

The Elements of a Perfected Song Cycle

A Lecture Recital on Schumann's *Frauenliebe und Leben*

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## Abstract

A lecture recital is a quintessential representation of the music student's knowledge and skill in a synthesis of performance and instruction. This thesis will encompass the extensive research and preparation necessary to perform a lecture recital about Robert Schumann's song cycle *Frauenliebe und Leben* (*A Woman's Love and Life*). This marvelous work is an excellent example of Schumann's enhancement of the song cycle genre. A standard work in soprano repertoire, *Frauenliebe und Leben* provides the opportunity for extensive musicality through vocal coloring, legato lines, ornamented turns, various phrasal structures, and clear dramatic direction. In addition to its rich history and theory, precise vocal technique and musical interpretation are necessary to present a successful performance of this piece.

## **The Elements of a Perfected Song Cycle**

### **A Lecture Recital on Schumann's *Frauenliebe und Leben***

#### **Rationale of the Lecture Recital Performance**

##### **The Need for Experience**

Students of collegiate music programs customarily pursue careers in either education or performance. However, the majority of music professionals will participate in *both* education and performance related engagements throughout their careers.

Performers are often called upon to impart their musical study methods, serve as guest-lecturers, or teach master-classes; and commonly, performers eventually become private or collegiate studio teachers. Educators, likewise, may be called upon to perform in faculty recitals, frequently demonstrate technique for their students, and benefit from the personal, foundational knowledge of their instrument that performing provides to adequately and effectively teach others. Similarly, music students invest hours of endless research into music history papers and hours of dedicated practice in preparation for recitals but are seldom required to expand their abilities to verbally communicate their knowledge. Unfortunately, no amount of practice or research can substitute for the value of experience.<sup>1</sup> In fact, one of the most effective ways to solidify one's own knowledge and comprehension of a subject is to teach others. The best way to become a great performer, a good communicator, and a clear educator, is to perform and teach, as frequently and as masterfully as possible.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Donna Kay Bagwell, "Lecture Recitals for Schools," *Music Journal* 33, no. 1, (Jan. 1975): 38.

2. Bagwell, "Lecture Recitals for Schools," 38.

### **The Lecture Recital as Solution**

The lecture recital is an invaluable experience for all students of music. It is a quintessential representation of the student's knowledge and skill in a synthesis of performance and instruction. Lecture recitals are an all-encompassing form of musical study and presentation requiring consultation of music education, history, theory, pedagogy, performance practice, and interpretive methods. While presenting a lecture recital, the student contributes to peer learning and enhances his or her musical experience while gaining new acumen for the presentation of future recitals or lectures.<sup>3</sup> The presentation of a lecture recital is a comprehensive musical endeavor and can serve as an apex to the music student's collegiate study. Presenting a lecture recital provides a unique opportunity to not only display the skill, technique, and musicality necessary to excellently perform a musical work; but, also requires that the lecturer has a firm, cohesive and concise communicable understanding of the processes and concepts of the composer and the work studied to be able to achieve an excellent performance. Because of this, the lecture recital is a superb opportunity to further develop necessary performance and educational delivery skills to prepare collegiate music students for continuing musical education and careers.

### **Lecture Recital Topic and Intent**

This thesis is comprised of the research and preparation necessary to present a lecture recital on Robert Schumann's song cycle, *Frauenliebe und Leben* (*A Woman's Love and Life*).<sup>4</sup> This marvelous work is an excellent example of Schumann's

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3. Ibid.

4. Robert Schumann, *Frauenliebe und Leben: A Cycle of Eight Songs; Opus 42*. (New York: International Music Co., 1960.)

enhancement of the song cycle genre.<sup>5</sup> A standard work in soprano repertoire, *Frauenliebe und Leben* provides the opportunity for extensive musicality through vocal coloring, legato lines, ornamented turns, various phrasal structures, and clear dramatic direction. In detail, this lecture will address Schumann's careful attention to the relationship and interpretation of the poetry in the music, as well as considerations for this work's interpretive performance.

This lecture recital will include a thirty-minute lecture, in which musical points will be illuminated by brief excerpts of the work, concluded by a performance of the song cycle in its entirety. Each song will be individually addressed in regard to Schumann's use of musical elements to enhance the poetry, in both emotional and contextual aspects. The intent of this presentation is to provide the audience with a deeper musical knowledge and understanding of Schumann's incredible *Frauenliebe und Leben*, and to inspire students to seek a thorough study of their music for the enhancement of its performance. This project emphasizes the musician's greatest mission: to engage in intentional, thorough historical, theoretical, emotional and technical preparation, in order to perform musical works in a way that reflects and reveres the composer's intended design.

### **Historical and Background Information on the Development of the Song Cycle**

#### **The Song Cycle**

**Introduction.** The song cycle is a peculiar genre of music. Unlike most musical genres that are defined by specific parameters, the definition of the song cycle has been ambiguous throughout the years. In *The Art of the Song Recital*, twelve varieties of the

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5. Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song and Literature* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2005), 77.

definition were provided.<sup>6</sup> The most basic definition of the song cycle, however, is a set of three or more songs that share some sort of coherence.<sup>7</sup> The song cycle's blurred boundary lines have uniquely allowed it to serve as "a barometer of music's changing role in culture."<sup>8</sup> Aside from the cultural definitions of the song cycle, it should be noted that the greatest number of cycles have shared the following characteristics: The songs share a common poet and theme, each song possesses both a unique and integral life, and the musical motive of the first song returns at the conclusion of the cycle.<sup>9</sup> This sense of unity is elemental to the song cycle and can be achieved through a variety of musical and/or poetic methods.<sup>10</sup>

**Beginnings.** During this Romantic age, the relationship of text and music was evolving, causing a rise in the idea of the song cycle. The song cycle was influenced by the characteristics of "lyric poetry." The lyric poem had been associated with singing since the classical ages of Greece and the "lyric-1," which is a first person expression of internal emotions, was prominent.<sup>11</sup> This "lyric-1" idea promoted "poetry as a language of feeling" as opposed to imitative poetry.<sup>12</sup> Settings of this sophisticated genre of poetry

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6. Shirlee Emmons and Stanley Sonntag, *The Art of the Song Recital* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press Inc., 2002), 259.

7. Laura Turnbridge, *Song Cycle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1.

8. Turnbridge, *Song Cycle*, 1.

9. Emmons and Sonntag, *The Art of the Song Recital*, 264.

10. Ibid., 266.

11. Turnbridge, *Song Cycle*, 2.

12. Ibid.

were initially set to folk tunes; this, in turn, led to the development of the German *Lied* (song) at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>13</sup>

**The *Lied*.** The song cycle first emerged from the German *Lied*. At the start of the nineteenth century, the song writing traditions of Austria and Germany exceeded all other countries with regard to its musical influence. *Lied* was written for voice and piano, and was typically strophic in nature. The strophic form maintained the priority of the text over the music as each stanza was sung to the same melodic structure with few variations. This form follows the order of emphasis in the construction of the lied: the poet was of greatest importance, followed by singers and expressive performance, and the composer, a far-removed third.<sup>14</sup>

**Social factors.** The German *Lied* became increasingly important with the rise of the educated middle class. *Lieder* were first sung in intimate, personal settings, often by amateurs, as the availability of published music flourished. Soon, the *Lied*, with its *volkstümlich* (folk-like) melodies and texts, became representative of an “expression and definition of national spirit,” and national identity.<sup>15</sup>

**Development.** The first work to be defined as a song cycle was *An die ferne Geliebte*, composed by Ludwig von Beethoven in 1816. Many attribute this title to the fact that the word *liederkreis*, meaning a garland or circle of songs,<sup>16</sup> appeared on its title page; however, this work does greatly resemble song cycles heard today.<sup>17</sup> Beethoven

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13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., 3.

15. Ibid.

16. Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 48.

