A Discussion Of Robert Schumann's Compositional Process In The Song Cycle Frauenliebe Und -leben

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A DISCUSSION OF ROBERT SCHUMANN’S
COMPOSITIONAL PROCESS
IN THE SONG CYCLE
FRAUENLIEBE UND -LEBEN

by

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B.M. Florida Southern College, 2008

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ABSTRACT

Robert Schumann’s compositional work during 1840 stands out as an unexpected turn of events. With relatively no background composing songs, Schumann suddenly produced a plethora of widely successful and monetarily lucrative songs all within one year. Perhaps most fascinating was the amount of detail Schumann placed into each song. This detail can be seen in the sketches which include the composer’s handwritten edits in both the piano and vocal scores.

With a focus on Schumann’s song cycle, Frauenliebe und -leben the qualities of Schumann’s songs and the compositional process used to create the songs’ final versions are examined through this study. The origins of the poems and their author, Adelbert von Chamisso, are investigated in addition to the relationship created by Schumann between the poems and vocal lines. Main emphasis is placed on tracing the progression from the rough vocal lines found in the autograph score to the relatively finished copyist’s score and finally to the final published version of the cycle.
For my parents
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INTRODUCTION

Robert Schumann’s compositions have been analyzed and discussed by many music scholars and performers. From his symphonic works to his extensive collection of solo piano pieces, his compositions have been pulled apart measure by measure in an attempt to determine exactly what was going on in the mind of this brilliant man as he composed. This intense scrutiny has uncovered a mix of influencing factors that include the composers whom Schumann admired and idolized, the forced separation from the woman he loved and his personal disappointment over his failed performance career. One must also consider the musicians who surrounded Schumann; Mendelssohn was a close friend, Liszt was a rival and Chopin was creating masterpiece as Schumann composed. However, this wealth of musical talent surrounding him was not so strong an influence on his creativity as was his relationship with his wife, Clara. Clara, the daughter of Schumann’s longtime piano instructor, Frederich Wieck, became a driving force in the composer’s life in the 1830s. She remained the central figure in his world and the strongest influence on his creative output for the rest of his life.

Schumann’s struggle to win the right to marry Clara greatly affected his compositional output. When faced with long spans of separation, he simply stopped producing new works and sketches. However, the opposite was also true. When spending time with Clara, Schumann’s compositional work flourished.

Perhaps what has made Schumann so endearing to the music world is how real and human he seems. Some composers leave scholars with many unanswered questions. Oftentimes, few documents exist, and fewer personal mementos survive. However, Schumann has left us with a plethora of information regarding his personal and professional life. Many of his personal letters have survived, and his marriage diaries have almost daily entries spanning a large number
of years. Much of the credit for keeping these diaries up-to-date goes to Clara. Regardless, the entries made by Robert and Clara provide musicians with a rare glimpse into the world of a composer and serve to humanize instead of strictly immortalize Schumann.

In this thesis I hope to highlight some of the history surrounding Schumann’s famous “Liederjahr.” Schumann’s personal struggles leading up to 1840 had a profound effect on his life and compositions. While his original focus was on piano compositions, his need for credibility as a composer combined with his need for financial stability led to this stunning Year of Song production. His song cycle, Frauenliebe und -leben, composed during 1840, is the focus of this thesis, and it provides ample examples of Schumann’s piano background spreading its influence into his songwriting. Schumann’s compositional process in connection to the marriage of the text, vocal line and piano accompaniment will be discussed and examined. Additionally, Adelbert von Chamisso, the botanist who penned the poems in the Frauenliebe und -leben poem cycle, will be examined. His life, work as a scientist and move into literary work is relevant in relation to the writing of these poems. Through this thesis I hope to explore Schumann’s compositional process and to understand the creative process which created Frauenliebe und leben.
CHAPTER 1: ROBERT SCHUMANN

Robert Schumann entered the world as part of a generation that would produce some of the greatest early Romantic music. Composers such as Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn, Frédéric Chopin, Franz Liszt, Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Wagner were born in the years immediately surrounding Schumann’s birth (1805-1813); they would grow to become his future colleagues, competitors and friends.

Schumann’s musical tendencies were noticed at an early age. Although he has become most popularly known as a composer, the first indication of his musical talent was his singing voice as a child. Realizing that their child had a musical gift, Schumann’s parents arranged for him to take piano lessons with Johann Gottfried Kuntsch. The child rapidly progressed, and when he was about eight years old, he began his first attempts at composition. Schumann continued to explore the world of composition during his school years in addition to embracing many forms of literature and experimenting with his own writing and poetry. By 1828 he had begun work on two piano concertos as well as other, now lost, piano works, and from 1827 to 1828 he composed a set of thirteen songs using texts by prominent poets and some of his own original poetry.

The year 1828 was perhaps the most important in Schumann’s life. At that time he began his piano studies with Friedrich Wieck, a man who would greatly influence Schumann’s life and career. Although Schumann was a law student at the time, he poured his attentions into his piano-playing to such a degree that Wieck described him as a “hothead at the keyboard;” in July of 1830 Schumann abandoned law entirely and decided to focus on his piano-playing under
Although he worked on multiple compositions during 1830, Schumann did not complete any of them; often a movement is missing, or the themes were left in sketches that he used in later compositions.  

### Hand Issues

Focused on becoming one of the leading pianists of his day, Schumann began fine-tuning his pianistic skills though daily lessons with Wieck. Although he appeared to be making progress, Schumann was plagued by a mysterious numbness in the third finger of his right hand. This condition actually began in January of 1830. It is interesting to note that even though he was experiencing an issue which could and eventually would ruin his hopes of a career as a virtuosic pianist, Schumann still decided to pursue this goal five months after noting the problem. Perhaps he thought the problem was temporary; perhaps he was in denial. Regardless, Schumann's focus was on performance, and since the problem persisted, he began to try alternative treatments. The first of these treatments was the use of a chiroplast in 1832. A chiroplast is a machine which pulls individual fingers back sharply in an attempt to provide extended mobility to the “exercised” finger. Schumann hoped to improve his finger agility by using this mechanism. Wieck strongly objected to Schumann’s use of this contraption; it certainly did nothing to improve the condition. However, Schumann continued to use it, possibly exacerbating the problem rather than providing the desired improvement. In June 1832 Schumann wrote that his finger had become “completely stiff.” With the chiroplast clearly not working, he turned to

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The patient was to obtain the carcass of a freshly slaughtered animal and insert his hand into its entrails, thereby absorbing healing warmth from a repellent mixture of blood, intestinal slime, and fecal matter; he was also ordered to soak his hand for several hours daily in a warm brandy fluid and wrap it in an herbally medicated bandage during the evening.³

This treatment was equally unsuccessful, and Schumann finally accepted the reality that his goal of professional pianism was finished. This led to an important turning point in his career. With his piano career no longer an option, Schumann decided to focus on his work as a composer. With such a prolific background studying and playing piano literature, it is no wonder that Schumann’s early compositional output consisted mainly of works for piano. In fact, almost the entirety of his output from 1833 to 1839 was piano works.

**Clara Wieck**

Schumann’s work as a composer was rather sporadic from 1835 to 1839. It is possible to relate much of this to the amount of time he was able to spend with Clara Wieck, his piano instructor’s prodigy daughter with whom he had fallen hopelessly in love. When spending time with Clara, his compositional output increased. When forced to be apart from her, he often fell into depressions and ceased his compositional work. For example in January 1836, when Clara’s father learned of Robert and Clara’s budding romance, he quickly moved Clara to Dresden without a word to Schumann. In that year, Schumann produced no works from January to May.

³ Daverio, 78.
Also, on September 9, 1837, Schumann finally requested Wieck’s permission to marry Clara; he received a flat refusal that sent him into periods of anxiety and depression. Once again, negative events regarding his relationship with Clara reflect in his work as a composer. Schumann produced few compositions from September through December of 1837; additionally, the majority of his compositions from this time have been lost.4

The next year held some happy events for Schumann. He became friends with Mozart’s son, visited the gravesites of both Beethoven and Schubert, and discovered Schubert’s unpublished C Major Symphony. Schumann’s good friend, Felix Mendelssohn, organized a performance of the work, and Schumann was able to arrange a printing of the work. However, even with these highlights during 1838, Schumann continued to suffer bouts of depression due to his forced separation from Clara. In a letter to Clara, he stated, “It seems as if I have been wrapped and packed away in black clothes; an indescribable state.”5

Finally, in 1839, Schumann and Clara signed a petition that requested that the courts grant them the right to marry regardless of Wieck’s clear disapproval of such a marriage. A period of waiting began. With the imminent threat of losing his daughter, Wieck began to present accusations against Schumann to the courts. These included that Schumann was not in a strong enough financial position as a composer to care for Clara and a statement accusing Schumann of being an alcoholic.6 In order to deny these accusations, Schumann and Clara devised a plan. First, a selection of Schumann’s compositions and writings were sent to the University of Jena, and in February 1839, Schumann was awarded an honorary doctorate. Second, and perhaps more

4 Daverio, 133-134, 147-148.
important, was their plan for Schumann’s compositional and financial success. Vocal literature appeared to be the most lucrative option at the time, so Robert and Clara began gathering poetry that could be set as songs. Together they collected 169 texts which they recorded by hand in a book titled, “Copies of Poems for Composition.” Schumann began setting these poems to music in rapid succession during 1840.7

**1840- The Year of Song**

After fighting for Clara for so many years, Schumann’s joy and anticipation over what he hoped would be a positive outcome in the courts clearly spilled over into his compositions. This was reasonable as music is often a direct reflection of one’s deepest feelings. However, his love for Clara was certainly not his only inspiration. Schumann had never experienced great success with his piano compositions; when he began to publish his songs, he also began to receive very profitable monetary compensation. This could have spurred him on in addition to his desire for credibility as a composer. By the end of 1840, Schumann has earned a quarter of his normal annual income from solo vocal works alone. Additionally, not all of the poems collected by Clara and Robert were focused on themes of love. They also included some of Heine’s more violent poetry which Schumann eventually used in his ballades. With life finally looking up, Schumann began what was to become known as the “Liederjahr” (Year of Song). With an unremarkable history of song-writing behind him, Schumann suddenly began to produce high quality songs during 1840, many of which have become staples in today’s vocal literature repertoire.

Schumann and Clara’s plan to refute the senior Wieck’s accusations worked. In July of 1840, the Court in Leipzig granted the couple the right to marry. Wieck waved his rights to present any further objections, and on September 12, 1840, Robert and Clara were wed. It is interesting to note that on September 13, 1840, Clara would turn twenty-one—the age at which she could legally marry whomever she chose. By deciding to marry one day before her birthday, Robert and Clara were showing their defiance toward the elder Wieck’s opposition. 8

**After the Songs—Other Compositional Styles**

Although Schumann continued to compose songs after his marriage, he was never as prolific in his songwriting as he was during 1840. The year immediately following the year of song is referred to as the Symphonic Year. In this year he shifted his focus away from vocal and piano compositions and began to focus on how he could use an orchestra. Schumann began 1841 with the composition of his “Spring” Symphony (op. 38). The symphony premiered on March 31 of the same year; the premiere represented an important shift for Schumann. Prior to this symphony, he was known for composing miniatures. With the presentation of his First Symphony, Schumann demonstrated his mastery of a complex compositional form. In this way, Schumann proved his skill and worth as a composer of all genres, not only of piano miniatures and of vocal works. 9 In addition to his Spring Symphony, Schumann also composed *Overture, Scherzi and Final* op. 52 which was also well received by his audience. During 1841, Schumann developed various sketches for future symphonic works; some of these were later used in other compositions, for example, a scherzo sketch originally intended for a C-minor symphony was

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9 Daverio, 229.
put to use in *Bunte Blätter*. Other ideas, such as the sketches for the remaining three movements of the c minor symphony, simply remained sketches.

The year 1842 presented another shift in Schumann’s focus. Schumann had composed chamber pieces as early as 1828; nevertheless, the majority of his chamber ideas remained in the form of sketches, and by 1839, he had only completed one quartet. However, in 1842, having achieved success in the areas of vocal literature, piano works and symphonies, Schumann once again turned his attention to chamber music. This time his thoughts flowed rapidly into sketches which he then completed. Within six months, Schumann completed three string quartets in A-minor, F-major and A-major (op. 41) as well as a Quintet in E-flat major (op. 44), a Quartet in E-flat major (op. 47) and *Phantasiestücke* (op. 88). However, Schumann’s exploration in chamber music composition was short, and in 1843 Schumann began to focus again on utilizing the human voice. In this year he composed his oratorio, *Das Paradies und die Peri* followed by sixteen works for choir and orchestra that he composed between 1844 and 1852.10

Although it appears that Schumann focused on one specific genre per year, it is important to realize that while he leaned toward specific genres, Schumann continued to sketch and compose simultaneously in multiple genres during the 1840s. Schumann’s creative output grew to include an admirable number of works for full symphony orchestra, instrumental chamber groups, chorale settings, theatrical works, an expanding collection of songs, and an ever-growing selection of solo compositions for piano.

Schumann’s compositions are still heard around the world and hold important places among the staples of orchestral, vocal and piano literature; however, it is 1840, his Year of Song, which attracts most attention among scholars. His sudden decision to compose in a genre which he previously showed no real inclination toward followed by his immediate success in the genre attracts much speculation as to the true cause of his inspiration. Regardless of what inspired his compositional work, the songs produced by Schumann in 1840 continue to hold their value in today’s vocal repertoire.
CHAPTER 2: ADELBERT VON CHAMISSO

The name Adelbert von Chamisso is not a name readily associated with great literary figures. His introduction into the literary world occurred during his already successful career as a botanist and scientific explorer. Although literary critics have often viewed Chamisso’s contributions as bearing little importance, Chamisso found a welcoming audience in the world of music. Composers have found Chamisso’s poetry to be ideal for musical settings. As such, many composers such as Max Bruch and Emma Lou Diemer have set his poems to music—one often finds that a single poem has received multiple settings by different composers.

French Beginnings—German Endings

Adelbert von Chamisso was a French nobleman born in Champagne in 1781 as Louis Charles Adelaïde de Chamisso. When he was eight years old, his family fled France, due to the Revolution, and settled in Berlin. It was here that Chamisso adopted the name, Adelbert von Chamisso. As befitting his noble background, Chamisso was eventually made a page in the Queen’s court and began training to be part of the Prussian military; he officially joined the military at the age of seventeen. By 1801 he had become a lieutenant.  

Although living in Germany, Chamisso was unsure whether to retain his French language or to completely adopt the German language and lifestyle. However, upon becoming friends with Varnhagen von Ense, he decided to adopt a Germanic lifestyle. This decision is reflected in his poetry, which contains no hints of his French origins; rather, they possess a love for the simple pleasures in life and a “warmth and sentimentality that was wholly German.”  

With Varnhagen, Chamisso founded the

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11 Frederic Henry Hedge, Prose Writers of Germany (Virginia: Carey and Hart, 1852), 544.
Berliner Musenalmanach. Although the literary effort failed, it did provide Chamisso a place to publish some of his early poems as well as providing him with some literary publicity.\footnote{13}{Ibid, 470.}

**Botany and a Voyage Around the World**

Chamisso returned to France in 1810 to take a professorship at the college of Napoleonville. Unfortunately, the position did not become a reality for Chamisso, but his journey was not wasted. During his trip he met Madame de Staël with whom he became friends. Upon her banishment, Chamisso followed her to Geneva and Coppet, Switzerland. His visit to Coppet was to play an important role in professional development. It was there that he began his study of botany, a profession that would eventually take him around the world.\footnote{14}{Hedge. *Prose Writers of Germany*, 545.}

After studying in Coppet for almost two years, Chamisso returned to Berlin in 1812, where he continued his scientific studies at the university. One year later, he produced his greatest literary effort, his first book, *Peter Schlemihl*—the story of a man who was made miserable by the loss of his shadow. This was his most popular literary work, and it has been translated into most European languages.

In 1815, Chamisso boarded the Russian ship Rurik which was on a voyage around the world in search of a passage across the top of North America in order to make travel between Russia and North America easier. Chamisso held the post of botanist among the crew commanded by Otto von Kotzebue.\footnote{15}{Hugh Chisholm, *The Encyclopaedia Britannia: a dictionary of arts, sciences, literature and general information, Volume 11.* (Chicago: The Encyclopedia Britannica Company, 1910), 826.} The ambitious group of explorers consisted of two lieutenants, three mates, two non-commissioned officers, twenty sailors, the physician and the
draughtsman. Chamisso and another scientist by the name of Wormskloid made up the naturalist portion of the team.\textsuperscript{16}

The voyage lasted for three years; upon his return Chamisso again settled in Berlin. The following year was full of success and change for Chamisso. In that year Chamisso became a member of the Society of Natural Sciences, received his Ph. D. from the University of Berlin and was awarded the post of custodian of the botanical garden in new Schöneberg, a position he held for the remainder of his working life. Additionally, in September of the same year, he married Antonie Piaste.

\textbf{Poetry and Other Literary Work}

With his life in a peaceful rhythm, Chamisso was now able to focus on his two interests—botany and poetry.\textsuperscript{17} His wife played an important role in his writing; his two poem cycles, \textit{Frauenliebe und -leben} and \textit{Lebens Lieder und Bilder} were written in response to his relationship with his wife of whom he wrote, “She is young, blooming and strong, handsome and good, pure and innocent, clear, cloudless and serene, calm, rational and cheerful, and so amiable!”\textsuperscript{18} In addition to writing his own poetry, Chamisso busied himself with translating works from various languages into German. In 1832 he took on the position of associate editor of the \textit{Berlin Deutscher Musenalmanach}. The periodical flourished under his attentive care; he retained the position until his death on August 21, 1838 in Berlin.\textsuperscript{19}


\textsuperscript{18} Hedge, \textit{Prose Writers of Germany}, 546.

Chamisso’s Poetry in Music

Chamisso’s poems were well embraced by song composers. Over 100 of his poems have been set to music; often one poem is set to music by multiple composers. Additionally, his poems often receive different forms of musical settings. A prime example is Chamisso’s poem, “Frisch gesungen.” This poem has been set to music by eleven composers. The earliest setting was published in 1859 by Max Bruch; the most recent setting was published in 2000 by Emma Lou Diemer. The arrangements of this poem include settings for high voice and piano, low voice and piano and men’s a cappella chorus.

