


Introduction

Clara Schumann: Changing Identities and Legacies

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In the course of the last two hundred years, different facets of Clara Schumann's artistic, creative and performative persona have been highlighted and different narratives have been produced. As the articles to follow demonstrate, these facets include Clara Schumann as a performer, an improviser, a virtuoso, a priestess, a prophetess, a celebrity, a composer and a curator of flowers and photographs. The Introduction and four research articles in this issue devoted to Schumann suggest in multifaceted ways that her creative identities and legacies are open to new ways of being contextualized in both historical and contemporary contexts. This journal issue initiates important conversations and provides some constructive starting points for considering the nature of Clara Schumann's identities and their legacies, and for pondering how Clara Schumann can help us to think afresh about identity and legacy as concepts.

Grappling with a range of sources in both German and English, this Introduction to the issue embraces the fluid intersections in Clara Schumann's creative world between the visual and the tactile, the sonic and the corporeal. It explores the changing images of Schumann from her lifetime to the present day and reconsiders her creativity from our current perspective.

Entering Clara Schumann's Creative World

Figures 1 and 2 allow us to enter into Clara Schumann's creative world in two markedly different ways. In Figure 1, our attention is drawn from the poise of Schumann's engagement with the piano, her hand placed carefully on the keys, to the music on the stand, an excerpt from the finale of her Op. 7 Concerto, composed during her teens. In Figure 2, which captures Schumann and Joseph Joachim in the act of performance, the visceral dimension of her creativity becomes clearer. Here we are invited to trace Schumann's bodily engagement with the instrument into the realm of the sonic, to imagine the sound of virtuosic display that is rooted in the physical and simultaneously suggestive of something beyond its reach. Spanning the period from her prodigious teenage years to her early maturity, these images encapsulate facets of creativity



Fig. 1 Clara Wieck at the age of 15. Julius Giere, Hannover, 1835 (lithograph). Manskopf Collection | Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg (Frankfurt am Main)

central to this special issue – Schumann the composer, the pianist, the collaborator, the virtuoso.

The portrayal of Schumann in these images chimes with tropes that run through her reception history. Prominent among these is the view of Schumann as a ‘priestess’ – that is, as a loyal, dignified pianist deeply invested in the programming of Austro-German music, particularly that of Beethoven, J.S. Bach, Felix



Fig. 2 Clara Schumann and Joseph Joachim in concert. Adolph Friedrich Erdmann von Menzel, 1854 (pastel drawing). Private collection | Peter Willi, Bridgeman Images

Mendelssohn, her husband Robert Schumann, and Johannes Brahms.¹ Yet, as recent studies by April Prince have shown, the priestess ideology conceals as much as it reveals about Schumann's contributions to nineteenth-century performance culture.² A contrasting strand of her pianism – emerging as early as the 1830s when Julius Giere composed his portrait – pertains to the notion of the prophetess. Underpinning this mode of performance is, as Amanda Lalonde shows, 'a strong demonstration of personality and a sense of abandon cultivated through an improvisatory character and bold physicality'.³ If the

¹ Alexander Stefaniak, 'Clara Schumann and the Imagined Revelation of Musical Works', *Music & Letters* 99/2 (2018): 194–223. See also Stefaniak, *Becoming Clara Schumann: Performance Strategies and Aesthetics in the Culture of the Musical Canon* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021).

² See April Prince, '(Re)considering the Priestess: Clara Schumann, Historiography, and the Visual', *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 21 (2017): 107–40.

³ Amanda Lalonde, 'The Young Prophetess in Performance', in *Clara Schumann Studies*, ed. Joe Davies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021): 188. Further on Schumann's improvisatory practices, see Valerie Woodring Goertzen, 'Clara Wieck Schumann's Improvisations and Her "Mosaics" of Small Forms', in *Beyond Notes: Improvisation in Western Music of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Rudolph Rasch (Lucca: Brepols, 2011): 153–62; and Woodring Goertzen, 'Setting the Stage: Clara Schumann's

priestess ideology is bound up with the 'self-effacing' portrayal of a composer's ideals, the prophetic act represents a mode of 'feminine ephemeral authorship'.⁴ The comparison between priestess and prophetess is neither straightforward, nor easy to disentangle, yet both feed into the ways in which Schumann positioned herself at what Alexander Stefaniak calls the 'cutting edge' of popular pianism.⁵ Intricately connected with this are the ways in which her performances conveyed a sense of interiority, something that Stefaniak defines as an elevation of virtuosity that transcends the physical. This resonates with what is conjured by the image of Schumann and Joachim shown in Figure 2.⁶