17. Emmons and Sonntag, *The Art of the Song Recital*, 263.



used Aloy Jeitteles' lyric cycle, much like a libretto and composed a work, which is "connected through musical materials, pointing the way for future song cycles."<sup>18</sup>

Beethoven wrote this cycle with no pauses, using piano interludes to connect and introduce each song. This work, though already unified through a series of themes and variations, is further unified by Beethoven's use of the beginning music to end the cycle.<sup>19</sup>

Following Beethoven's example, other famous *Lied* composers propelled the song cycle genre. Schubert, one of the greatest developers of the *Lied*, had no less impact on the song cycle.<sup>20</sup> *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise* were Schubert's greatest contributions to the genre; compositions that would influence composers for ages to come. In Schubert's song cycles, "the piano is an active supporter of the voice." Schubert's piano technique "[unified] and [set] the scene," often implementing tone painting to create an enveloping atmosphere for each song.<sup>21</sup> Schubert's influence led composers to explore greater freedom within the song cycle, veering away from folk-like melodies, progressing toward through-composition and increased prominence of the piano.<sup>22</sup>

If Schubert brought life into the piano accompaniment, then Schumann instilled it with a soul. As mentioned above, Schubert often suggested an atmosphere or essence through the use of the piano. However, with Schumann "the piano comes into its own as

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18. Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 48.

19. Ibid.

20. Turnbridge, *Songcycle*, 8, 38.

21. Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 52.

22. Turnbridge, *Song Cycle*, 4.

a full participant with the voice.”<sup>23</sup> Many consider Schumann’s *Dichterliebe* as the epitome of song cycles, with its unmatched synthesis of poetry and music.

In her book *Song Cycle* Laura Turnbridge says “to trace the history of music through works such as Schumann’s *Dichterliebe* (1840), Mussorgsky’s *Sunless* (1874), Arnold Schoenberg’s *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten* (1909) and *Pierre lunaire* (1912), and Boulez’s *Le Marteau sans maître* (1955) is to engage with generation upon generation of the avant-garde.”<sup>24</sup> This is a clear statement of how the song cycle genre opened the musical communication about one’s innermost feelings about society, nationalism, and relationships to the encompassing world.

### **Lecture Recital: Program Notes**

#### **Introduction to the Poetry and Poet**

Schumann’s *Frauenliebe und Leben*, is a setting of the first eight poems of Adelbert von Chamisso’s poems of the same name.<sup>25</sup> In nineteenth century. Chamisso was a renowned German poet with a status rivaling Heine or Eichendorff. In *Frauenliebe und Leben*, Chamisso takes on an interesting task: to portray the life of a woman through her own voice and inner feelings. In Chamisso’s time, women seldom had the literary freedom to appear feminine in their writing. In fact, female poets often wrote in a masculine voice. Though men could passionately express their love of a woman through poetry, women did not have this luxury when describing the love for a man. In this cycle, Chamisso “gives poetic voice to an underrepresented, passionate, ‘woman’s

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23. Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*. 77.

24. Turnbridge, *Song Cycle*, 5.

25. John Daverio, *Robert Schumann: Herald of a “new Poetic Age”* (New York: Oxford University press, 1997), 213.

perspective.’”<sup>26</sup> The following quote of David Ferris provides a wonderful insight into Chamisso’s time and poetry:

Chamisso undertook to imagine a woman’s impassioned fixation on her idealized lover and eventual husband. The celebration of marriage as a choice born of passion, not merely the fulfillment of a duty imposed by patriarchal authority... Chamisso’s poems spoke to the experience of these women... He took pains to catch the echoes of real, and distinctive, woman’s voices, lending the poems an aura of familiarity.<sup>27</sup>

Though the topic of the domestic woman may seem like a stroke against feminism in today’s society, the condition of women that is appalling to many today is likely what was most desired in Chamisso’s time.<sup>28</sup>

### **Overview of the Story within *Frauenliebe und Leben***

*Frauenliebe und Leben, A Woman’s Love and Life*, is a set of eight songs that excerpt pinnacle moments in a woman’s life. These eight “vignettes” begin with the first sight and admiration of her future husband, disbelief at his reciprocated love, their engagement, and wedding day preparations, followed by her joy in pregnancy and childbirth, concluding with the pain of her husband’s passing. This poetic cycle “documents the domestic culture of its time like a series of old photographic snapshots.”<sup>29</sup>

### **Overview of Robert Schumann’s Life**

Robert Schumann was born in Zwickau, Germany on June 8, 1810. Schumann was an intellectual at a young age. He enrolled in school at age six and began learning

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26. Kristina Muxfeldt, “Frauenliebe und Leben: Now and Then” *19<sup>th</sup> Century Music* 25, no. 1 (Summer 2001): 34.

27. Muxfeldt, “Frauenliebe und Leben,” 34.

28. *Ibid.*, 29.

29. James Parsons, *The Cambridge Companion to the Lieder* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Latin, French and Greek at a very young age. At age seven, he began taking piano lessons with great success. Intriguingly, Schumann first studied law, but left his studies to pursue a career as a concert pianist. He then took lessons with Fredrick Wieck, a man who was confident that Schumann could be one of the greatest concert pianists to ever live. Dismally, Schumann later suffered a severe hand injury, dashing his dream. This tragedy, remarkably, proved itself to be a blessing in that it accelerated Schumann's career and obsession with composition.

Schumann experienced much sorrow in his early life. His sister committed suicide in 1825; and his brother and sister-in-law passed away from a cholera outbreak in 1833, followed by his mother in 1836. It is likely that these sorrowful events contributed to Schumann's development of the obsessive and manic-depressive tendencies that influenced his daily and professional life. Schumann worked in frenzies, and documented every part of his life. Though debilitating at times, his mania and compulsion would become great contributors to his bursts of compositional focus.

Schumann fell in love with the daughter of Fredrick Wieck, Clara, when she was only fifteen years of age. After many trials due to Clara's father's refusal to allow their marriage, known as the "probationary years," Robert and Clara finally wed on September 12, 1840. Robert and Clara travelled widely, kept marriage diaries, composed alongside each other, and had eight children together. In 1854, due to his mental deterioration, and his concern for being a danger to Clara, Robert requested admission to a mental-illness facility, where he would pass away two years later on July 29, 1856.<sup>30</sup>

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30. Martin Geck, *Robert Schumann: The Life and Work of a Romantic Composer*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013). This paragraph is summarized from information in this book.

### **The *Liederjahr***

In the year leading up to his marriage with Clara, 1840, Schumann composed in an endless frenzy, producing one hundred and thirty-eight songs.<sup>31</sup> Ferris speculated that the approaching marriage caused Schumann to indulge in a “year of frantic production” as a solution to the long period of uncertainty that lay ahead; he ventures that Schumann was engaging in “one last spell of Genius.”<sup>32</sup> In this year, some of Schumann’s most famous compositions, including the featured work of this recital, *Frauenliebe und Leben*, were produced. Schumann set Chamisso’s *Frauenliebe und Leben* to song in two days, the eleventh and twelfth of July 1840, and intended this cycle to be presented as a gift to Clara on the couple’s wedding day.<sup>33</sup> This cycle was the last he wrote before his marriage and seems to be an attempted mirror of the couple’s emotional experience.<sup>34</sup> In *Frauenliebe und Leben*, Robert Schumann’s and Clara Wieck’s beaming love, anticipation, and dreams for the future are manifested in a flawless marriage of text and music.

### **General Musical Elements of *Frauenliebe und Leben***

In this song cycle, Schumann bestows each song with an unusual amount of dramaticism, almost likening its composition to a *Liederspiel* (a play of songs). The florid imagination of the woman portrayed in the poem contributed to the dramatic experience,

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31. Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 77.