In the poem cycle, Frauenliebe und -leben, Chamisso takes his reader through the phases of a woman’s life. Beginning with her enchantment with the man she eventually marries, Chamisso skillfully weaves through her life until she is a widow. There are nine poems included in the poem cycle; Schumann chose not to include the ninth poem in his musical setting. Although Schumann’s setting of these poems is the most famous, other composers set the poems from this cycle to music as well. Some composers chose to set the entire cycle as Schumann did; others set only select poems.

Other composers who produced settings of Frauenliebe und -leben poems

“Seit ich ihn gesehen” Elizabeth R. Austin, Franz Paul Lachner, Johann Karl Gottfried Loewe and Karl Gottlieb Reissiger

“Er, der Herrlichste von Allen” Elizabeth R. Austin, Franz Paul Lachner, Johann Karl Gottfried Loewe

“Ich kann’s nicht fassen, nicht glauben” Adlof Ander, Elizabeth R. Austin, Johann Karl Gottfried Loewe, Karl Gottlieb Reissiger, Caroline Wiseneder
“Du Ring an meinem Finger” Elizabeth R. Austin, Johann Karl Gottfried Loewe, Sigismund Thalberg

“Helft mir, ihr Schwestern” Johann Karl Gottfried Loewe

“Süsser Freund, du blickest” Elizabeth R. Austin, Johann Karl Gottfried Loewe

“An meinem Herzen, an meiner Brust” Johann Karl Gottfried Loewe, Louis Ferdinand

“Nun hast du mir den ersten Schmerz getan” Johann Karl Gottfried Loewe, Ernest Vietor²⁰

Although many composers have set poems from Frauenliebe und -leben to music, the most famous is Schumann’s exquisite setting of the cycle. This setting provides a perfect union of text with voice, vocal line with piano accompaniment and piano score with the emotional content of the poems.

CHAPTER 3: SKETCH STUDY

When studying a composer’s creative process, it is helpful if that composer has left a trail of manuscripts documenting the different stages of his compositional work. By sifting through these roughly sketched melodies, working drafts, manuscripts covered in corrections and final copies of a particular work, one can begin to understand the composer’s mind at work. It is with this purpose in mind that this sketch study is being done. The concept of studying Schumann’s sketches is not new. Multiple studies of his song cycles have been written with Rufus Hallmark’s sketch study of Schumann’s Dichterliebe being one of the most prominent of such studies.21

One is truly fortunate to find rough sketches, continuing drafts, short scores, autograph manuscripts, fair copies and proofs with corrections all in addition to the published version of a score. While in some sketch studies all of these resources are available, in this study of Schumann’s Frauenliebe und -leben, we have Schumann’s autograph manuscript containing mainly vocal lines, a copyist’s fair copy with corrections and the final critical edition prepared by Clara available. These resources can give much insight into Schumann’s creative genius.

Both Schumann’s autograph manuscript and the copyist’s manuscript containing the composer’s corrections can be found at the Morgan Library and Museum in New York City. They can be viewed online through the Music Manuscripts Online project.22 Launched in 2007, the Music Manuscripts Online project provides online access to scanned images of over 900

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When viewing the copyist’s scores online, please note that the third and fourth pages of “Er, der Herrlichste von allen” have been mistakenly listed as the third and fourth pages of the following song, “Ich kann’s nicht fassen.”
manuscripts. One can also view scanned images of manuscripts and letters written by famous authors such as Charles Dickens as well as viewing artwork collections.

Schumann’s autograph manuscripts (accession number: Cary 68-69, Record ID: 115681) are handwritten in black ink on upright staff paper. Each page contains sixteen staves which appear to be pre-printed. Corrections are made in what appears to be the same black ink used to write the autograph. It appears that attention was given to efficient use of paper as most of the pages contain two songs without even one empty stave between them. Altogether, the autograph score consists of five pages. The final two songs in the cycle, “An meinem Herzen,” and “Nun hast du mir den ersten Schmerz gethan,” are each written on a separate piece of paper. The copyist’s manuscript appears to be bound together and includes a title page which also contains the word “Revision” possibly to indicate that Schumann had included handwritten revisions to the copyist’s manuscript. On the insert before the actual score begins, Schumann has indicated that he wants the “hochformat” to be used in the final manuscript, meaning that he wanted the final copy to be printed on upright paper. The remaining fourteen pages are the eight completed songs written in black ink in the copyist’s hand. Schumann’s revisions are seen extensively throughout; they appear penciled in over the original ink notations.

When comparing Schumann’s autograph score to the copyist’s score with the composer’s changes and then to the final published version, one can begin to follow Schumann’s thought process. To avoid confusion, the following abbreviations will be used to identify exactly which portion of each score is being discussed.

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autograph sketches = Sk

copyist’s score = C

published version = P

the page discussed = p

the line discussed = L

the measure discussed = m

Therefore, Sk song 2, L. 4, m. 3 would mean the autograph sketch of song 2, the fourth line, third measure.

The first seven songs in the autograph score consist only of unaccompanied vocal lines and text. No markings alluding to a piano portion are present, leaving us to assume that perhaps Schumann had not given any thought to the piano at this point. It appears that he was simply writing melodies as inspiration struck, content to add the piano accompaniment later. It seems that the vocal line was of primary importance to Schumann. It appears that much thought was given to the vocal lines before writing them because while the vocal lines receive minor changes and edits before being published in the final version, the final published version closely matches what is written in the autograph score. However, even though the vocal line seems to have received the most initial attention, it is quite possible that Schumann had some ideas in mind for the piano score even though he did not notate it immediately. If this is the case, it could explain Schumann’s sudden inclusion of a piano postlude in “Nun hast du mir den ersten Schmerz gethan,” the eighth and final song in the cycle.

In this final song, Schumann follows his original pattern of writing out only the melody and text. What is interesting is that he did not stop there as he had done with the other seven songs. Instead, he continued and wrote what could be considered a piano postlude to the cycle.
This is the only piano writing seen in the autograph score. Even more interesting is the fact that the majority of this postlude found in Sk song 8, L 6, m 3 is almost identical to the melody and the not-yet-written piano portion of the first song, “Seit ich ihn gesehen,” as found in C song 8, p. 2, L. 1, m3. One then wonders, did Schumann already have the piano portion of “Seit ich ihn gesehen” conceived in his mind or possibly written elsewhere? Or did he compose the last song before the first and then think that the postlude melody would be a good fit for the first song? When comparing this postlude piano accompaniment to the finished piano accompaniment of the first song, the melody seems to fit the text a little too well for it to simply have been a postlude melody that then happened to suit the text of the first song. It is more likely then that Schumann already had some ideas for the piano accompaniments in mind, but for an unknown reason did not include them in his autograph score. One is left to wonder what the earliest sketches of the piano portion of the cycle looked like. If they were anything like the postlude, they were probably almost identical to the final scores.

In Sk song 1, L. 2, m. 2 of “Seit ich ihn gesehen,” Schumann originally includes a measure-and-a-half pause in the vocal line after “sah ich ihn allein,” perhaps trying to add emphasis to the concept of complete euphoric focus on one individual or to give his audience time to feel the weight of the words before moving on. When looking at C song 1, P. 1, L. 2, m. 2, we see that the empty space became a short piano interlude that was a simple pre-statement of the melody to follow. In Sk song 1, L. 5, m. 1, we see that Schumann placed a matching pause after the parallel phrase, “nicht begehre ich mehr,” in verse two. Once again, when looking at the completed piano portion in C song 1, P. 1, L. 2, m. 2, we see that the empty space became a short piano interlude. Due to the simple nature of these interludes, one wonders if perhaps their only purpose was to remind the singer of what melody comes next. They could also be included to
allow the listeners time to process the meaning of the words just sung. While these miniature interludes are included in the copyist’s score (along with the rest of the working piano score), Schumann has crossed both out with an almost checkerboard pattern of lines. These interludes were clearly not going to be reintroduced. Schumann’s decision to make the vocal line continuous instead of creating this pause allows the text to flow without interruption.

We see further evidence of Schumann streamlining the song at the ends of verses one and two. It appears that he was working to create a stronger sense of finality at the end of each verse. In the autograph score, one can see at the end of the third and sixth staves that the final phrases of both verses were originally repeated, each repetition having a different melody (Sk song 1, L. 3, m. 6-7, and Sk song 1, L. 6, m. 4-5). In the published score at measures 15 and 31, these repetitions are no longer used. (P song 1, p.1, L. 4, m. 4, and P song 1, p. 2, L. 5, m. 1). In the first verse of the published score, Schumann opted to retain the melody of the second repetition found in Sk song 1, L. 3, m. 6-7 as it provides a solid return in the melody to the tonic B-flat. In the second verse, Schumann does not use either of his original melodies for “glaub ich blind zu sein;” rather he borrows the melody from verse one so that both verses match perfectly.

Although he did not use his original final melody for the last phrase of the song in Sk song 1, L. 6, mm. 3-5, we find that he recycled this melody; it later became the melody used in the interlude between verse one and verse two seen in P song 1, mm. 15-17. When exactly this was done is a mystery. This interlude was not included in the autograph score or the copyist manuscript. It must have been added somewhere between the copyist score we have available and the final publishing of the song. In this case, the pause is useful, giving the listeners time to digest what they have just heard in verse one.
It is interesting to note that the notation of the piano scores for verse one and verse two is identical in both the copyist’s score and the final published version. Even the one-measure introductions are precisely the same. In this way Schumann was able to keep the same mood flowing throughout both verses, even though he added in a two-measure interlude before verse two. Moreover, it appears that Schumann was very aware of whom he was writing for—everyday people who, while having a working knowledge of music, would possibly have some trouble recalling the beginning notes of the vocal line. Perhaps it was with these limitations in mind that Schumann composed the simple one measure introduction which clearly outlines the first notes of the melody.