This journal issue – featuring four articles, two CD reviews, and a score review – opens up ways of thinking about Schumann's creativity and legacies that both complement and put pressure on received ideas about female authorship.⁷ It moves beyond assessing legacy in terms of works, an approach that is familiar from the figure of the 'great' male composer, towards an emphasis on the plurality of creative endeavour, its slippages between text and performance, historical context and technological reinvention. Each article addresses a distinct aspect of Schumann's legacies – Schumann and the cadenza, Schumann and photography, Schumann and floral poetics, Schumann on film – and collectively they contribute to a richer understanding of the changing portrayal of her personal and artistic demeanour through the ages and the ways in which her artistry has inspired subsequent generations of musicians.

Preludes', in *In the Course of Performance: Studies in the World of Musical Improvisation*, ed. Bruno Nettl and Melinda Russell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998): 237–60.

⁴ Lalonde, 'The Young Prophetess in Performance', 188.

⁵ Alexander Stefaniak, 'Clara Schumann's Interiorities and the Cutting Edge of Popular Pianism', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 70/3 (2017): 697–765.

⁶ For wider discussion of Schumann's pianism vis-à-vis nineteenth-century musical practices, see Joe Davies, 'Clara Schumann, Joseph Joachim, and the Nineteenth-Century Cadenza', in *Joseph Joachims Identitäten*, ed. Katharina Uhde and Michael Uhde (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, forthcoming); Natasha Loges, 'From Miscellanies to Musical Works: Julius Stockhausen, Clara Schumann, and *Dichterliebe*', in *German Song Onstage: Lieder Performance in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Natasha Loges and Laura Tunbridge (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020): 70–86; Loges, 'Julius Stockhausen's Early Performances of Franz Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin*', *19th-Century Music* 41/3 (2018): 206–24; and Ludim R. Pedroza, 'Music as *Communitas*: Franz Liszt, Clara Schumann, and the Musical Work', *Journal of Musicological Research* 29 (2010): 295–321.

⁷ On the subject of authorship as it relates individually and/or collectively to Clara and Robert Schumann, see Benedict Taylor, "'Du meine Seele, du mein Herz": Self, Other, and Hermaphroditic Union in the Music of Robert (and Clara) Schumann', *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie* 18/2 (2021): <https://doi.org/10.31751/1147>; Roe-Min Kok, 'Clara: Robert's Posthumous Androgyne', in *Clara Schumann Studies*, 223–45; Melina Boyd, 'Gendered Voices: The *Liebesfrühling* Lieder of Robert and Clara Schumann', *19th-Century Music* 23/2 (1999): 145–62; and Rufus Hallmark, 'The Rückert Lieder of Robert and Clara Schumann', in *Of Poetry and Song: Approaches to the Nineteenth-Century Lied*, ed. Jürgen Thym (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2010): 335–74. On issues of gender and authorship in German culture, see Laura Deulio and John B. Lyon, eds, *Gender, Collaboration and Authorship in German Culture: Literary Joint Ventures, 1750–1850* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019); Matthew Head, *Sovereign Feminine: Music and Gender in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

Changing Images

One constant in the literature grappling with Clara Schumann's legacies is biographical output, against which the images of Schumann highlighted above come into sharper focus. Amid this landscape are two distinct yet complementary strands of research: one emerging from Nancy Reich's *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman*,⁸ the other stemming from the work of Beatrix Borchard and Janina Klassen,⁹ and given new impetus in the recent biographies by Borchard and Irmgard Knechtges-Obrecht,¹⁰ both released on the foot of the 2019 bicentenary of Schumann's birth. These biographical developments are enriched by the efforts invested in the (ongoing) publication of diaries and letters, sources that add crucial details to the emerging picture of Schumann's life and art.¹¹ These two strands reflect what Laura Hamer describes as the first and second 'waves of feminist music scholarship'.¹² Reich's biography is pioneering for the degree to which it unearthed primary source documents and gave a new level of recognition to Schumann's life. Borchard, Knechtges-Obrecht, and Klassen have the benefit of greater chronological and critical distance, as well as access to the more recent editions of letters published by the Schumann Haus in Zwickau which is transforming our understanding of Clara Schumann and her networks. Each of their books interrogates biographical forms of representation, and brings a heightened awareness to the socio-political purposes such sources can serve. This 'second wave of feminist musicology', as Hamer puts it, broadens out from a focus on composers (an approach which, she argues, runs the risk of replicating patriarchal historiographical tendencies of the 'great' life), rendering a more richly