32. David Ferris, “Robert Schumann, Composer of Songs,” *Music Analysis* 32, no. 3 (Summer 2013): 256.

33. Jon W. Finson, *Robert Schumann: The Book of Songs* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 94.

34. Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 80.

and certainly influenced Schumann's approach.<sup>35</sup> The songs are set in "declamatory-lyrical" sections that simulate the arioso-aria, giving the cycle a quasi-operatic style.<sup>36</sup> To clarify, the cycle contains contrasting movements of fervent animation and wistful serenity. Throughout the cycle, Schumann utilizes blocked and arpeggiated accompaniments, closely related keys, text-painting, and a variety of textures to portray his "masculine response to feminine expression," revealing a reverence and sentiment for the joys and pains of the woman's life.<sup>37</sup> An interesting cohesive element of the cycle is found in the way the opening notes present the motto of the cycle in a 5-6-5-1 pattern. This pattern will present itself at the beginnings of songs 3, 5, and 7.<sup>38</sup> However, the greatest cohesive element of theme and music is found at the end of the cycle when Schumann returns to the key of B $\flat$ , ending with the opening accompaniment of "*Seit ich ihn gesehen*," a reminiscence distorted as her love is no longer alive to revitalize her memory of their first days.

### **General Performance Considerations for *Frauenliebe und Leben***

Before individual aspects of the performance of each song are discussed below, there are a few important considerations regarding the performance of *Frauenliebe und Leben* that are applicable to the whole cycle. Firstly, it is understood that the performance of this cycle is not only an aural experience for the audience, but also a visual one. The singer should consider the increasing maturity of the character choosing gestures to

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35. Finson, *The Book of Songs*, 94.

36. Ferris, "Robert Schumann," 265.

37. Richard Miller, *Singing Schumann: An Interpretive Guide for Performers* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1999), 8 and 34.

38. Barbara Turchin, "Schumann's Song Cycles: The Cycle within the song," *19<sup>th</sup> Century Music* 8, no. 3 (Spring 1985): 233.

accompany phrases or facial expressions to portray a song through acting. For example, the wide-eyed, grinning splendor that could be chosen for “*Er der Herrliche von allen*” should be quite different from the calm maturity in the joy experienced in “*Süsser Freund*”. Similarly, the gestures and points of focus for each song of the cycle should be unique to each vignette of the woman’s life. The raising of the left hand to bring the focus to the place of an engagement ring whilst singing “*Du Ring an meinem Finger*” is affective and appropriate for the atmosphere that Schumann has brought about in the composition of this song.

Secondly, variance in the treatment of diction between the songs of this cycle is a necessary and extremely affective way to achieve desired emotional contrast. Often times a singer’s desire to portray intense emotion produces tension within the laryngeal and neck muscles, compromising the vocal mechanism. However, diction can be used to portray emotions without causing unnecessary tension. The way a singer naturally approaches diction during moments of intensity and quick melodic lines, versus moments of extreme serenity and legato provides realistic contrast and emotional atmosphere to each song, especially those with varying themes within the song itself, such as “*Ich kann’s nicht fassen.*”

Lastly and most importantly, in a performance of any kind, it must be understood that it is the responsibility of the singer and the accompanist as co-laboring artists to internalize the music and poetry in such a way that it is made real in *their* individual performance of the work. Richard Miller reminds the performing singer that, though they are not the authors of the music they sing, they must always sing “with a sense of

immediate creation.”<sup>39</sup> This being said, for a successful performance of *Frauenliebe und Leben*, the performing artist must grasp the intrinsic qualities of the progressively maturing poetry in this cycle and discover how this can be realistically portrayed in her particular performance of the work. Though many wish for a recipe or formula for a perfect performance, music is a personal matter; and in a cycle as intimate and introspective as *Frauenliebe und Leben*, no two believable performances will be identical. The performer must feel the quiet pride and intimacy of “Süsser Freund” personally; and the exuberance of youth and excitement in “*Helf mir, ihr Schwestern*” must be portrayed in a way that the performer identifies with when she sings this song. The performer must take cues from Chamisso’s poetry, from Schumann’s composition, and from her own knowledge and life experiences to allow nuance and personal investment in each moment of performance as she approaches each song in a way that portrays how the woman of the cycle views life and love as she grows and learns through life. Again, it is ultimately the performing artists’ responsibility to make the poetry, story, and music come alive in *their* individual performance.

### **Lecture Recital Transcript: Song by Song Analysis**

#### **1. “*Seit ich ihn gesehen*”**

**Summative translation.** “*Seit ich ihn gesehen, glaub ich blind zu sein,*”

translates, “Since I have seen him, I believe I’ve become blind.” This song retells the story of the woman’s, young at this time, first sight of her true love. She speaks of seeing him everywhere and says “his image floats before [her].” She relates that all else in life

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39. Richard Miller, *On the Art of Singing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 142.



has become dull and she no longer cares to share in her sisters' games. She voices that she would rather weep in solitude because his image has flooded her being.<sup>40</sup>

**Musical elements.** The text-music relationship of this first piece is a primary concern of Schumann's. In this song, the woman of this cycle is a young maiden, awe-struck by her first love. Schumann portrays this moment as though it causes a sudden shift in perspective, leaving the young woman stunned. He creates a sense that the world blurs out and stands still as she fixes her eyes on the man she will one day marry.

Schumann creates this "atmosphere of adoration" through a simplistic yet unsteady musical texture.<sup>41</sup> The accompaniment to this song is simple, supplied by irregular punctuation of chords in the lower to middle range. The irregularity of the chords' rhythm provides an unsteady feeling, mimicking the girl's fluttering heart, an off-balance feel. In Figure 1, the "shifting accentuation between voice and piano," where the phrase is displaced to a weak beat, contributes to this off-balance nature.



Figure 1. Shifting accentuation between voice and piano in "Seit ich ihn gesehen."<sup>42</sup>

These "hypnotic" monotonous chord changes make the singer and pianist seem "caught in a daydream."<sup>43</sup>

40. For all subsequent translations see Appendix 1. For performance, translation will be provided in program.

41. Miller, *Singing Schumann*, 84.

42. This figure, and all subsequent figures are provided in Powerpoint presentation. And all musical excerpts may be found through public domain at this link:  
[http://petrucci.mus.auth.gr/imglnks/usimg/8/8e/IMSLP270922-PMLP12743-Schumann\\_\\_Robert\\_Werke\\_Breitkopf\\_Gregg\\_Serie\\_13\\_Band\\_2\\_RS\\_129\\_Op\\_42\\_scan.pdf](http://petrucci.mus.auth.gr/imglnks/usimg/8/8e/IMSLP270922-PMLP12743-Schumann__Robert_Werke_Breitkopf_Gregg_Serie_13_Band_2_RS_129_Op_42_scan.pdf)

In “*Seit ich ihn gesehen*,” the woman of the cycle is still of a youthful age. In order to emulate this youth and tender poetry, Schumann kept the texture of the song simplistic with limited technical vocal and accompaniment demands.<sup>44</sup> The rhythmic and melodic structures are established on the natural inflection of the text.<sup>45</sup> A narrow intervallic range is observed as a statement of bewilderment until the words “*tiefstem Dunkel*” meaning “deepest darkness.”<sup>46</sup> “*Tiefstem*” is sung on a descending seventh interval (D5 to E♭4) followed by an ascending sixth, and “*Dunkel*” descends like darkness with a stepwise motion. For later analysis, it is also important to note that Schumann doubles the voice in the accompaniment. Ultimately, Schumann’s strophic setting, off-balanced rhythms, and simple chords represent the girl’s youth, simplicity and uncertainty.<sup>47</sup>

**Performance considerations.** In this song, vocal timbre must be kept light and not overly darkened. It is effective to begin this cycle with a light, youthful tone, and later deepen to a broad, darker maturity of sound as the woman matures through life. To accomplish this, one must sing the first song with a brightened vowel sound and a ringing, vibrant, spinning resonance keeping the sound forward in the mask and avoid darker vowel formations. The performer should not perform this song as though she is breathless, sighing, or captivated to the point of moaning through the song. Though this song is one of awe, simplicity, and uncertainty, the woman of Schumann’s cycle is not

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43. Muxfeldt, “Frauenliebe Und Leben,” 41.

44. Miller, *Singing Schumann*, 85.

45. Ibid., 84.

46. Lois Phillips, *Lieder Line by Line and Word for Word* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1980), 172.

47. Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 81.

wimpy by any means. Now, because of the rich chords that accompany this song, the performer should be declamatory and profound in the delivery of this song. There should be a sense of pride and excitement to accompany the full harmony amidst the awe and uncertainty emulated in the rhythmic structure. As the composition is simple, the performance should be simple. The performer should avoid over complicating or over emoting to express this song as it can easily become parodic. For example, it is unnecessary to crescendo or diminuendo each note as this only breaks up the songs inherent dignity.<sup>48</sup> Therefore For an expressive delivery of “*Seit ich ihn gesehen*,” the singer should perform with a strong legato in the voice with an honest timbre.<sup>49</sup>

## 2. “*Er der Herrlichste von allen*”

**Summative translation.** “*Er der Herrlichste von allen*” is an exclamation that translates into English as “He, the most splendid of all!”<sup>50</sup> This song is one of extreme passion. Carol Kimball provides an excellent summary of the song: “Brimming with ardor, she extols the virtues of her sweetheart and vows that, even though her heart should break if she were not the chosen one, only the finest woman is worthy of his magnificence.”<sup>51</sup>

**Musical Elements.** “*Seit ich ihn gesehen*,” which is written in B $\flat$ , serves as the dominant to the E $\flat$  key of “*Er der Herrlichste von allen*.” This key relationship is allusive of the *cantabile-cabaletta* or *arioso-aria* style mentioned earlier. In this song, Schumann implements more regularity and aria style than is found in most of the other

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48. Miller, *On the Art of Singing*, 109.

49. Miller, *Singing Schumann*, 84-85.

50. Phillips, *Lieder Line by Line*, 173.

51. *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 81.

songs in *Frauenliebe und Leben*.<sup>52</sup> “*Er der Herrlichste*” is a gem of Schumann’s, encompassing many of his most favored techniques such as “block chords, octave doubling, soaring vocal and pianistic dotted arpeggiated themes, and sensitive use of embellishment.”<sup>53</sup>

Schumann begins the emotionally mountainous structure of this song without delay. In the beginning four measures, the emotional tone changes along with the vocal quality. The phrase, “*Er der Herrlichste von allen*” is exuberant with short, dotted rhythms and an ascending melodic line; whereas, “*wie so milde, wie so gut,*” meaning, “so gentle, so good” is simplified with a broader rhythm and an expressive turn, performed with rubato. The expressive turn is found ornamenting many subsequent phrase endings after its original appearance in the fourth measure. The rubato that accompanies these ornaments is the perfect source of relief from the ceaseless reiteration of block chords.<sup>54</sup>

Schumann also uses stark contrasts in dynamics in this song, an element that only adds to its deeply dramatic poetic shifts. In the phrase prior to “*nur in Demut,*” see figure 2, Schumann builds the dynamics, only to drop to a pianissimo sharply on “*Demut*” or “humility,” accompanied by brief harmonic ambiguity.



Figure 2. Sudden dynamic change on the word “*Demut,*” in mm. 24-25.

52. Finson, *The Book of Songs*, 38.

53. Miller, *Singing Schumann*, 88.

54. *Ibid.*, 85, 88.

The dynamic change indicates importance of the word and the characteristic of humility in the woman's love.<sup>55</sup> At the conclusion of the text in the vocal line, Schumann indicates a grand *ritardando*. It is natural at this point in the song to expect an emotive cadenza; however, the singer follows the written melody, while Schumann cleverly assigns the grand cadenza to the accompanying piano in the postlude of this song, iterating a sense of internalization of the woman's admiration.<sup>56</sup>

**Performance considerations.** While Schumann uses ornamented turns and repeated block chords to progress the song and exude an ecstatic mood, and, while the changing and ambiguous harmonies “mirror [the woman's] uncertainty and changing emotions,” he also asks for much from the vocalist.<sup>57</sup> Schumann marks the beginning of this piece with the instruction of *innig*. *Innig* is a multi-faceted German term used by Schumann to mean “fervent,” “ardent,” “inward” or “devoted,” and also intimate.<sup>58</sup> That understood, the vocalist and pianist must perform with an exuberance and sincerity. The vocalist should also be careful when approaching the large intervals in this piece, the tone should be consistent and the transition smooth. Keeping the larynx stable in a neutral, relaxed position will enable the singer to maintain a consistent body of resonance in spite of the leaping melody.

### 3. “*Ich kann's nicht fassen*”

**Summative translation.** “*Ich kann's nicht fassen, nicht glauben*” translates “I cannot grasp it, I cannot believe it.” In this song, the woman of Schumann's cycle

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55. Ibid., 86.

56. Finson, *The Book of Songs*, 38.

57. Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 81.

58. Miller, *Singing Schumann*, 89.

discovers that the man she adores and loves shares her feelings. This is the man that, in the previous song, she declared only deserved the “worthiest of all,” and now, he has chosen her. She wishes to “die in this dream,” pledges to him her devotion, and ends by asking that “sacred death drink [her] up in tears of endless joy.”

**Musical elements.** An astonished discovery of reciprocated feelings by the woman’s desired love overwhelms the emotion of this song. Schumann marks the song “with passion” and provides a light accompaniment of sparsely placed chords beneath a primarily linear melody.<sup>59</sup> In a style much like recitative, shown in Figure 3, Schumann writes a single-note melody, uninterrupted except by the intervallic emphasis of important words.<sup>60</sup>



Figure 3. Recitative style and sparse accompaniment in “*Ich kann’s nicht fassen.*”

Schumann marks frequent tempo fluctuations, but gives little pause in the melody, creating a sense of breathlessness. The first break in the music is withheld until nineteen measures from the end. An eight-measure interlude, in which the piano increases in intervallic leaps, similar to the vocal line preceding it, “*wie hätt’ er doch unter allen mich Arme erhöht und beglückt?*” After this interlude, Schumann repeats the opening phrases, raising the line a fourth, reiterating and strengthening the woman’s disbelief.<sup>61</sup>

59. Finson, *The Book of Songs*, 38.

60. Miller, *Singing Schumann*, 88.

61. Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 81.

**Performance Considerations.** Schumann had a distinctive purpose for each key that he used. In *The Singer's Schumann*, Thilo Reinhard notes that the key of c-minor was decided by the writings of Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart to represent “all the languishing, longing, and sighing of a soul drunk with love,” and it is speculated that Schumann gave great consideration to Schubart’s descriptions of the characteristics of keys in choosing tonalities for this cycle.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, in this song, a growing passion must be emulated through a constantly sustained and strengthened tone, never allowing the breath support to falter.

In the text, the woman falters from disbelief, reminisces about the past, and fantasizes about the future before returning to disbelief. The heightened sense of emotion must be conveyed to depict these changes in mood, a “sense of immediacy,” as mentioned earlier.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, allow a degree of flexibility in the performance of this work, and perform with “an intensity level at least as strong as that which motivated poet and composer.”<sup>64</sup> For example, the opening phrase “I cannot grasp, nor believe it, A dream must have me bewitched,” is repeated three times, the first loud, the second and third soft, requiring that each sequential repetition be varied.<sup>65</sup> Due to the changing moods that this song undergoes, contrast and nuance is necessary and can be accomplished through clear changes in articulation, word emphasis, dynamic phrasing, and style with each additional repetition and phrase.

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62. Thilo Reinhard, *The Singer's Schumann* (New York: Pelion Press, 1989), 92.

63. Miller, *On the Art of Singing*, 141.

64. Ibid.

65. Reinhard, *The Singer's Schumann*, 92.

#### 4. “*Du Ring an meinem Finger*”

**Summative translation.** In “*Du Ring an meinem Finger*,” the woman of *Frauenliebe und Leben* is newly engaged. As she admires the ring her now-fiancé gave her, she is beginning to grasp how her life has changed.<sup>66</sup> She refers to her childhood as a dream that has come to an end.<sup>67</sup> She then contemplates the new journey that her life as a married woman will entail, exclaiming that the ring has opened her eyes.