When examining the copyist’s score of, “Er, der Herrlichste von Allen” we see that Schumann has once again provided the singer with a single measure introduction, clearly giving the starting vocal note. This trend does not continue throughout the entire song cycle; it is possible Schumann felt that after assisting the vocalist in the first two songs, she would be comfortable enough to require less assistance throughout the rest of the cycle. However, it is more likely that Schumann wanted the eighth-note E-flat chords to start the song as a precursor to the rest of the piano portion; the E-flat chords continue into the second measure when the vocal line begins. With regards to the vocal line, the B-flat is doubled in the piano chords; it is likely Schumann added in the extra B-flat more to provide a smooth transition from the E-flat chord to the vocal line than to assist the vocalist in finding a starting note.

In this song, we see Schumann taking some minor liberties in his organization of Chamisso’s text. On the last page of the copyist’s score, after setting the entire poem to music, Schumann reused the opening portion of the text.
Er, der Herrlichste von Allen,  
wie so milde, wie so gut.  
Holde Lippen, klares Auge,  
heller Sinn und fester Mut.  
So wie dort in blauer Tiefe,  
hell und herrlich, jener Stern,  
also er an meinem Himmel,  
hell und herrlich, hehr und fern.

He the most glorious of all,  
O how mild, so good!  
Lovely lips, clear eyes,  
bright mind and steadfast courage.  
Just as yonder in the blue depths,  
bright and glorious, that star,  
so he is in my heavens,  
bright and glorious, lofty and distant.

It appears that this was originally conceived as the ending for the song which would provide it with a bookend effect—beginning and ending with the same text and same melody. However, the portion of the song from, “So wie dort in blauer Tiefe,” to “hehr und fern,” was crossed out in the copyist’s manuscript; instead Schumann replaced that original text with the simple, “wie so milde, wie so gut,” which is the second line of the entire song. It is hard to imagine what might have prompted Schumann to discard a full eight measures of vocal lines, text and piano score. Perhaps he felt that the descriptive phrase, “wie so milde, wie so gut,” flowed better with the also descriptive text immediately before it. Regardless of his reasons, when looking at C song 2, p. 4, L. 4, we can see that he retained his closing melody opting to simply change the text without any vocal line or piano accompaniment alterations.

While the first song in the cycle was generally complete in its sketched form, “Er, der Herrlichste von Allen,” is missing a significant portion in the autograph score. While the exact vocal line and text from measure 1-45 in the copyist’s score are present in the autograph, measures 46-65 are missing. The fact that measures 57-65 are not included is not odd, considering that they are repetitions of previous material. However, measures 46-54 contain the last four phrases of the poem.
Will mich freuen dann und weinen,
Selig, selig bin ich dann,
Solte mir das Herz auch brechen,
Brich o Herzs was liegt daran?

I shall rejoice and I shall weep then,
Blissful, blissful I am then,
Even though my heart should break,
Break, o heart, what does it matter?

There is the possibility that Schumann was undecided about what to do melodically with those last phrases of text. There is also the possibility that he considered omitting that portion of the text. The poem makes sense without the last lines, so it would not seem abrupt to end the song without the poem’s ending. Also, without the last four lines, the poetry would focus more on the heroine wishing for her beloved’s happiness instead of focusing on her breaking heart. We do not know at what point Schumann decided to add the last four phrases into the song, but perhaps it was at that same time that he decided to include measures 57-65, repeating the opening text and creating a sense of closure to the piece.

“Ich kann’s nicht fassen,” appears to have experienced much less of a transformation than the previous song. The entire vocal line of the song was sketched in the autograph score, and Schumann even left empty measures before the final statement of “Ich kann’s nicht fassen, nicht glauben,” in anticipation of the piano interlude which he planned to insert. He originally left three empty measures available, but by the time the score reached the copyist, he had composed an interlude of eight-and-a-half measures which remained unaltered and became the published version. Schumann appeared to be quite content with his piano writing in this particular song as no corrections were made to the piano score on the copyist’s manuscript; the published version matches the copyist’s manuscript exactly. The detail seen in the copyist’s score make one wonder if Schumann was especially inspired when writing this song or if there was an intermediate draft. While the piano score was finalized, it seems that it took Schumann longer to be content with the vocal line. The vocal line found in the autograph score is the same as the
vocal line in the copyist’s score. However, Schumann went through later and altered multiple notes throughout the vocal line, slightly adjusting the flow of the phrases. Perhaps the phrase which stands out the most is the closing phrase. Schumann originally wrote a recitative-like phrase for the words “Ich kann nicht fassen nicht glauben,” which were all sung on “C”. He later went through the score and altered the notes so that the first syllable of “glauben” was raised to an “F,” the highest note used throughout the song. By raising “glauben” to a higher note, the word is receiving more emphasis than the surrounding words. This shifts the text emphasis to focus on the girl’s amazement that what she desired is coming true. The rest of the phrase is altered as well, removing the recitative quality from the song ending.

![Musical note](image)

*Figure 1*—the upper line shows the original melody found in C song 3, p. 2, L. 3, m. 1-5. The second line presents the same melody as it was modified by Schumann in the copyist’s score.

When considering how a composer selects which texts to set to music, one often finds that the composer has chosen texts which reveal personal preferences, morals, thought patterns and beliefs about himself. Much can also be learned by looking at what portions of a text are omitted by a composer.

In the autograph score of “Du Ring an meinem Finger,” we see almost the entire poem set to music. The last two phrases of Chamisso’s poem are missing. These phrases, “Hin selber mich geben und finden Verklärt mich, in seinem Glanz,” (“give myself and find myself transfigured in his splendor”) turn the ending focus of the poem to the girl. By omitting these
phrases, the poem instead closes with the girl speaking of her devotion to serving, living for and belonging completely to her husband.

In the 1800s a woman’s role in society mainly consisted of being a wife and mother. Men were given a higher place in society, and as such, this way of thinking is seen in some of the poetry and literature of that time. It could be that Schumann was trying to bring a stronger sense of male dominance to this poem. One must take into consideration that Schumann was setting these poems to music during his engagement to Clara—a woman who had surpassed the traditional role of women in her society by focusing on a career as a concert pianist. Perhaps he was concerned that she would not take her duty as wife and mother as seriously as her piano career. If that was the case, it would make sense that this concern would bleed over into his shaping of the text.

Looking at Sk song 4, L. 6, the last phrase, “ihm angehören ganz,” we see that the word “ganz” is notated as a half note F5. This leaves the song sketch without a resolution as well as omitting the last two phrases of the poem; this could mean that Schumann had more in mind than he sketched in his autograph score. When looking at the copyist’s score of “Du Ring an meinem Finger” p.2, L. 1, m. 5, we can see that Schumann did decide to include the missing final phrases. However, immediately following these phrases, he reintroduces the first four lines of the poem with the same melody that he used in the beginning of the song. These lines appear beginning on C. song 4, p. 2, L. 2, m. 3. It is interesting to note that if the two phrases found between C. song 4, p. 2, L. 1, m. 5 and C. song 4, p. 2, L. 2, m. 3 were omitted, the end of C. song 4, p. 2, L. 1, m.5 and the end of C. song 4, p. 2, L. 2, m. 3 would flow together seamlessly. This possibility is shown in figure 2.
Perhaps this is what Schumann originally had in mind. It would explain the missing phrases in the autograph score and the reason for the apparently missing resolution. While there is also the simple possibility that he had not decided what to do melodically with those two phrases and therefore had not written them in, the ease with which they could be omitted makes a strong case for Schumann originally planning on not including them. If this is the case, it leaves us to wonder why he decided to include them and when. Perhaps there were more sketches between the autograph and copyist scores, but without those hypothetical sketches, we can only guess as to what Schumann’s intentions were.

“Helft mir, ihr Schwestern” displays Schumann’s process of cutting unnecessary piano interludes. The autograph score, although not containing any actual writing for the piano, does contain four empty measures throughout which marked future piano interludes. The first empty piano measure, which can be seen in Sk song 5, L. 1, m.5, was fully composed in the copyist’s score. On the C. song 5, P. 1, L. 2, m. 2, we can see the one-measure piano interlude which contains a melody almost the same as the preceding measure. Schumann crossed out this interlude in the copyist’s score. It could be that he felt there was no need for an interlude this early in the song. The phrases before and after the interlude all have to do with getting the bride ready for her wedding day, so there really was no need for a division between the first two phrases and the rest of the poem.
In Sk song 5, L. 2, m. 5, Schumann left another measure blank, presumably for another piano interlude. However, no such interlude appears in the copyist’s score. Schumann’s original placement of this solo piano measure made sense with the poetry, effectively dividing the beginning section, which speaks about the girl’s sister’s helping her adorn herself for the wedding, from the following section which is the girl focusing on the joy she feels with her betrothed. This leads one to wonder why Schumann did not use the idea. Throughout this song there is a sense of breathless excitement, and this feeling is perpetuated by the constantly moving eighth notes in the piano score. The vocal line is also imbedded with a rushing momentum due to the many eighth notes mixed into the melody. By not including a measure of solo piano this early on in the song, Schumann was able to keep the momentum hurdling forward. Perhaps this is why the idea of a piano measure was discarded.

