



Robert Schumann

(1810-1856)

Schumann' personalities

- ▶ Schumann wrote about music in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* under the pseudonyms “Florestan” and “Eusebius”
 - ▶ “Florestan” was his passionate, impulsive, outgoing side
 - ▶ “Eusebius” was his dreamy, introspective side
 - ▶ Sometimes, an objective third party named “Master Raro” was called upon for his professional, intellectual opinion
- ▶ All of these personalities joined in opposition against what Schumann called “the musical Philistines,” inferior composers who specialized in flashy technical displays
- ▶ Schumann praised and promoted Chopin, Schubert, Berlioz, and Brahms, while disparaging Liszt and Wagner

Musical symbols in *Carnaval*

- ▶ Another interesting aspect of *Carnaval* is its use of musical acrostics, in which the musical alphabet (A-G) is used to represent words and names
 - ▶ For example, BACH = Bb – A – C – B
 - ▶ (In Germany, H = B, B = Bb, and S = Eb)
 - ▶ Schumann = S – C – H – A
- ▶ One movement of *Carnaval* is entitled “Sphinxes,” implying that there is a riddle to be solved—it consists only of three sets of four notes (which should not be performed)
 - ▶ The first Sphinx is Schumann (S-C-H-A)
 - ▶ The third Sphinx is girlfriend Ernestine's home town (A-S-C-H)
 - ▶ The second Sphinx is similar: As – C – H

Robert Schumann

- ▶ Schumann was a influential composer and music critic
- ▶ He quit his law studies in 1830, after hearing Paganini play
- ▶ He hoped to become a virtuoso pianist, but injured his hand, leading him to focus his energies on composition
 - ▶ Schumann often devoted himself to only one type of composition at a time, writing 168 songs in 1840, two symphonies in 1841, only chamber music in 1842, etc.
- ▶ Schumann married his piano teacher's daughter, Clara Wieck, after a secret courtship and a lengthy legal battle
- ▶ After an attempted suicide in 1852 due to growing mental illness, Schumann was admitted into a mental institution for the last few years of his life

Carnaval

- ▶ Many of these personalities make an appearance in Schumann's piano cycle *Carnaval*
- ▶ In *Carnaval*, many characters mingle at a masked ball
 - ▶ Some are the traditional characters of Italian *commedia dell'arte*, such as Pierrot, Harlequin, