voice doubling the vocal line. The Clara motive is presented in the vocal line from measures 6-7 and is interrupted by a D-flat escape tone between the first two tones of the motive. What this does is hide the fact that the motive is being presented. At measures 11-12 the voice is finally given

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<sup>68</sup> Astra Desmond, *Schumann Songs* BBC Music Guides 22 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972), 17-8.

independent movement which allows for the use of a striking melisma in measures 13-14 which frees the text to more fully pull on the heart strings of the listener.<sup>69</sup>

### **Op. 25: Final Analysis**

What is seen through the analysis of the songs in Op. 25 is that each song within the cycle contains significant tonal, motivic, and poetic themes which are introduced in the first song of the cycle. (A chart of all similarities discussed is given in Figure 5.) This allowed Schumann to create a poetic narrative from unrelated songs which shared a central idea, with coherence coming from the presence of a basic thematic core which he afforded great flexibility and freedom in its treatment. The kinship between the whole and its parts is elusive but can still be sensed.

In order to show the ways in which Op. 25 displays characteristics of a song cycle within the constraints of modern analysis I will be drawing on the criteria presented in Arthur Komar's essay on *Dichterliebe*. Komar presents seven criteria to designate what constitutes a song cycle and serve to outline the quality in a group of songs that, in his opinion, make the listener hear a "cycle" as opposed to a mere "collection." Although he intended these only for use with *Dichterliebe*, I believe they give a working model of what constitutes a song cycle to the modern scholar. The seven criteria (as paraphrased by McCreless) are as follows:

1. Similarity of style, construction and subject matter of the poetry; style of the music.
2. Similarity (i.e. cross-reference) between thematic, rhythmic, harmonic, or tonal configurations in different songs.
3. Thematic, harmonic, or tonal cross-references as above, but untransposed.
4. Pairing of songs so as to achieve local continuity (e.g. pairing of adjacent songs in a dominant-tonic relationship).
5. Existence of a coherent key scheme throughout the cycle.

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<sup>69</sup> Moore, 91-2.

6. The presence of a general plan that “embraces all of the songs in the cycle in their given order.”
7. The presence of all the features of No. 6, plus the use of a single key to govern the cycle. [That is, the cycle begins and ends in the same key.]<sup>70</sup>

It is important to note that not all of the songs in Op. 25 will adhere to every one of these criteria. The purpose in using the criteria as a guide is to demonstrate how the songs within each book display characteristics of a song cycle which helps to support the theory that they have been placed in their publication order intentionally to demonstrate a narrative. Also, some of the criteria that Komar presents are nebulous at best and could result in many differing interpretations (such as criteria number six). I have already established how Op. 25 meets criteria number one by presenting that each book shares similar sentiments and subjects in order to achieve a large-scale biographical narrative. In addition, criteria numbers two, three, and six have also been addressed in the previous discussion of the songs based on Barbara Turchin’s analysis.

Criteria four is met in two ways within Op. 25. Each book includes a pair of songs written by the same poet which are found as pairs in the original poetic collections for all of the books but book four. In the last book of the cycle Schumann sets two songs by Rückert with the last song serving as both a conclusion and a pair with the first song of the cycle. All of these pairings either contain a dominant to tonic relationship (books one and four) or are set in the same key (books two and three.) Schumann also uses pairs of songs with either a tonic to dominant relationship (songs 1 to 2, 7 to 8, and 5 to 16 in books one through three, respectively) or a dominant to tonic relationship (songs 19 to 20 in book four) to help establish the tonal center

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<sup>70</sup> Patrick McCreless, “Song Order in the Song Cycle: Schumann’s ‘Liederkreis’, Op. 39.” *Music Analysis* 5, no. 1 (March 1986): 8-9.

of the individual book within the first three songs. The pairing of songs 19 to 20 helps to clue the listener in to the fact that the cycle will soon be concluding.