There are two other short interludes which Schumann discarded once he viewed them in the copyist’s score. The first of these is found on the C. song 5, p. 2, L. 2, m. 4; we can see the proposed piano interlude was fully notated and then crossed out. It makes sense that this would be omitted. Schumann was simply trying to make verse one and verse two identical; since he had already crossed out the piano interlude in the first verse (C. song 5, p. 1, L. 2, m. 2), of course he crossed out the matching interlude in the second verse.

The last interlude to be discarded can be seen in the copyist’s score C. song 5, p. 4, L. 1, m. 1-2. There is nothing noted in the autograph score regarding this two-measure interlude. Its placement flows smoothly with the poetry. The bride is instructing her sisters to scatter flowers before her soon-to-be husband. This instruction was followed by the two-measure interlude. The next two phrases are the final phrases of the poem and speak of the bride feeling sorrow at leaving her sisters but also feeling happiness for her marriage. Poetically, Schumann’s original
interlude makes perfect sense. However, he crossed it out in the copyist’s score. This leaves us to speculate as to why he crossed out what appeared to be a well-placed pause in the vocal line. Perhaps the answer can be found in the dynamics which Schumann included in the copyist’s score. The singer has been instructed to sing at a *mezzo-forte* level throughout the song until she reaches the final two phrases. When telling her sisters that she is greeting them with sadness, the dynamic is suddenly *piano* along with a *ritardando*. This change of dynamic level and beginning of a *ritardando* was originally written in the discarded piano interlude. However, once those two measures of piano were discarded, Schumann wrote the *ritardando* and *piano* over the vocal line, thus leaving this feeling of sudden sadness to be expressed entirely by the vocalist. It is possible that Schumann wanted to convey a sense of whispering a hidden sadness or perhaps a small fear. While poetically a two-measure break in the vocal line makes sense, musically it gives a deeper meaning to the text by not including the break.

In the sketches of “Süsser Freund” we see a composer who has a clear picture in his mind of what this piece should be. In the autograph score the entire text is presented, and there are measures left empty for future piano interludes. Unlike the previously discussed song, these piano interludes appear in the copyist’s score and survive into the published score. When viewing the copyist’s score, there are not large sections crossed out as in some of the previous songs; in fact, there is not a single measure discarded from the copyist’s score. Naturally, there are minor changes from the composer. We still see Schumann’s penciled in notes covering some of the original ink notes. However, the overall scheme of the piece—the rhythms, melodic phrases, piano interludes—all remain intact.

While Schumann retained his original ideas, he also added two extra measures at some point after the copyist’s score had been written. P. song 6, p. 3, L. 2, m. 2-3 is a short piano
passage before the key change at P. song 6, p. 3, L.2, m. 4. However, P. song 6, p. 3, L. 2, m. 2-3 was not included in the copyist’s score. Clearly then, there must have been another copyist’s score written later on, with the composer’s corrections included, before the published score was produced. This later score was probably the Stichvorlag, the copy used to prepare the final published score.

When looking at the autograph score of “An meinem Herzen,” we see the entire poem sketched straight through with no empty measures included. When we compare the melody line in the autograph score to the melody line found in the copyist’s score, there are sections which match almost perfectly, and then there are entire melody lines which are very different. While this is not out of the ordinary, it does point to the belief that Schumann must have created other working drafts of his scores before sending it to the copyist.

There are only minor adjustments made within the copyist’s score. For example, the opening phrase, “An meinem Herzen,” originally began on the sixth beat of the first measure in the copyist’s score. This gave the song an upbeat and placed emphasis on the first syllable of “meinem.” However, in the copyist’s score, Schumann later rearranged this opening so that the opening phrase, “An meinem Herzen” began on the first beat of the second measure. This moved the emphasis from “meinem” to “an” (figure 3).

Figure 3 The first line shows the original rhythm giving emphasis to “meinem.” The second line shows the modified version which places emphasis on “an.” C. song 7, p. 1, L. 1, m. 1
Other small details which Schumann addressed in the copyist’s score include measure 11 where he simplified two decorative eighth notes into a single quarter note. This same pattern of two eighth notes was also used in measure 13 and was also reduced to a single quarter note.

Besides a few more minor changes such as the previously discussed alterations, this song appears to be almost in its final form in the copyist’s score. Throughout the copyist’s score, the piano score is almost entirely untouched; it received even fewer changes than the vocal line. Clearly, Schumann had given much thought to this song before sending it to the copyist.

Schumann’s autograph score of “Nun hast du mir den ersten Schmerz getan” is perhaps the most interesting of the eight sketches included in the Frauenliebe und -leben cycle. In this final song, we see Schumann breaking out of the composition pattern which, until the final song, he had followed religiously. Schumann begins his autograph score with a D-minor chord intended for the piano. This is the first piano writing that we see in the entire autograph score of Frauenliebe und -leben. Perhaps he was beginning to think about the piano score now that the vocal writing was almost complete. However, it is also possible that he simply included it as a reminder that the only introduction he wanted for the song was a single D-minor chord.

Following the introductory chord, Schumann returns to his tradition of sketching only the vocal line and text. The melody which he wrote is remarkably similar to the final published melody; only two deviations occur. The first is found in the first seven measures of the autograph score. Schumann originally wrote the melody of “Du schläfst, du harter, unverbrenn’ger Mann” to match note for note the melody of the opening phrase, “Nun hast du mir den ersten Schmerz getan” (Sk. Song 8, L.1, m. 1-5, -Sk. Song 8, L. 2, m. 1-3). Although these matching phrases flowed together well, in C. song 8, p. 1, L. 1, m. 1-5, Schumann slightly changed the melody of the second phrase (Du schläfst…) so that the word “schläfst” received more emphasis by being
placed on the downbeat. It makes poetic sense for “schläfst” to receive added emphasis as the widow uses the word to describe her husband “sleeping” in death while she is left alone.

The second deviation is found at the end of the vocal portion of the song. In Sk. Song 8, L. 5, m. 5- Sk. Song 8, L. 6, m. 1-2, we see the words “du meine Welt, du meine Welt.” The vocal line continues to move lower until it ends on a low A. This line is replaced in the copyist’s score with a simpler melody which moves upward to end on E (C song 8, p. 1, L. 4, m. 5- C song 8, p. 2, L 1, m. 1-2). There is no repetition of “du meine Welt” in the copyist’s score; the phrase appears only once. This closing vocal line (C song 8, p. 1, L. 4, m. 5- C song 8, p. 2, L 1, m. 1-2) was not altered and appears in the published score exactly as it appears in the copyist’s score (figure 4).

![Figure 4: the last phrases as written in the autograph score (Sk. Song 8, L. 5, m. 5- Sk. Song 8, L. 6, m. 1-2) followed by the version found in the copyist’s score which became final published version of the phrase (C song 8, p. 1, L. 4, m. 5- C song 8, p. 2, L 1, m. 1-2).](image)

Perhaps the most surprising element found in “Nun hast du mir den ersten Schmerz getan” is that Schumann included a postlude after the vocal line ended. Using the same melody and accompaniment scheme as “Seit ich ihn gesehen,” the postlude serves to bookend the entire cycle with a sense of continuity. Naturally, it also represents the widow thinking back to when she first laid eyes on her husband.

The early version of the postlude found in the autograph score contains a large portion of what is found in the copyist’s score and the final published score. The piano accompaniment
found in C. song 8, p.2, L. 2, m. 6-7 is a direct repetition of the two measures before and has been crossed out. It appears that perhaps this was a simple mistake on the part of the copyist. Once crossed out, the postlude found from C. song 8, p. 2, L 1, m. 3 to C. song 8, p.2, L. 4, m. 2 is a note for note repetition of P. song 1, p. 1, L. 1, m. 1 – P. song 1, p. 2, L. 1, m. 2.

The last line of the postlude in the copyist’s score did receive some changes. Originally, it was notated so that there were four repetitions of the melody found in C. song 8, p. 2, L. 4, m. 2-4. However, all of these repetitions were crossed out in the copyist’s score leaving only the third measure of the last line to present the closing melody. By the time the cycle was published, two repetitions appear (P. song 8, p. 2, L. 5, m. 3-4. The two final measures appear in the published score as they appear in the copyist’s score.
CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF MUSIC AND POETRY

_Frauenliebe und -leben_ provides an excellent demonstration of Schumann’s comfort in piano composition being married to his talent for vocal composition. The piano accompaniment found in this cycle is not merely a simple chordal accompaniment with the vocal line presented in the right hand: rather, it is the emotional undercurrent of each song. Joy, despair, hope, resolve—all these emotions and more are expressed to the listener through the piano accompaniment that serves to underscore the vocal line’s text. In this way Schumann raised the piano accompaniment to the same level as the vocal line.

After examining all the changes Schumann made throughout his sketches, it is important to return to the text and examine how the text now relates to the music. When setting Chamisso’s poems to music, Schumann made only a few slight alterations to the text; the changes made did not alter the meaning or context of the poems.24 All the components of the cycle—text, vocal line, and piano accompaniment—merge together as one to tell a story; they are no longer separate components. As one unit, they now express emotion, build vivid imagery, and guide the audience through the life of a woman.