**Musical elements.** “*Du Ring an meinem Finger*” returns the cycle to the E $\flat$  key of the second song, after the relative C minor interlude of the third song. This song is also marked with *innig* as its instruction, but the timbre is more “sober” than the disbelief displayed in the third song.<sup>68</sup> The *innig* instruction here likely is aimed at a “heartfelt” nature more than a “fervent” one.<sup>69</sup>

Unlike the other songs in this cycle, this song is not indicative of Schumann’s talents for synthesizing words and music. Here, Schumann adamantly poses music—primarily the doubled melody in voice and piano—as the “undisputed master.”<sup>70</sup> Though “*Du Ring an meinem Finger*” is fairly repetitious, but Schumann varies the repetition with the varied B-section. At the B-section, the poetry is declamatory as the woman of the cycle professes her dedication to her betrothed. In this section, Schumann returns to his favored repetition of block chords, contributing a welcomed variety to the song.<sup>71</sup>

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66. Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 81.

67. Muxfeldt, “Frauenliebe Und Leben,” 44.

68. Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 81.

69. Finson, *The Book of Songs*, 39.

70. Miller, *Singing Schumann*, 90.

71. Finson, *The Book of Songs*, 39.



**Performance considerations.** As the woman of *Frauenliebe und Leben* matures, so should the vocal representation that is given in each piece. This song is likely the most performed and most ill-performed song in this cycle. It is often performed at a funeral's pace with an exaggerated soupy-sappy emotion. Highlighted previously, *innig* in the context of this song refers to an ardent emotion, not bewitched drudgery. The performer must take care not to exaggerate the emotions of this song, which is too often performed with saccharine and lethargy. This song is one that is "honest and direct," not psychologically probing. Therefore, the song must be sung with quiet excitement and anticipation. Allow the song to "move joyfully," at a quickened tempo; but, while singing at a quicker pace, take heed to minimize the false accents in the upward leaps, such as "an" in the opening phrase, shown in Figure 4.<sup>72</sup>

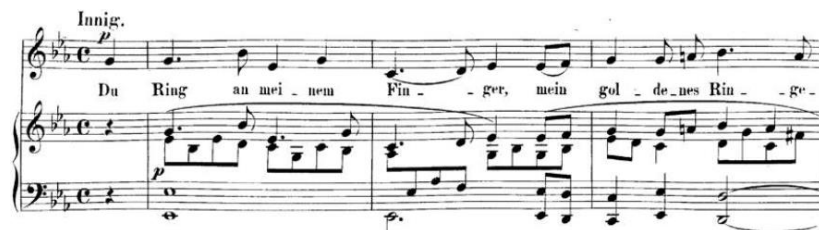


Figure 4. False syllabic accents in "Du Ring an meinem Finger."

##### 5. "Helft mir, ihr Schwestern"

**Summative translation.** "Helft mir, ihr Schwestern" says, "Help me, my Sisters." The vignette described in this song is one of bridal preparations on her wedding day. Typical hustle and bustle of preparations occur, as she beckons her sisters to adorn her with flowers, telling them of stories and feelings she has shared with her groom in anticipation of their wedding day. She asks her sisters to "help rid [her] of her foolish anxiety," and exhibits a mix of joy and somber sobriety as she says, "Cover him, sisters,

72. Miller, *Singing Schumann*, 89-90.

cover him with flowers... but you, my dear sisters, I greet with melancholy, departing joyfully from your midst.”

**Musical elements.** With the first measures of “*Helft mir, ihr Schwestern*” in B $\flat$ , Schumann opens the scene with arpeggiated chords which mimic the “din of hollow turning figures,” the pealing of bells.<sup>73</sup> The arpeggiated chords build excitement throughout the song, exemplifying the building anticipation of the day. The melody has a rapid pulse without breathing space. In the first twenty-two measures of music, only three quarter-rests give the singer pause. Schumann uses this ceaseless melody to stimulate a sense of urgency and anticipation.<sup>74</sup> Save the appearance of one turn, the melodic line is unornamented and inculcated with instrumental style.<sup>75</sup>

In measure 27, the beginning of the phrase alludes to melodic material from the stunned “*Ich kann's nicht fassen*,” and in measure 30, the ornamental turn directs the listener to recall the adoring “*Er, der Herrlichste von allen*.”<sup>76</sup> These remnant melodies connect the journey of the woman from distant admirer to sought-after bride-to-be. Measures 27 and 30 bear the following poetic text: “*Bist, mein Gelibter, du mir erschienen, gibst du mir, Sonne, deinen Schein*,” which translates to “When my beloved comes for me, will you give me your light, O sun?”<sup>77</sup> Alongside the allusions to past songs of wonder and delight, this questioning phrase discloses to the listener the woman’s

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73. Muxfeldt, “Frauenliebe Und Leben,” 42. On June 9, 1839, Robert wrote to Clara that he “awakened to the din of inner bells,” a possible influence on his choice of accompaniment figures.

74. Miller, *Singing Schumann*, 90-91.

75. Finson, *The Book of Songs*, 40.

76. Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 81.

77. Phillips, *Lieder Line by Line*, 176.

mild, nervous bewilderment and her trepid farewell to childhood as she stands in the reality of what she once conjured only in dreams.

Later in the song, in measure 41, the vocal melody anticipates a change in the accompaniment; the poetry bidding a bittersweet parting from sisters. Alongside the melodic anticipation, the tonality briefly moves to G<sup>b</sup> and then progresses back to the original B<sup>b</sup> major. Here, as shown in Figure 4, Schuman “skillfully transforms his chordal-arpeggiated harmonic (and dotted-rhythmic) figure into a wedding march.”<sup>78</sup>



Figure 5. Accompaniment shift to wedding march texture of mm. 46 to end in “Helft mir, ihr Schwestern.”

**Performance considerations.** According to the writings of Schubart, the key B<sup>b</sup> major represents “serene love, good conscience” and “longing for a better world.”<sup>79</sup> The mood set by this key suits the woman’s longing for her walk down the aisle to unite with her beloved. Why then does Schumann modulate to G<sup>b</sup> as she bids her sisters goodbye? If Schumann truly was following characteristics of keys described by Schubart, this modulation is well planned. The key of G<sup>b</sup>, according to Schubart, emulates “a deep

78. Miller, *Singing Schumann*, 91.

79. Reinhard, *The Singer’s Schumann*, 90.

breath after ascending to the hills,” or an “echo of a soul that has struggled greatly and peacefully gained victory.”<sup>80</sup> The implications of these tonal moods need to be conveyed through the singer’s performance. In the key of B $\flat$ , the singer should exude joy and urgency by sustaining vocal energy and using precise diction.<sup>81</sup> When the modulation to G $\flat$  occurs, strength in a resolute tone and confidence should bring resolution and relief to the poetic scene.

## 6. “*Süsser Freund*”

**Summative translation.** “*Süsser Freund*” is German for “sweet friend,” but carries with it the connotation of “dearest friend.”<sup>82</sup> Chamisso’s poetry in “*Süsser Freund*” is filled with radiant joy, ardent love and loss for words. In this song, the woman of the cycle has learned that she is with child. Brimming with tears of joy and sweet intimate love for her husband, she searches for “the words to say.” She beckons for her husband to lay his face upon her heart that she may whisper the news in his ear. She tells her husband and longs for the day that their child, her husbands “image,” will smile up at her. Schumann ends the song with a repetition of the phrase “*dein Bildnis*,” “your image.”

**Musical elements.** This song indicates a turning point in the cycle. Songs one through four were indicative of the woman’s youth, song five was transitional as she prepared for her wedding, and the present song, song six, “[divides] the cycle’s first

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80. Ibid., 91.

