



THE SCHUMANN SONATA

PROGRAMME

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Sonata for Piano and Violin Op.105 in A minor

1.) *Mit leidenschaftlichem Ausdruck*

(With passionate expression)

2.) *Allegretto*

3.) *Lebhaft (Lively)*

Violin: Seila Tammisola

Piano: Patrick Leresche



A Sonata about Schumann's life

Acting and Voice: Alex Knox

Violin: Seila Tammisola

Piano: Patrick Leresche

Sound artist and lighting: Jay Jones



EXPLANATORY NOTES

Schumann's life is goes with extremes: From ecstasy to depression, from excessive work to impotence of composing, from hope to despair. For a lifetime he had been chased by the fear of going mad, then found some stability in his marriage with Clara Schumann, but he ended up in a mental health clinic after he had thrown himself in the Rhine in an attempt of self-murder.

For a lifetime, Schumann had been fighting for what was dearest to him, which were his love to his wife Clara, his music and his work as a music critic and patron for upcoming talents. Thanks to the collection of his letters to Clara during the years they were forced to live apart from each other, we gain a direct insight into Schumann's emotional life.



We can see into his struggle with Clara's father, who didn't want him to get married to his daughter; his longing and the fear of losing her at the same time, doubts about their financial future, descriptions about moments of madness and many more.

Inspired by these texts, we have matched them together with the music of Schumann's first violin sonata Op. 105. Schumann wrote this sonata in September 1851, a bit more than two years before he threw himself into the Rhine and had to go to the mental health clinic. These months were literally the time before he lost his mind and therefore a turning point in his life. We imagined that Schumann must have anticipated his future with all the madness about to come and he must have expressed his feelings through his music; as he has always done it throughout his life.

In our arrangement of the sonata, Robert relives the different stages of his life, starting with the time of forced separation before his marriage to Clara. We called this first stage of Robert's life longing and it talks about the pain of separation, insecurity about Clara's feelings and intentions, loneliness and profound longing, that even led to moments of mirages. We must remind ourselves, that the only contact Robert and Clara were having at that time was the one through secret letters. >



Clara's father was intervening it at times, which led to severe irritations between Clara and Robert. The music to this first section is based on the form and thematic material of the first movement of the sonata.

Longing is followed by *Love*, describing the deep satisfaction after winning the legal battle against Clara's father and getting married. It is full of deep contentment and happiness. Light-heartedness dominates the mood and Robert uses all his poetic talent to flatter Clara with charming lines. Robert wrote in one of his letters to Clara: "I used to be able to express all my feelings towards a person

in words, but know (as I am in love with you) I cannot anymore. And if you don't know what I am talking about, I cannot describe it to you."

There is a complete change of mood in the next section called *Madness*. It starts of with an excerpt of a letter to Clara, where he recalls his first case of madness. Robert is afraid of never being able to think again clearly and, close to death, fears he couldn't write down all the music he wanted to. In the middle of his delirium, he has flashbacks of happy moments together with Clara, but suddenly asks for Champagne, a substance he often used to get stimulated while composing. As he has a breakdown, the music stops completely and Robert starts to comprehend that his end is close. He has lost everything that was crucial in his life: Music, Clara and his mind.

The music for the last two sections, *Love* and *Madness* is based on the second and third movement of the sonata, but the connection to the original gets more loose the longer the play goes on. The play finishes with a free interpretation of Schumann's *Requiem* Op. 90.

All the texts and fragments used in the play are out of the collection of Clara and Robert Schumann's letter correspondence. As Schumann was a great fan of



Shakespeare (he had read the complete edition several times and had written an overture to Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*), we included some of his poems and lines in the play as well as excerpts of Alex Knox's poetry.

Musically, we use excerpts of the original score from the violin sonata, but we often reduced the music to its harmonic skeleton. This gives us more flexibility to adapt the music to the text and is the base for improvisation. Therefore, every performance is different and inspired by the moment.

This project is the result of the work with Dr David Dolan and the Centre for Creative Performance & Classical Improvisation of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. It has mainly been inspired by the collaboration with the acting department during the course *Interpretation through Improvisation* and the wonderful experience of interaction between words, music and acting. This project is part of the final exam of the Masters of Music in Performance of Seila Tammissola and Patrick Leresche.





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A THRILLING JOURNEY
INTO THE LIFE AND MIND
OF ROBERT SCHUMANN.

GET DRAWN INTO A
PASSIONATE PLAY
WITH IMPROVISED
MUSIC & ACTING.

THURSDAY 21ST JULY, 7.30PM

 THE FORGE, CAMDEN. £7/£4
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