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24 All texts and translations are provided from “The Lied, Art Song and Choral Texts Page” http://www.recmusic.org/lieder/ (accessed 3-12-2011) Additionally, all changes to the text can be viewed here as well.
“Seit ich ihn gesehen”

The first song in the cycle, “Seit ich ihn gesehen,” (“Since I Saw Him”) describes the young woman falling in love.

Seit ich ihn gesehen, Since I saw him
Glaub’ ich blind zu sein; I believe myself to be blind,
Wo ich hin nur blicke, where I but cast my gaze,
Seh’ ich ihn allein; I see him alone.
Wie im wachen Traume as in waking dreams
Schwebt sein Bild mir vor, his image floats before me,
Taucht aus tiefstem Dunkel, dipped from deepest darkness,
Heller nur empor. brighter in ascent.

Sonst ist licht- und farblos All else dark and colorless
Alles um mich her, everywhere around me,
Nach der Schwestern Spiele for the games of my sisters
Nicht begeh’ ich mehr, I no longer yearn,
Möchte lieber weinen, I would rather weep,
Still im Kämmerlein; silently in my little chamber,
Seit ich ihn gesehen, since I saw him,
Glaub’ ich blind zu sein. I believe myself to be blind.

In this first poem Chamisso invites his readers into the mind of his subject—a young girl who has just seen the man of her dreams. The poet provides the girl with strong imagery to express her deepest feelings. She claims to be “blind” to everything around her; all she sees is “him” (“ihn”) whether waking or sleeping. In comparison to her beloved, all her surroundings appear dull and colorless. She is overwhelmed by new feelings and not sure how to respond. No longer interested in the things that used to attract her, “Nach der Schwestern Spiele nicht begeh’ ich mehr”, she prefers to go to her “Kämmerlein,” (“little room”), and cry. This suggests that she believes the object of her affections to be out of her reach and thus she weeps in despair. Chamisso underscores her feelings of blindness to her environment by framing the poem in identical phrases, “Seit ich ihn gesehen, glaub ich blind zu sein.”
In this first song, the tempo marking of *larghetto* combined with the opening accompaniment’s basic texture creates a sense of thoughtfulness. This ambiance allows the listener to feel how the young girl is thinking very pensively about “ihn” (“him”). Through the use of dotted note rhythms, Schumann is able to bring emphasis to important words. In measure 2, “ihn” receives the dotted value, giving it prominence in the phrase, “Seit ich *ihn* gesehen,” (“Since I saw *him*”). The same is true in the next phrase. “Blind” receives the dotted value in the phrase, “Glaub’ ich *blind* zu sein.” (“I believe myself to be *blind*”). (figure 5) Additionally, Schumann uses the piano to underscore the importance of these dotted words.

![Figure 5](image)

*Figure 5, P. song 1, p. 1, L. 1, mm. 1-4*

Throughout the song Schumann uses the piano accompaniment to convey the girl’s emotions. His continued use of staccato chords at the beginning of almost every phrase reflects the girl’s uncertainty and hesitance throughout the song. (figure 6)

![Figure 6](image)

*Figure 6, P. songs 1, p. 1, L. 1, mm. 1-4*

The dynamic marking of *piano* also mirrors the girl’s lack of confidence in her ability to win the affection of the man she loves. This gentle unhappiness is ably conveyed to the listener through the sweet and tenderly melancholic melody line that hovers over the piano accompaniment.
While it is possible for a high quality vocal performer to express the girl’s emotions in this song without any assistance from the piano score, Schumann’s piano accompaniment provides the audience with a deeper emotional experience by underscoring the vocal line’s text. In addition, one can see Schumann’s attention to the flow of the text when viewing earlier versions of this song. Originally, the words “ihn allein” in mm. 7 was followed by five beats of solo piano. This piano accompaniment was a simple anticipation of the melody to follow. However, Schumann’s decision to make the vocal line continuous instead of creating this pause allows the text to flow without interruption. In contrast to this decision, in measure 15, the word “empor” was originally set so that the second verse immediately followed with no pause. Schumann later revised this portion of his score so that there are two full measures between the end of verse one and the beginning of verse two. In this case, the pause is useful, giving the listeners time to digest what they have just heard in verse one.

“Er der Herrlichste von allen”

The second song, “Er der Herrlichste von allen,” (“He, the most glorious of all”), is the girl’s description of the one she loves as well as her declaration of unending love for him. She despairs of ever winning his affections; however, because she loves him, she sincerely wishes for his happiness—even if his happiness is found with another woman.
Er, der Herrlichste von allen,
Wie so milde, wie so gut!
Holde Lippen, klares Auge,
Heller Sinn und fester Mut.

So wie dort in blauer Tiefe,
Hell und herrlich, jener Stern,
Also er an meinem Himmel,
Hell und herrlich, herh und fern.

Wandle, wandle deine Bahnen,
Nur betrachten deinen Schein,
Nur in Demut ihn betrachten,
Selig nur und traurig sein!

Höre nicht mein stilles Beten,
Deinem Glücke nur geweiht;
Darfst mich niedre Magd nicht kennen,
Hoher Stern der Herrlichkeit!

Nur die Würdigste von allen
Darf beglücken deine Wahl,
Und ich will die Hohe segnen,
Viele tausend mal.

Will mich freuen dann und weinen,
Selig, selig bin ich dann;
Sollte mir das Herz auch brechen,
Brich, o Herz, was liegt daran?

He, the most glorious of all,
O how mild, so good!
lovely lips, clear eyes,
bright mind and steadfast courage.

Just as yonder in the blue depths,
bright and glorious, that star,
so he is in my heavens,
bright and glorious, lofty and distant.

Meander, meander thy paths,
but to observe thy gleam,
but to observe in meekness,
but to be blissful and sad!

Hear not my silent prayer,
consecrated only to thy happiness,
thou mays't not know me, lowly maid,
lofty star of glory!

Only the worthiest of all
may make happy thy choice,
and I will bless her, the lofty one,
many thousand times.

I will rejoice then and weep,
blissful, blissful I'll be then;
if my heart should also break,
break, O heart, what of it?

Schumann marks this song as *Innig, lebhaft* (heartfelt, lively). A sense of restlessness is suggested throughout this song by Schumann’s use of repeated eighth-note chords in the piano accompaniment as well as the resounding chromatic octaves in the low bass. This demonstrates that while the girl is sorrowful over her perceived sense of inadequacy, she is also filled with resolve. She will be happy for her beloved regardless of whom he chooses to be with. This firm resolve is sounded in the accompaniment by the low half-note octaves. (figure 7) While the piano
score is marked piano, Schumann still managed to retain a sense of urgency, unsettledness, and resolution by moving the octaves in a chromatic motion.

![Figure 7, P. song 2, p. 1, L. 1, mm. 1-4](image)

In measure 21, there is a sudden change in feeling. The girl is telling the one she loves to go on his way and be happy. While she will be happy just to observe him, she will also be sad at the same time. This melancholy is reflected in the voice by the sweet melodic line which emerges while the steady low octaves of resolve are gone. The repeating eighth-notes remain, but the firm resolve to be happy regardless of what happens is gone; only the restlessness remains. (figure 8)

![Figure 8, P. song 2, p. 1, L. 5, m.15- P. song 2, p. 2, L. 1-3 mm. 15-23](image)
In measure 29 the bass octaves reappear as she regains her resolve and speaks of praying for his happiness. However, when she begins speaking of him choosing another woman instead of her, the girl’s emotions are not so steady and resolved. This is suggested through the eighth-notes passed from the right hand to the left hand in the piano accompaniment. (figure 9)

![Figure 9 P. song 2, p. 3, L. 2-3, mm. 37-41](image)

Although she is clearly distraught at the thought of losing him, she is firm in her decision to bless the one he chooses. Schumann places strong emphasis on the word “Wahl” (“choice”) (referring to the man’s choice of wife) in measure 42 as it soars to a G-flat, the highest note in the song.

Throughout this entire cycle, Schumann uses the piano accompaniment to provide a firm emotional foundation. If one merely heard the piano accompaniment without the vocal line, it would be easy to determine the suggested emotions. Additionally, “Er, der Herrlichste von Allen,” is the one song in the cycle in which he allows an echo effect—whenever the vocal line pauses, Schumann allows the piano to echo the melody just sung. This effect is very precisely utilized and creates an impression of the girl pondering what she has said before continuing to her next thought.
“Ich kann’s nicht fassen, nicht glauben”

“Ich kann’s nicht fassen, nicht glauben” provides a strong contrast to “Er der Herrlichste von allen.”

Ich kann's nicht fassen, nicht glauben,  
Es hat ein Traum mich berückt;  
Wie hätt er doch unter allen  
Mich Arme erhöht und beglückt?  
Mir war's, er habe gesprochen:  
"Ich bin auf ewig dein,“  
Mir war's - ich träume noch immer,  
Es kann ja nimmer so sein.  
O laß im Traume mich sterben,  
Gewieget an seiner Brust,  
Den seligen Tod mich schlürfen  
In Tränen unendlicher Lust.