⁸ See Nancy B. Reich, *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985, rev. 2001); Reich, 'The Correspondence between Clara Wieck Schumann and Felix and Paul Mendelssohn', in *Schumann and his World*, ed. R. Larry Todd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994): 205–32; Reich, 'Women as Musicians: A Question of Class', in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993): 125–46; 'Clara Schumann and Johannes Brahms', in *Brahms and His World*, ed. Walter Frisch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990): 37–47; and Reich and Anna Burton, 'Clara Schumann: Old Sources, New Readings', *Musical Quarterly* 70 (1984): 332–54.

⁹ See Beatrix Borchard, *Clara Schumann: Ihr Leben* (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1991); Borchard, *Clara Schumann: Ihr Leben. Eine biographische Montage* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2015); and Janina Klassen, *Clara Schumann: Musik und Öffentlichkeit* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2009).

¹⁰ Beatrix Borchard, *Clara Schumann – Musik als Lebensform – Neue Quellen – Andere Schreibweisen* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2019); Irmgard Knechtges-Obrecht, *Clara Schumann: Ein Leben für die Musik* (Darmstadt: wbg THEISS, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2019).

¹¹ An important project in this area is the *Schumann Briefedition*, ed. Thomas Synofzik et al., Robert-Schumann-Haus, Zwickau, und dem Institut für Musikwissenschaft der Hochschule für Musik Carl Maria von Weber, Dresden; see www.schumann-briefe.de/editionsplan.html. See also Gerd Nauhaus, ed., *The Marriage Diaries of Robert and Clara Schumann: From their Wedding Day to the Russia Trip*, trans. Peter Ostwald (Northeastern University Press, 1993); and Berthold Litzmann, *Clara Schumann: An Artist's Life, Based on Material Found in Diaries and Letters*, trans. Grace E. Hadow, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1913, rev. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

¹² Laura Hamer, 'Preface', in *The Cambridge Companion to Women in Music Since 1900*, ed. Laura Hamer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021): xxi–xxix.

socio-politically varied, and therefore a more inclusive view of Schumann's life that is in keeping with a meta-biographical approach to life writing.¹³

To engage with the figure of Clara Schumann is not only to re-evaluate her work as performer, composer and teacher, but also to explore the ways in which Schumann herself played a pivotal role in creating her identity and shaping her legacy for posterity, what Borchard calls the Schumann 'concept'.¹⁴ This unique role of Schumann's agency, as explored in what follows, nonetheless has an ambivalent relationship with the question of legacy shaped posthumously or without any input from the individual in question.

Addressing such issues requires navigating the fluid boundaries between biography, metabiography, compositional lineages, reception history and the questions that arise therein:¹⁵ to what extent are legacies grounded in historical reality? What role does mythmaking and storytelling play in the construction of identity? What do legacies reveal about the times and cultures that give rise to them? In what ways do ideas of gender and class play out in the narration of musicians' lives? And to what extent do scholarly accounts align with – or depart from – fictional legacies cultivated by the popular imagination?