81. Miller, *Singing Schumann*, 90.

82. Phillips, *Lieder Line by Line*, 250.

poems of charm and youth with those of her maturity.”<sup>83</sup> This song charms listeners by bringing the first non-flat tonality into the cycle, G major. The new tonality is “both fresh and striking, heralding a momentous announcement.”<sup>84</sup> As Schubart wrote and Schumann understood, G major can express all calm and gentle emotions, and in this song we see a “calm and contented passion.”<sup>85</sup> The accompaniment of organ-like chords in lower ranging octaves grants the song a reflective tone.<sup>86</sup> While songs four and five parade open emotional expressions, Chamisso’s text in song six, “[probe] the psychological depths of poetic language,” enhanced by Schumann’s initial key ambiguity.<sup>87</sup>

The previously discussed lyric-declamatory style is once again apparent in “*Süsser Freund*.” The musical composition is based on word inflection and speech pacing.<sup>88</sup> Schumann neglects the original poetic meter to bring life to “free and vivid expression” of the thrilling news, much like an accompanied recitative.<sup>89</sup>

The middle of this song declares the genius of Schumann’s word painting. When the woman invites her husband to come to her breast, that she may “whisper all [her] desire” to him, the accompaniment persists in sustained chords, entrusting the word painting to the singer. In Figure 6, Schumann beautifully tunes the audience’s ear with

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83. Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 81.

84. Ibid.

85. Reinhard, *The Singer’s Schumann*, 90.

86. Miller, *Singing Schumann*, 92.

87. Miller, *Singing Schumann*, 91. Key ambiguity is Schumann’s trademark for psychological probing.

88. Ibid., 91-92.

89. Finson, *The Book of Songs*, 40.

the placement of the triplet on “*Ohr die*,” directly preceding the fifth leap to “*flüstern*,” or “whisper.”



Figure 6. Final line of initial A-section and triplet leading to “*flüstern*” and subsequent descending line in “*Süsser Freund*.”

This directory triplet prior to the high notation of “whisper” epitomizes the woman’s building excitement and her husband’s anticipation. The preceding The tension build is then hung on a thread as the line descends with “*alle mein Lust*,” or “all my joy,” leading into a piano interlude, Figure 7.



Figure 7. Piano sharing the whispered moment, followed by key change in “*Süsser Freund*.”

This interlude, beginning with the last measure of Figure 6, is the musical depiction of the building courage of the woman as she leans in to tell her husband the news of the child she bears. The interlude builds using ascending chords, but remains dynamically even. The key change is suspended before the resolving grace note on E5 is played. In the moments of this suspension, the listener feels the husband’s suspended breath and wordless shock; then, his expelling sigh of joy and pleasure with the sounding of the Eb,

followed closely by the continuance of the song saying, “now you understand the tears that I weep.”<sup>90</sup>

**Performance considerations.** The phrase shown in figure 6 is most effective when a slight crescendo and diminuendo accompanies the ascending line, reaching “*flüstern*” at the softest dynamic, as the word requires. Proper interpretation of this song lies in the singer’s ability to portray the text-painting that Schumann provides. In “*Süsser Freund*,” the key describes a calm and gentle passion, a perfect description of early motherhood. The singer must glow and convey a greater maturity than in the previous songs. Maternal and matrimonial joy along with a quiet disbelief and pride fill the notes of this song.

Another important performance consideration for this song is that Schumann writes it in a recitative-like style. Therefore, as is done in recitative, emphasis should be given to the naturally occurring stresses and rhythms of the spoken language when musically interpreting this song. Note the similarities between operatic recitative and Schumann’s use of the style for this particular song of the cycle. In opera, recitative is the sung dialogue or monologue that moves the story’s plot forward and is followed by an accompanying aria that often expands upon the emotions of the character at the moment. The same can be said of this song. The singer is not merely relaying emotions of a situation, but is engaging in a direct dialogue that progresses the plot; the woman of the cycle is directly telling her husband that they are expecting, a progression of the cycle’s plot. However, the singer must take caution to approach the recitative not with a breathy, whisper-like quality and an unmusical delivery, that has been unfortunately paired with many recitatives, but with a properly supported and energetic *sotto voce* in the intimate,

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90. Phillips, *Lieder Line by Line*, 177.

whispered sections of this song.<sup>91</sup> The performer should take heed to never allow the idea of *parlando*, or speech-like, singing to take precedence over the fact that the *recitative* was, in-fact, written for singing and should be performed with proper technique.<sup>92</sup> With this song it is imperative that the singer knows the translation word for word with this piece, because it is a moment of intimate communication and not merely a dictation of an emotional atmosphere. This is the first moment in this cycle where the woman speaks directly *to* her beloved and is not merely exploring her thoughts, which must be made clear in presentation through the vocal delivery of each phrase and the performers acting. The singer can be portray this direct dialogue through changes in visual focus, more engaged acting, and clearly dictated, directed articulation.

### 7. “*An meinem Herzen*”

**Summative translation.** “*An meinem Herzen, an meiner Brust, du meine Wonne, du meine Lust!*” This opening line is translated, “On my heart, and on my breast, you my joy, you my delight!” In this song, the woman of *Frauenliebe und leben*, now a new mother, speaks to her child with exuberance and profound love. She expresses that only a mother who has nourished the child she loves can know “what it is to love and be happy.” The woman pities man, who cannot know her joy, a profound and triumphant statement. In her statement, “you look at me and smile,” the dream and hopes revealed in song six have come to fruition.

**Musical elements.** Songs six and seven are unique among this cycle, for in these songs the cynosure is the woman as a mother, instead of the husband’s excellence. These two songs are another example of the lyric-declamatory style, song six serving as lyric or

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91. Miller, *On the Art of Singing*, 116.

92. Ibid.



arioso and song seven as declamatory or aria. The non-flatted major tonality of G in song six is shared in song seven, moving to the dominant, D major.<sup>93</sup>

The beginning seventh chords are brimming with excitement; the introduction, built on a theme of fourths, one of Schumann's favorite compositional techniques to represent happiness.<sup>94</sup> The tempo in "*An meinem Herzen*" is steady and waltzing. The lilting, constant movement, shown in figure 8, paints a tone-picture of bouncing or rocking a child, while whirling around at times to spur the child's laughter.



Figure 8. Lilting, constant movement in "*An meinem Herzen*," mm. 4-5.

The strong and steady movement of the accompaniment and nonstop vocal line also "communicate an undeniable, almost militant pride."<sup>95</sup> The poetry is set syllabically with a standard, repetitious rhythmic form. This technique seemingly serves to emulate the concise and simple structure of "baby-talk."<sup>96</sup>

Though simple, this song is powerful in its communication of the woman's love, joy, confidence, and joy. Because of the repetitious structure, the singer and accompanist must be cautioned not to become monochromatic in performance. They must hold the listener's attentive ear until the last chords "echo the last words" of "*Süsser Freund*," a

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93. Finson, *The Book of Songs*, 40.

94. Miller, *Singing Schumann*, 93.

95. Finson, *The Book of Songs*, 41.

96. Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 82.

representation that the dream of having her husband's likeness smile up at her has now materialized and become a dearest reality.<sup>97</sup>

**Performance considerations.** Since this song has a waltzing feel, the lilting stresses must be represented in the voice as well. This implies that there needs to be a sing-song feel, stressing beats one and three. The quiet joy of the new mother must be felt in performance. A fortissimo performance of this song would seem natural; however, it should be noted that the song emulates rocking a baby, an activity that is typically accompanied by hushed tones.

#### 8. "*Nun hast du mir den ersten Schmerz getan*"

**Summative translation.** The opening phrase translates "Now, for the first time, you have caused me pain." The woman of *Frauenliebe und Leben* has been inflicted with the pain of her husband's death, a pain that has "struck [her] deep." She tinges with anger towards him, for the first time using harsh words, "cruel and merciless," to describe him. Abandoned, "she indulges a painfully desolate projection, envisioning herself forlorn in an empty world;" she declares herself to be no longer living.<sup>98</sup>

**Musical elements.** In "*Nun hast du mir*," Schumann "by minimal musical means, deftly catches the woman's effort to control her grief."<sup>99</sup> The D minor chord, which opens the song with a striking *sforzando*, startles listeners with the stark contrast against the previous songs D major tonality. The initial melodic phrase outlines the D minor chord in an unyielding heaviness of rhythm, allowing the audience to feel the woman's anger and restraint.