I can't grasp it, nor believe it,  
a dream has bewitched me,  
how should he, among all the others,  
lift up and make happy poor me?  
It seemed to me, as if he spoke,  
"I am thine eternally“,  
It seemed - I dream on and on,  
It could never be so.  
O let me die in this dream,  
cradled on his breast,  
let the most blessed death drink me up  
in tears of infinite bliss.

In this short song, the girl speaks of her amazement at her dreams of love coming true. The emotion created here by Chamisso is nothing short of pure blissful delight as the girl relives the thrill of discovering she is loved.

Schumann clearly defined the emotional state to be used in this song by assigning it the opening direction of *Mit Leidenschaft* (with passion). He also provided the vocalist with a vocal line conducive to expressing passion and excitement. By imbedding the vocal line with eighth notes, the words can move through the vocal line quickly, thus giving the impression of breathless excitement (figure 10)

![Figure 10](image)

*Figure 10, P. song 3, p. 1, L. 1, mm. 1-8*
In measure 16, Schumann writes in the tempo change of *Etwas Langsamer* (somewhat slower). Here the girl takes time to calm herself and recall all that has just happened. The excited eighth notes slow down, and the dynamic marking changes to *piano* as the girl relives the moment when her soon-to-be-husband first told her that he was forever hers. She spends twenty measures in blissful imagination. In measure 36, the *forte* dynamic reappears as she passionately declares she would be happy to die as long as she dies in his arms. This change ushers in a return to the original tempo in measure 50 along with a restatement of the original melody and text in the hushed tones of a *piano* dynamic. This state remains for the rest of the song until measure 76 when the opening line is repeated in a slow pensive manner.

When excitement is expressed during the opening fifteen measures in the vocal line, the piano underscores that emotion through the use of staccato chords giving the impression of whirlwind excitement or perhaps someone bounding around a room in excitement. (figure 11)

![Figure 11](image1.png)

When the girl calms down a little and the vocal line slows in measure 16, the accompaniment mimics this change by replacing the staccato chords with tied dotted quarter-note chords (figure 12).

![Figure 12](image2.png)
These chords still provide the harmonic variation found in the beginning of the song while providing a calmer and smoother emotional backdrop. When the intense excitement returns in measure 36, the staccato chords and forte dynamic reappear. In measure 52 Schumann brings back the opening four phrases of the poem to finish the song. These four phrases serve to frame the middle of the song, where the girl is deep in imagination.

“Du Ring an meinem Finger”

Du Ring an meinem Finger, Thou ring on my finger,
Mein goldenes Ringelein, my little golden ring,
Ich drücke dich fromm an die Lippen, I press thee piously upon my lips
Dich fromm an das Herze mein. piously upon my heart.

Ich hatt ihn ausgeträumet, I had dreamt it,
Der Kindheit friedlich schönen Traum, the tranquil, lovely dream of childhood,
Ich fand allein mich, verloren I found myself alone and lost
Im öden, unendlichen Raum. in barren, infinite space.

Du Ring an meinem Finger Thou ring on my finger,
Da hast du mich erst belehrt, thou hast taught me for the first time,
Hast meinem Blick erschlossen hast opened my gaze unto
Des Lebens unendlichen, tiefen Wert. the endless, deep value of life.

Ich will ihm dienen, ihm leben, I want to serve him, live for him,
Ihm angehören ganz, belong to him entire,
Hin selber mich geben und finden Give myself and find myself
Verklärt mich in seinem Glanz. transfigured in his radiance.
Du Ring an meinem Finger,
Mein goldenes Ringelein,
Ich drücke dich fromm an die Lippen
Dich fromm an das Herze mein.

Thou ring on my finger,
my little golden ring,
I press thee piously upon lips,
piously upon my heart.

The fourth song, “Du Ring an meinem Finger,” captures the image of the girl gazing at her wedding ring and realizing that all her childhood dreams have come true and that all her fears are gone. She speaks of her devotion to her future husband and her desire to belong to him completely. Her “goldeness Ringelein” is a symbol of everything she has ever wanted and now she wears it on her own hand and presses it to her lips. The tradition of kissing rings is associated with the Catholic clergy and is a sign of respect.\(^{25}\) By kissing her own ring, she is viewing her role as a married woman almost with a religious fervor.

Schumann gives the song the instruction, *Innig*, (heartfelt, intimate). Once again, Schumann uses dotted rhythms to emphasize key words such as “Ring” in measure 1, “Finger” in measure 2, and “Lippen” in measure 6. (figure 13)

![Figure 13, P song 4, p. 1, L. 1-2, mm. 1-7](image)

The song is marked *piano* and the accompaniment is very peaceful and flowing. Eighth-note patterns give the piano score a sense of motion while a gentle bass line keeps it calm. (figure 14) In measures 25-32 the passion in the text increases as the girl speaks of her total

devotion to her husband. To convey this change in emotion, Schumann changes the texture in the piano score by writing repeated eighth-note chords in both hands as a reflection of the passion with which the girl speaks of her love and devotion. (figure 15)

Figure 15, P. song 4, p. 2, L. 1, mm. 25-26

In measure 33 the opening theme and text returns as a gentle close to a heartfelt song.

“Helft mir, ihr Schwestern”

Helft mir, ihr Schwestern,  Help me, ye sisters,
Freundlich mich schmücken, friendly, adorn me,
Dient der Glücklichen heute mir, serve me, today’s fortunate one,
Windet geschäftig busily wind
Mir um die Stirne about my brow
Noch der blühenden Myrte Zier. the adornment of blooming myrtle.

Als ich befriedigt, Otherwise, gratified,
Freudigen Herzens, of joyful heart,
Sonnst dem Geliebten im Arme lag, I would have lain in the arms of the beloved,
Immer noch rief er, so he called ever out,
Sehnsucht im Herzen, yearning in his heart,
Ungeduldig den heutigen Tag. impatient for the present day.
In this fifth song, “Helft mir, ihr Schwestern,” (“Help me, ye sisters”), the bride-to-be is filled with anticipation. It is her wedding day, and as her sisters assist in preparing for the ceremony, the bride speaks of how long she has waited for this day. As her sisters give her the bridal flowers, she asks them to help quell “Eine törichte Bangigkeit” ("a small foolish worry"). However, Chamisso makes it clear that this “small worry” does not weigh heavily on the bride’s mind. After that one uneasy phrase, she returns to her radiant happiness and nothing more is mentioned of any marital concerns.

Schumann begins this piece with the direction, *Ziemlich schnell*, (moderately fast). This upbeat tempo paired with the *mezzo-forte* dynamic marking demonstrates the girl’s happiness on her wedding day; meanwhile, the constantly moving piano accompaniment mimics the whirl of commotion which traditionally goes on during wedding preparations. (figure 16)
When the bride speaks of her “one foolish worry” in measures 19-22, Schumann leaves no room for the listener to be worried as well. Rather, he cleverly uses the same melody and piano accompaniment in this worrisome phrase as he used in the brilliantly happy first phrase thus creating a sense that this is simply a normal case of last minute cold feet. Fortunately, the feeling does not last long, and with no changes taking place in the harmonic scheme, one almost forgets this line is even included in the text. There is the possibility that when setting this particular poem to music Schumann came across this line and it reminded him of the issues with Clara’s father and her occasional uncertainty in rejecting her father’s concerns regarding a possible marriage to Schumann. Perhaps this is why he chose to keep the music unchanged instead of reflecting any concern or doubt. While he could have simply omitted the phrase, these poems were collected by Clara and Robert in their book of “Copies of Poems for Composition;” if he omitted these phrases, Clara would probably have noticed, thus drawing more attention to them instead of less. Only in measures 41-42 does the tempo slow down slightly with a *ritardando* as the bride speaks of having to leave her sisters. However, by measure 43 the tempo is back to the original speed and there is no more trace of sadness.
Süßer Freund, du blickest
Mich verwundert an,
Kannst es nicht begreifen,
Wie ich weinen kann;
Laß der feuchten Perlen
Ungewohnte Zier
Freudich hell erzittern
In den Auge mir.

Wie so bang mein Busen,
Wie so wonnevoll!
Wüßt ich nur mit Worten,
Wie ich's sagen soll;
Komm und birg dein Antlitz
Hier an meiner Brust,
Will in's Ohr dir flüstern
Alle meine Lust.

Hab' ob manchen Zeichen
Mutter schon gefragt,
Hat die gute Mutter
Alles mir gesagt,
Hat mich unterwiesen
Wie, nach allem Schein,
Bald für eine Wiege
Muß gesorget sein.

Weißt du nun die Tränen,
Die ich weinen kann?
Sollst du nicht sie sehen,
Du geliebter Mann?
Bleib an meinem Herzen,
Fühle dessen Schlag,
Daß ich fest und fester
Nur dich drücken mag.

Hier an meinem Bette
Hat die Wiege Raum,
Wo sie still verberge
Meinen holden Traum;
Kommen wird der Morgen,
Wo der Traum erwacht,
Und daraus dein Bildnis

Sweet friend, thou gazest
upon me in wonderment,
thou cannst not grasp it,
why I can weep;
Let the moist pearls'
unaccustomed adornment
tremble, joyful-bright,
in my eyes.

How anxious my bosom,
how rapturous!
If I only knew, with words,
how I should say it;
come and bury thy visage
here in my breast,
I want to whisper in thy ear
all my happiness.

About the signs
I have already asked Mother;
my good mother has
told me everything.
She has assured me that
soon a cradle
will be needed.