These questions are especially pertinent in the case of Clara Schumann, for whom an awareness of the public eye figured prominently in the ways she navigated the personal and the professional realms. Traces of this are palpable throughout Schumann's own writings and correspondence, wherein she positions herself as someone immersed in artistic endeavour while also acutely aware of the socio-cultural pressures under which she lived and worked. Rarely does Schumann appear to be writing for herself; even in that most personal format – the diary – one is aware of the weight of posterity and the impression of reading material penned for the wider world as much as for herself.¹⁶ Also imbricated in this is the way Schumann defined herself (both personally and creatively) in relation to Robert, a partnership that has captured the imagination in myriad ways since their lifetime: from the now-problematized view of Clara as muse to Robert, to the deeper appreciation of the ways in which their lives and art were not only entwined but mutually enriching.¹⁷ These aspects move beyond the personal and/or the curated, to thinking about the malleability of such constructions in contexts over which she had little control.¹⁸ There are gaps, invitations to confront

¹³ Hamer, 'Preface', xxiii.

¹⁴ Borchard, 'Von Robert zu Clara Schumann und zurück?' *Schumann Studien* 9, ed. Ute Bär (Sinzig: Studio Verlag, 2008): 81–96 at 81.

¹⁵ On recent approaches to biography in nineteenth-century musical culture see the special issue, 'Music and Biography', ed. Joanne Cormac, *19th-Century Music* 44/2 (2020), esp. Paul Watt, 'Marie Lloyd (1870–1922) and Biographical Constructions of the Nineteenth-Century Female Superstar', 119–130.

¹⁶ On Schumann's letters, and ideas of self-representation, see (among others) Beatrix Borchard, 'Clara Schumann in Dresden – Briefe. Tagebücher: Lektüren', in *Schumann und Dresden*, ed. Thomas Synofzik and Hans-Günter Ottenberg (Cologne: Dohr, 2010): 47–64; and Nancy Reich, 'The Diaries of Fanny Hensel and Clara Schumann: A Study in Contrasts', *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 4/2 (2007): 21–36.

¹⁷ See Joe Davies and Roe-Min Kok, eds, *Clara and Robert Schumann in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming), for further exploration of the complexities surrounding their personal and creative relationship.

¹⁸ Such is the case in the context of Schumann's American reception, where she was, as Jonathan Kregor shows, portrayed as a 'symbolic figure who not only appealed to America's nascent celebrity culture, but who could also be invoked to shape important aesthetic social

what is known and unknown, as Schumann's legacies form at the intersection of myth and reality, fact and fiction.¹⁹

Schumann's Creativity Reconsidered

The complex nature of Clara Schumann's creative persona (and its portrayal in the musical imagination) is explored in multifarious ways in this special issue. In 'Creativity, Performance and Problems of Authorship: Clara Schumann's Cadenzas for Mozart's D minor Concerto, K466', Christian Leitmeir explores the distinct facets of Schumann's pianism – her engagement with music of the past, the fluidity between improvisation and composition, and ideas of ephemeral authorship – as manifested in her approach to the cadenza. Problematizing the notion of authorship as fixed and monolithic, Leitmeir situates Schumann's cadenza in a nexus of shared practices that extend from Brahms (whose cadenza for K466 left an imprint on hers) back to Mozart and Beethoven, and forward to Anton Rubinstein. His approach illuminates Schumann's engagement with the wider culture of nineteenth-century cadenzas, and the ways in which she navigated the boundaries between improvisation, composition and corporeal memories of music past and present. Leitmeir's engagement with the cadenza as a multi-modal process encourages an understanding of Schumann's legacy as a pianist-composer that lies less in the score than in the creative exchanges among musicians, in the slippages between text and performance.

Schumann's legacies arise also at the intersection of compositional culture and material culture, as Christopher Parton explores here apropos Schumann's engagement with flowers ('Speech and Silence: Encountering Flowers in the Lieder of Clara Schumann'). This extends from her personal interest in flower books, as reflected in the *Blumenbuch für Robert*, to her creative output, where she cultivated the 'language of flowers', *Blumensprache*, as a key aspect of her Lied aesthetic. Parton embarks on a rich exploration of how flowers – the archetypal symbols of German Romantic literature – were discursively mediated in male-authored literature, the inexhaustible polysemy of flowers being closely associated with the ineffable or the unknown. His article is bound up with the question of how nineteenth-century women authors were therefore faced with a floral poetics that slipped freely between silence and specificity, and between the objectivity and subjectivity of both flowers and women. In his interrogation of this discourse as it relates to the legacy of Clara Schumann, Parton shows that 'her subtle navigation of this floral mutability reflects a unique aspect of her mode of authorship'.