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97. Ibid.

98. Muxfeldt, "Frauenliebe und Leben," 44.

99. Miller, *Singing Schumann*, 93.

Schumann's texture in the song is the bleakest of the whole cycle. The lean texture shown in figure 9 portrays the widow's feeling of emptiness as she lives without her beloved. Throughout the song, only blocked chords are played until the postlude begins.<sup>100</sup>



Figure 9. Lean, recitative-like texture in “Nun hast du mir den ersten Schmerz getan,” mm. 1-3.

Over the listless accompaniment, the voice is given a melody of close-intervallic structure and a single note center.<sup>101</sup> At times, dissonant harmonies give emphasis to words, such as “*leer*” and “*zieh*,” as well as the final “*Glück*.” The vocal shaping is flat, paired, and repeated, while the accompaniment is void of rhythm or driving energy, resulting in this last song resembling a *parlando, recitative* style more than a Lied.<sup>102</sup>

**Performance consideration.** This final song in *Frauenliebe und Leben*, is an example of Schumann's finest use of his lyric-declamatory style.<sup>103</sup> The contrast between songs seven and eight is an “instance of theatricality,” but the singer must not let the last song become a histrionic display.<sup>104</sup> Anguish needs to be related but, again, without being maudlin. Schumann constructed the cycle with such genius that overtly theatrical

100. Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 82.

101. Miller, *Singing Schumann*, 93.

102. Finson, *The Book of Songs*, 41.

103. Miller, *Singing Schumann*, 93.

104. Finson, *The Book of Songs*, 41.

performances, overuse of facial expressions, angrily-articulated phrases etc., will only detract from his compositional techniques.

### **The Postlude**

Following the last words of text, Schumann returns to the opening music of the cycle. There is no subtle modulation interweaving of themes, only a direct return. Schumann must have desired this “deliberate disjunction,” used to give a musical representation of “a jarring event that heralds the appearance of a new world...pushing the old one into the distance.”<sup>105</sup>

As the opening accompaniment doubles some of the vocal line in “*Seit ich ihn gesehen*,” so the postlude plays the melody in the final measures. This false repeat of the cycle, summons the text that “has previously overlain them,” supplying cohesion to the cycle.<sup>106</sup> The audience will find themselves recalling the first song as the widow stands recalling the memories of her love. However, the further the postlude progresses, the more difficult it is for the listener to place the words over the accompaniment, because the repetition is inaccurate. As the words begin to fall through, the affect is an “[imitation] of the perceptual mechanisms of a memory that has no hope of being revitalized by physical proximity.”<sup>107</sup>

### **Closing Remarks**

*Frauenliebe und Leben* is an apex composition of Robert Schumann’s life. He successfully tells the story of a woman’s “progression from bride to mother to widow,”

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105. Ibid., 41-42.

106. Miller, *Singing Schumann*, 83, 85, 94.

107. Muxfeldt, “Frauenliebe und Leben,” 45, 47.

and “creates a monumental emotional experience.”<sup>108</sup> *Frauenliebe und Leben* is likely the one of the most frequently performed works of Schumann, alongside *Dichterliebe*. This song cycle showcases some of Schumann’s most renowned compositional techniques: arpeggiated and block-chord keyboard configurations, frequent use of dotted rhythms, extensive and frequent “pianistic digressions,” coherent tonal schemes and strong key relationships, voice doubling with the keyboard, chromaticism to enhance introspection, and close intervallic melodic structure.<sup>109</sup>

Should a performer endeavor to sing this cycle, she must immerse herself in the female role of time in which this work was composed. The singer must be willing to understand and portray the “social milieu” of the time, realizing that this cycle is “an artistic expression” of a “young, vital innocent woman.”<sup>110</sup> The performer should step into the shoes of Schumann, a man who composed tirelessly, in ardent love with a woman he could not yet marry, but was pining for the day of their wedding. Or, step into the shoes of Clara, a young woman, admired by a well-accomplished man, who left her youth behind to marry him and stayed devoted to his side until the day he first caused her grief, the day of his death. In light of Robert and Clara’s life, this cycle is no longer one of a fabricated woman, but of a true love story. It is not a comment on societal standards, but a representation of a woman’s utmost triumphs and sorrows in life. *Frauenliebe und Leben* is a specimen of Schumann’s most devoted works and the performance of such a work should supply its performance with matching devotion.

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108. Miller, *Singing Schumann*, 83, 85.

109. Ibid., 9.

110. Ibid., 87.

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## Appendix 1

**Translation:***Woman's love and life***Frauenliebe und Leben**

Song Cycle, op. 42

Adelbert von Chamisso (1781-1838)

**1. Seit ich ihn gesehen***Since I first saw him,*

Seit Ich ihn gesehen,

*I believe I've become blind;*

Glaub' ich blind zu sein;

*wherever I look,*

Wo ich ihn nur blicke,

*I see only him;*

Seh ich ihn allein;

*as if in waking dreams,*

Wie im wachen Traume

*his image floats in front of me,*

Schwebt sein Bild mir vor,

*it dips from deepest darkness,*

Taucht aus tiefstem Dunkel,

*brighter as it rises.*

Heller nur empor.

*Everywhere else is pale and colorless*

Sonst ist licht- und farblos

*all around me,*

Alles um mich her,

*while my sisters play games*

Nach der Schwestern Spiele

*I no longer desire,*

Nicht begehrt ich mehr,

*I'd rather cry*

Möchte lieber weinen

*quietly in my little room;*

Still im Kämmerlein;

*since I first saw him,*

Seit ich ihn gesehen

*I believe I've become blind;*

Glaub' ich blind zu sein.

**2. Er, der Herrlichste von allen***He is the finest man of all,*

Er, der Herrlichste von allen

*so gentle, so good.*

Wie so milde, wie so gut.

*Sweet lips, clear eyes,*

Holde Lippen, klares Auge,

*bright minded and firm courage.*

Heller Sinn und fester Mut.

*Just as in the blue depths*

So wie dort in blauer Tiefe

*every star is bright and glorious,*

Hell und herrlich, jener Stern,

*likewise is he in my heaven*

Also er an meinem Himmel

*bright and glorious, lofty and distant.*

Hell und herrlich, hehr und fern.

*Wander, wander down the paths;*

Wandle, wandle deine Bahnen;

*only let me gaze upon your way;*

Nur in Demut ihn betrachten,

*only in pain to watch him,*

Selig nur und traurig sein.

*only blissful and sad am I.*

Selig nur und traurig sein.

*Hear not my silent prayer*

Höre nicht mein stilles Beten,



*devoted to your happiness alone;*  
Deinem Glücke nur geweiht;

*you cannot know me, an unworthy maid,*  
Darfst mich niedre Magd nicht kennen  
*you highest star of glory.*  
Hoher Stern der Herrlichkeit.

*The worthiest of all*  
Nur die Würdigste von allen

*could make you happy*  
Darf beglücken deine Wahl

*and I will praise this highest woman*  
Und ich will die Hohe segnen

*many thousand times.*  
Viele tausend Mal.

*Then I will rejoice and cry,*  
Will much freuen dann und weinen,

*blissful, blissful will I be then,*  
Selig, selig bin ich dann,

*my heart would also break,*  
Sollte mir das Herz auch brechen,

*break, O heart, so what of it?*  
Brich, o Herz, was liegt daran?

### 3. Ich kann's nicht fassen

*I cannot grasp it, I cannot believe it,*  
Ich kann's nicht fassen, nicht glauben,

*a dream has made me happy;*  
Es hat ein Traum mich berückt;

*how has he from all the others*  
Wie hätt' er habe gesprochen

*lifted up and blessed poor little me?*  
Mich Arme erhöht und beglückt?