Knowest thou the tears,
that I can weep?
Shouldst thou not see them,
thou beloved man?
Stay by my heart,
feel its beat,
that I may, fast and faster,
hold thee.

Here, at my bed,
the cradle shall have room,
where it silently conceals
my lovely dream;
the morning will come
where the dream awakes,
and from there thy image
Mir entgegen lacht. shall smile at me.

In the sixth song, “Süßer Freund,” (Sweet Friend) Chamisso presents the girl in a state of awe upon realizing that she is carrying a life within herself. During the song she gently explains the news to her husband. This poem is different from the other poems in the cycle in that it is a pure narrative; none of the girl’s thoughts are revealed. From the simple and straightforward way the girl speaks, it appears that she has no hidden thoughts and is verbally expressing everything in her heart and her mind.

Schumann cleverly uses the music to express what is not said in words—just how much this child means to the girl. The directions given, “Langsam, mit innigen Ausdruck,” (“slowly with intimate expression”) gives an idea of the song’s mood before examining it. It is performed in a slow and tender manner that is befitting of the subject of a child, and the accompaniment is simple and free of unnecessary ornamentation. It is interesting to note that while the girl is telling her husband of their child, the music is composed in the key of G major. When she speaks directly to him, in measure 25, asking if he understands what she is saying, the key shifts to C major. This reflects the gentle subtleties the voice takes on when speaking with more emphasis. The piano accompaniment underscores this emphasis by adopting a pattern of repeating eighth notes instead of the dreamy sustained chords used in the beginning section of the song. Also, at measure 32 Schumann indicates that the tempo become more lively (“Lebhafter”). This greater sense of motion depicts a firmer manner of speaking instead of the previously dreamy tone. This more lively tempo continues until measure 45 where the sustained chords return until the end of the song.
“An meinem Herzen”

An meinem Herzen, an meiner Brust,
Du meine Wonne, du meine Lust!

At my heart, at my breast,
Thou my rapture, my happiness!

Das Glück ist die Liebe, die Lieb ist das Glück,
Ich hab es gesagt und nehm's nicht zurück.

The joy is the love, the love is the joy,
I have said it, and won't take it back.

Hab überglücklich mich geschätzt
Bin überglücklich aber jetzt.

I've thought myself rapturous,
But now I'm happy beyond that.

Nur die da säugt, nur die da liebt
Das Kind, dem sie die Nahrung giebt;

Only she that suckles, only she that loves the child, to whom she gives nourishment;

Nur eine Mutter weiß allein
Was lieben heißt und glücklich sein.

Only a mother knows alone
What it is to love and be happy.

O, wie bedaur’ ich doch den Mann,
Der Mutterglück nicht fühlen kann!

O how I pity then the man who cannot feel a mother's joy!

Du schaust mich an und lächelst dazu,
Du lieber, lieber Engel, du!

Thou lookst at me and smiles,
Thou dear, dear angel thou.

“An meinem Herzen,” (“At My Heart”) the seventh song in the cycle, is about the joys of motherhood. The young mother is clearly enraptured with motherhood and caring for her newborn baby. Her joy is clear when she says “Das Glück ist die Liebe, die Lieb ist das Glück,” (“happiness is love, love is happiness”). She goes on to say with more renewed conviction that only a mother can truly understand the depths of love one feels when caring for her child.

Chamisso is so dedicated to painting a portrait of a mother purely joyful in motherhood that his character actually states that she feels sorry for men because they cannot possibly understand the joy and love a mother feels. While this might be a stretch of the imagination even for the period in which the poem was written, the intent is clear and the portrait is painted; a young mother looks lovingly into the eyes of her newborn child and feels the deepest love ever felt in her life.
Schumann provides this portrait with the caption, *Fröhlich, innig*. *Fröhlich* means cheerful, merry or happy while *innig* means tender, heartfelt and sincere.

This song moves along at a brisk pace, the underlying sixteenth notes providing a driving energy throughout the piece, as well as providing a strong contrast to the preceding contemplative song. (figure 17)

![Figure 17](image1.png)

**Figure 17, P. song 7, p. 1, L. 1, mm 1-3**

When the girl speaks of a new love she has only experienced as a mother, Schumann gives the direction, *Schneller*. This faster tempo conveys the passion with which the mother speaks. Then, in measure 26, the mother becomes even more enraptured as she speaks to her infant child. “You dear, dear angel you, you look at me and smile also!” (figure 18) Combined with the staccato chords in the piano score and quicker tempo, the impression of a mother cooing over her child in delight is clearly evident.

![Figure 18](image2.png)

**Figure 18, P. song 7, p. 4, L. 1, mm. 26-28**
In measure 29 Schumann brings back the first two phrases of the poem, “An meinem Herzen, an meiner Brust, du meine Wohne, du meine Lust!” Once again Schumann has framed a song by using matching text at the beginning and end, thus creating a strong sense of continuity throughout the song. Schumann also uses a ritardando to bring the tempo back to the original tempo in measure 31. His clever use of tempo changes throughout this song make it easy to hear the tone inflections which would be used if the poem were spoken.

Nun hast du mir den ersten Schmerz getan

Nun hast du mir den ersten Schmerz getan,
Der aber traf.
Du schläfst, du harter, unbarmherz’ger Mann,
Den Todesschlaf.
Es blicket die Verlaßne vor sich hin,
Die Welt is leer.
Geliebet hab ich und gelebt, ich bin
Nicht lebend mehr.
Ich zieh mich in mein Innres still zurück,
Der Schleier fällt,
Da hab ich dich und mein verlornes Glück,
Du meine Welt!

Now thou hast given me, for the first time pain, how it struck me.
Thou sleepst, thou hard, merciless man, the sleep of death.
The abandoned one gazes straight ahead, the world is void.
I have loved and lived, I am no longer living.
I withdraw silently into myself, the veil falls, there I have thee and my lost happiness, O thou my world!

The eighth and final song in this cycle is “Nun hast du mir den ersten Schmerz getan,” ("Now thou hast given me, for the first time, pain"). In this song, the wife mourns her husband’s death. He has been her world for so many years, and now he is gone. Lost and unsure what to do, the new widow feels abandoned. He was her life, and now that he is gone, she feels that she too is no longer living.

Schumann treats this closing song almost as a recitative. Sustained chords provide a stark framework for the vocal line which stretches out rows of repeated notes—as if the words are more spoken in a monotone daze than actually sung. (figure 19)
There are no special instructions for this piece; it is simply *Adagio*. By creating an accompaniment which provides only the bare necessities and a vocal line which tends to linger on one pitch before allowing itself to slowly move on to something else, Schumann has captured the stunned disbelief and pure sorrow experienced by the widow. As the song draws close to the end, measure 15 is marked *piano* and measure 19 is *pianissimo* depicting the widow whispering, “Silently I withdraw into myself, the veil falls, There I have you and my lost happiness, You, my world!” With the last words sung, the piano slowly plays the opening melody from “Seit ich ihn gesehen,” the first song in the cycle—the song the girl sang when she first saw him.
CONCLUSION

Although Robert Schumann’s original goal was to become a virtuoso pianist, through his untimely hand injury, the world instead gained a treasury of beautifully crafted compositions. In particular, Schumann’s songs present an example of the detail invested in his work as a composer.

In *Frauenliebe und -leben* Schumann married Chamisso’s poems to the vocal lines seamlessly. Thoughts and voice inflections are reflected in his melody lines in such a realistic way that one can almost hear the conversations as if in real life. When the young bride speaks with her sisters on her wedding day, the audience can hear her excitement. When the widow whispers her final words to her deceased husband, one can almost hear her voice tremble and fade away. Such is the genius of Schumann; the man who originally showed no true interest in vocal composition was able to dig deep when necessary and produce songs which can move an audience to tears, paint pictures in one’s mind and guide a listener through a young woman’s life.

When examining Schumann’s songs it is tempting to simply consider the relationship between the vocal line and the text; however, one must realize the importance of not only viewing the vocal line but also the piano accompaniment. While a thorough examination of the vocal line is truly an important part of the investigative process, if only the vocal line is examined, a vast amount of information regarding the emotional content of the song will be lost.

It must be remembered that Schumann began his musical career as a pianist with training in serious piano literature. As such, it was inevitable that this background greatly influence his compositional style. Schumann made a natural progression from being a performing pianist to composing piano works and then moving into songs. As would be expected, he placed emphasis on the piano accompaniments for each song. Schumann truly delved into the emotional content
contained in the text, and while a portion of that emotion is written into the vocal line, the majority of the emotion spilled over into the piano accompaniment. When combined, the vocal line and piano accompaniment created a full sense of the emotion of the work. While it would be easy to focus all his attention on the vocal line leaving the piano accompaniment unimaginative, Schumann instead composed the accompaniments in such a way that movement flows between the pianist’s left and right hand; hesitance is felt through staccato notes, deep thought is heard in ponderous chords, resolve is developed within low bass lines and joy is portrayed through a shower of notes circling each other in swift patterns.

When examining Schumann’s sketches, one can see a brilliant mind at work. All of the beautifully expressed emotion and vivid storytelling in both the vocal line and piano accompaniment came from the careful edits of a conscientious composer with a clear goal in mind. Through his attention to detail, Schumann effectively guides his audience through a carefully crafted musical world—a world that is the life and love of a woman.
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