A curiosity about modes of authorship, and the extent to which Schumann exerted control over her public image, also underpins (albeit with a different critical slant) April Prince's exploration of 'The Technological Priestess: The Piano Recital, Photography, and Clara Schumann'. Probing the historical coincidences between the 'invention' of the piano recital and the photograph, and the impact

and artistic issues'. Kregor, 'Clara Schumann, "Clara Schumann" and the American Press', in *Clara Schumann Studies*, 246–70. For more on this topic, see Nancy Reich, 'Clara Schumann and America', in *Clara Schumann: Komponistin, Interpretin, Unternehmerin, Ikone*, ed. Peter Ackermann and Herbert Schneider (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1999): 195–203.

¹⁹ For more on this approach of 'constellations', wherein there will always be gaps, see Borchard, *Clara Schumann – Musik als Lebensform*, 29, 75; and Natasha Loges, 'Clara Schumann's Legacy as a Teacher', in *Clara Schumann Studies*, 272.

of these technologies on the nineteenth-century artistic psyche, Prince explores the discourses that engulfed these musical and visual technologies as they relate to Clara Schumann and the construction of identity. In doing so, she further charts how Schumann herself cultivated a safe and socially acceptable public identity with her mass-produced photographs, and especially her *cartes-de-visite*.

Shifting the focus from Schumann's lifetime to her reception in German film, in 'The Socio-Political Faces of Clara Schumann on German Film', Nicole Grimes shows how successive periods of German political history each crafted their own image of this powerful musical figure. Grimes explores the implications of three such constructions: Schumann as seen through the lens of World War II, Schumann against the backdrop of East Germany behind the iron curtain and, finally, Schumann through the feminist lens of a West German filmmaker following German reunification. Emerging from Grimes's discussion is a picture of the extent to which these films capture or distort the historical realities of Schumann's life, and of how such portrayals relate to the shifting socio-cultural climate of German history. She thus offers fresh ways of thinking about film as a medium through which to (re)define creative legacies at the intersection of biography, metabiography, and reception history.

Continuing the conversation are the reviews by Joao Martins and Cheryl Tan of recent recordings of Schumann's Lieder and piano music, together with Joe Davies's review of the Bärenreiter edition of Schumann's Three Romances for Violin and Piano, Op. 22. Dialogues between performance and scholarship, central to all three reviews, come to the fore in Davies's contribution through excerpts from a conversation with pianist Lorna Griffitt, whose recording of the Op. 22 Romances with violinist Haroutune Bedelian has recently been released under the title *Romantic Music of Robert, Clara, and Johannes*.²⁰ Griffitt's insights, ranging from practical matters of notation to the tactile qualities of Schumann's music – how it feels under the hands and fingers – capture the slippages between text and performance that run through this special issue in myriad forms. All three reviews place a spotlight on Schumann's compositional voice – sonically and textually – while situating her music within the context of her work as teacher and performer, or in relation to stylistic and aesthetic discourses (such as prelude and improvisation) that shaped her artistic outlook. They thus encourage us to problematize the nexus of myths surrounding Schumann the composer – as represented by her oft-quoted diary entry that 'I once believed that I possessed creative talent, but I have given up this idea; a woman must not desire to compose – there has never yet been one able to do it. Should I expect to be the one?'²¹ – and to listen again to her musical creativity.

As the discussion above indicates, and as the articles and reviews to follow demonstrate, the last two hundred years have witnessed manifold ways of thinking about Clara Schumann's artistic, creative and performative personae. These include Schumann as a performer, an improviser, a virtuoso, to a composer, a priestess, a prophetess, a celebrity, and a curator of flowers and photographs. In all instances, Schumann's creative identities and legacies are open to new ways of being contextualized in both historical and contemporary contexts. This journal issue initiates important conversations and provides some constructive starting

²⁰ *Romantic Music of Robert, Clara, and Johannes*, Lorna Griffitt, piano, and Haroutune Bedelian, violin, Centaur Records CRC3948 (2022).

²¹ Quoted in Reich, *Clara Schumann*, 216.

points for considering the nature of Clara Schumann's identities and their legacies, and for pondering how Clara Schumann can help us to think afresh about identity and legacy as concepts.