Criteria five and seven go hand in hand. Part of a coherent key scheme would obviously include the beginning and ending of the cycle being presented in the same key. Op. 25 starts and ends in A-flat major. Similarly to criteria six, what constitutes a coherent key scheme is something that can be subjective. There are many ways that Schumann incorporates coherence to the scheme of keys used in *Myrthen*. Each book in the cycle is related to the preceding book by the interval of either a third or sixth. Within each book there is a high occurrence of parallel and relative major and minor progressions as well as a high level of perfect fourth and perfect fifth relationships. The cycle opens with a tonic to dominant progression and concludes with the same succession of keys to create a tonic-dominant-tonic progression. This adds the level of cohesiveness that is expected within a song cycle let alone any work in Western music. Although there are aspects that seem to contradict the criteria set forth by McCreless, on the whole Op. 25 meets the majority of them.

## **Conclusion**

Many of Schumann's songs cycles have received dedicated study from scholars, yet *Myrthen*, Op. 25, calls into question the modern view of the song cycle and for this reason is difficult to classify. Due to the absence of an immediately apparent narrative it is given only a brief mention in the scholarship relating to Schumann's oeuvre. Schumann viewed the lied as a recreation of the essence of the poet's text and achieved this through continuity between voice and piano and the designation between cycle and collection was not defined in the same way that it is today. The fact that Op. 25 does not have an immediately discernible story line is something

that would not have been thought of as an issue to nineteenth century critics. It has been presented that given his view of the art form and his compositional process it is plausible that Schumann had a specific organization in mind for this work. Though musical relationships exist, via recurring themes and mottos, what binds this cycle together is the literature which was ordered to present a narrative that mirrored the relationship between Robert and Clara.

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## Figures

Figure 1

Order in letter to Kistner	Published order in Op. 25
1. "Widmung" by Rückert	1
2. "Lotosblume" by Heine	7
3. "Jemand" by Burns	4
4. "Mutter, Mutter" by Rückert	11
5. "Lass mich ihm am Busen hangen" by Rückert	12
6. "Mein Herz ist ihm Hochland" by Burns	13

Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

	Key	Arpeggio/ Recurring Opening Figure	Ave Maria Quote	Prelude/ Postlude/ Interlude	Common Tone Modulation/Modulation to Parallel or Relative Key	Fluid and/or Arpeggiated Accompaniment	Block Chords/ Structural Bass Line	Alteration of Text	Predominantly Arpeggiated movement in Vocal line	Clara Motive
Widmung	A-flat major	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x (mm. 14-16)
Freisinn	E-flat major			x			x	x	x	
Der Nussbaum	G major	x		x		x		x		
Jemand	E minor		x	x	x	x	x			
Lieder I	E major	x		x		x	x			
Lieder II	A minor			x		x	x	x		
Die Lotosblume	F major				x		x	x		x (mm. 1-3)
Talismane	C major	x		x		x	x	x	x	
Lied der Suleika	A major	x		x		x		x		
Die Hochländer- Witwe	E minor			x		x	x			
Lieder der Braut I	G major			x		x		x		x (mm. 8-10)
Lieder der Braut II	G major			x			x	x		
Hochländers Abschied	B minor	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	
Hochländisches Weigenlied	D major			x			x			
Aus den hebräischen Gesängen	E minor	x		x	x	x		x		
Rätsel	B major						x			x (mm. 4-5, 21- 22, 40- 41)
Zwei Lieder I	G major			x		x	x			
Zwei Lieder II	G major			x		x	x			
Hauptmanns Weib	E minor			x			x			x (mm. 22-24)
Weit, weit	A minor	x		x		x		x		x (mm. 12-13)
Was will die einsame Träne	A major			x		x				
Niemand	F major			x		x	x		x	
Im Western	F major	x				x	x		x	
Du bist wie eine Blume	A-flat major			x		x	x	x		
Aus den östlichen Rosen	E-flat major	x		x		x		x		
Zum Schluss	A-flat major			x			x			x (mm. 6-7)