

# Literary Musicians I: Robert Schumann

April 17, 2018

# The “public sphere”

- ▶ The press; specialized journals and dailies for the general public.
- ▶ Enlightenment values, basically; reason, “aristocracy of merit”
- ▶ 1798 Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung (“Universal music news”)
  - ▶ ETA Hoffman’s most famous articles
  - ▶ Schumann’s early articles, before founding *Neue Zeitschrift*
- ▶ Berlioz in *Journal des debats*, founded 1789
- ▶ Schumann founds *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (“New music journal”), in 1833

# Philistinism

- ▶ Contradictions in Romanticism; see Liszt's writings on Field  
cf. his active courtship of a new consumer class.
- ▶ Contractions in the life of Schumann
- ▶ Hence the *Davidsbundt*?

## Davidsbund (from Taruskin)

*The cast of characters included, in the first place, Florestan and Eusebius, Schumann's alter egos. The former, named after Beethoven's imprisoned freedom-fighter, represented his embattled "innerliches 'Ich,'" his "inmost I," a concept associated with German romanticism from its Beethovenian beginning. Eusebius, named after an early church historian later adjudged a heretic (as Schumann must have known), represented Schumann's gentler, more moderate nature in contrast and occasional opposition to the more choleric Florestan.*

Also, there is Meister Raro – most likely a figure for Friedrich Wieck.

Taruskin continues:

*Thus we have a virtual Freudian trinity: the rash and reckless Florestan (id), the milder, more sociable Eusebius (ego), and the reproving Raro (superego). As Freud constantly maintained, his psychoanalytic theory was strongly prefigured in romantic literature, and here is a choice bit of evidence.*

# Music as literature?

A type of criticism that exalts a given work to the status of the “absolute”, and insinuates a degree of intellectual and spiritual content equal to more traditional intellectual pursuits. Contra Kant.

# Schumann on Schubert

*What a diary is to others, in which they set down their momentary feelings, etc., music paper really was to Schubert, to which he entrusted his every mood, and his whole soul, musical through-and-through, wrote notes where others use words.*

(Quoted in Taruskin)

# *Dichterliebe*, 1840

- ▶ “Year of song” – long deferred year of conjugal union
- ▶ 16 settings from Heine’s *Lyrisches Intermezzo*
- ▶ *Im wunderschönen Monat Mai* (no. 1)
- ▶ *Aus meinen Thränen*
- ▶ *Ich grolle nicht* (no 7)



# Im wunderschönen Monat Mai

Im wunderschönen Monat Mai,  
Als alle Knospen sprangen, Da ist  
in meinem Herzen Die Liebe  
aufgegangen.

Im wunderschönen Monat Mai,  
Als alle Vögel sangen, Da hab'  
ich ihr gestanden Mein Sehnen  
und Verlangen.

In the beautiful month of may  
when all the buds burst open, in  
my heart love has risen  
In the beautiful month of may  
when all the birds sang I  
confessed to her my yearnings  
and desires

## Taruskin waxes poetic on *Monat Mai*

*In its refusal to settle the matter of keys, the entire song thus prolongs a single unconsummated harmonic gesture—expressed most dramatically by the piano's forever-oscillating, never-cadencing ritornello—that finds its “objective correlative” (its fixed semantic counterpart) on the literary plane. That final line, “my longing and desire,” has the last word in a profoundly musical sense, made palpable by the very last note in the song—a B that in context functions as an unresolved, unconsummated seventh. After it dies away the air veritably tingles with the longing and desire it has created/symbolized/embodyed.*

## Ich grolle nicht

Ich grolle nicht, und wenn das  
Herz auch bricht, ewig verlор'nes  
Lieb! Ich grolle nicht. Wie du  
auch strahlst in

Diamantenpracht, es fällt kein  
Strahl in deines Herzens Nacht,  
das weiß ich längst. Ich grolle  
nicht, und wenn das Herz auch  
bricht. Ich sah dich ja im  
Traume, und sah die Nacht in  
deines Herzens Raume, und sah  
die Schlang', die dir am Herzen  
frißt, ich sah, mein Lieb, wie sehr  
du elend bist. Ich grolle nicht.

I bear no grudge, even as my  
heart is breaking, eternally lost  
love! I bear no grudge. Even  
though you shine in diamond  
splendor, there falls no light into  
your heart's night,  
that I've known for a long time. I  
bear no grudge, even as my heart  
is breaking. I saw you, truly, in  
my dreams, and saw the night in  
your heart's cavity, and saw the  
serpent that feeds on your heart,  
I saw, my love, how very  
miserable you are. I bear no  
grudge.