*It seemed to me, he had spoken to me:*  
Mir war's, er habe gesprochen:

*"I am forever yours,"*  
>> Ich bin auf ewig Dein,<<

*it seemed to me that I was still dreaming,*  
Mir war's, ich trauma noch immer,

*it could never be so.*  
Es kann ja nimmer so sein.

*O let me die in this dream*  
O laß im Traume mich sterben,

*rocked upon his chest,*  
Gewieget an seiner Brust,

*then sacred death drink me up*  
Den seligen Tod mich schlürfen

*in tears of endless joy.*  
In Tränen unendlicher Lust.

### 4. Du Ring an meinem Finger

*You ring on my finger,*  
Du Ring an meinem Finger,

*my little gold ring,*  
Mein goldenes Ringlein,

*I press you against my lips,*  
Ich drücke dich fromm an die Lippen,

*against my heart.*  
An das Herze mein.

*I dreamed of it no longer,*  
Ich hatt' ihn ausgeträumet,

*the peaceful, beautiful dream of childhood*  
Der Kindheit friedlich schönen Traum,

*I found myself alone and lost*  
Ich fand allein mich, verloren

*in a barren unending realm.*  
Im öden unendlichen Raum

*You ring on my finger,*  
Du Ring an meinem Finger,

*you have taught me for the first time,*  
Da hast du mich erst belehrt,

*you have opened my eyes*  
Hast meinem Blick erschlossen

*to life's eternal, deep worth.*  
Des Lebens unendlichen, tiefen Wert.

*I want to serve him, live for him,*  
Ich will ihm dienen, ihm leben,

*belong to him entirely,*  
Ihm angehören ganz,

*yield to him and find myself*  
Hin selber mich geben und finden

*transfigured in his splendor.*  
Verklärt mich in seinem Glanz.

### 5. Helft mir, ihr Schwestern

*Help me, my sisters,*  
Helft mir, ihr Schwestern,

*Kindly adorn me,*  
Freundlich mich schmücken,

*Serve me on my happy day,*  
Dient der Glücklichen heute mir,

*wind quickly*  
Windet geschäftig

*around my brow*  
Mir um die Stirne

*the flowering myrtle adornment.*  
Noch der blühenden Myrte Zier.

*When I content*  
Als ich befriedigt

*and joyful in my heart*  
Freudigen Herzens,

*lay in the arms of my beloved,*  
Sonst dem Geliebten im Arme lag,

*ever yet would he call*  
Immer noch rief er,

*with longing in his heart,*  
Sehnsucht im Herzen,

*impatient for the present day.*  
Ungeduldig den heutigen Tag.

*Help me, my sisters,*  
Helft mir, ihr Schwestern,

*help rid me*  
Helft mir verscheuchen

*of my foolish anxiety;*  
Eine törichte Bangigkeit;

*that I with clear*  
Daß ich mit klarem

*eyes may welcome him,*  
Aug' ihn empfangen,

*him, my source of joy.*  
Ihn, die Quelle der Freudigkeit.

*When, my beloved,*  
Bist, mein Geliebter,

*you appear to me,*  
Du mir erschienen,

*sun, will you give me your shine?*  
Giebst du mir, Sonne, deinen Schein?

*Let me in devotion,*  
Laß mich in Andacht,

*let me in meekness,*  
Laß mich in Demut,

*let me kneel before my husband.*  
Laß mich verneigen dem Herren mein.

*Cover him, sisters,*  
Streuet ihm, Schwestern,

*cover him with flowers,*  
Streuet ihn Blumen,

*bring him blooming roses,*  
Bringet ihm knospende Rosen dar,

*but you, dear sisters,*  
Aber euch, Schwestern,

*I greet with melancholy,*  
Grüß ich mit Wehmut,

*departing joyfully from your midst.*  
Freudig scheidend aus eurer Schar.

## 6. Süßer Freund, du blackest

*Sweet friend, you gaze*  
Süßer Freund, du blickest

*at me with wonder,*  
Mich verwundert an,

*you cannot grasp it,*  
Kannst es nicht begreifen,

*how I can weep;*  
Wie ich weinen kann;

*let these moist tears,*  
Laß der feuchten Perlen

*their unaccustomed adornment*  
Ungewohnte Zier

*tremble brightly and joyfully*  
Freudig hell erzittern

*in my eyes.*  
In dem Aug emir.

*How anxious is my heart,*  
Wie so bang mein Busen

*how joyful!*  
Wie so wonnevoll!

*Could I with words,*  
Wüßt ich nur mit Worten,

*know how to say it;*  
Wie ich's sagen soll;

*come and hide your face*  
Komm und birg dein Antlitz

*here upon my breast,*  
Hier an meiner Brust,

*I want to whisper in your ear*  
Will in's Ohr dir flüstern

*all my desire.*  
Alle meine Lust.

*You understand the tears*  
Weißt du nun die Tränen,

*that I weep,*  
Die ich weinen kann,

*should you not see them,*  
Sollst du nicht sie sehen

*beloved husband?*  
Du geliebter Mann?

*Stay by my heart,*  
Bleib' an meinem Herzen,

*feel it pound,*  
Fühle dessen Schlag,

*that I fast and firmer*  
Daß ich fest und fester

*only may hold you.*  
Nur dich drücken mag.

*Here beside my bed*  
Hier an meinem Bette

*the cradle has room,*  
Hat die Wiege Raum,

*where it quietly hides*  
Wo sie still verberge

*my lovely dream;*  
Meinen holden Traum;

*the morning will come*  
Kommen wird der Morgen,

*when that dream awakes;*  
Wo der Traum erwacht;

*and from there your image*  
Und daraus dein Bildnis

*will smile up at me.*  
Mir entgegen lacht.

### 7. An meinen Herzen

*On my heart, on my breast,*  
An meinem Herzen, an meiner Brust,

*you my joy, you my delight.*  
Du meine Wonne, du meine Lust.

*Joy is love, love is joy,*  
Das Glück ist die Liebe, die Lieb' ist das  
Glück,  
Gelie  
*I have said it and will not take it back.*  
Ich hab's gesagt und nehm's nicht  
zurück.

*I thought I knew happiness*  
Hab' übergücklich mich geschätzt

*but I am overjoyed.*  
Bin übergücklich aber jetzt.

*Only she who nurses, only she who loves*  
Nur die da säugt, nur die da liebt

*the child to whom she gave birth;*  
Das Kind, D dem sie die Nahrung gibt;

*only a mother knows,*  
Nur eine Mutter weiß allein,

*what it is to love and be happy.*  
Was lieben heißt und glücklich sein.

*O, how I feel sorry for the person,*  
O, wie bedauer' ich doch den Mann,

*who cannot feel a mother's joy.*  
Der Mutterglück nicht fühlen kann.

*You dear, dear angel you,*  
Du lieber, lieber Engel du,

*you look at me and smile.*  
Du schauest mich an und lächelst dazu.

*On my heart, on my breast,*  
An meinem Herzen, an meiner Brust,

*you my joy, you my delight.*  
Du meine Wonne, du meine Lust.

### 8. Nun hast du mir

*Now for the first time you have given me*  
Nun hast du mir den ersten Schmerz  
getan,

*pain, which stuck me,*  
Der aber traf,

*you sleep, you hard, unfeeling man,*  
Du schläfst, du harter, unbarmherz' ger  
Mann,

*the death sleep.*  
Den Todesschlaf.

*Looking before me, abandoned,*  
Es blicket die Verlassne vor sich hin,

*the world is empty.*  
Die Welt ist leer.

*I have loved and lived,*  
Geliebet hab' ich und gelebt,

*I am not alive anymore.*  
Ich bin nicht lebend mehr.

*Silently I withdrew into myself,*  
Ich zieh mich in mein Innres still zurück,

*the veil falls,*  
Der Schleier fällt,

*there I hold you and my lost happiness,*  
Da hab' ich dich und mein verlор'nes  
Glück,

*you my world.*  
Du meine Welt.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Jonathan Retzlaff, *Exploring Art Song Lyrics: Translation and Pronunciation of the Italian, German, and French Repertoire*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 248-254.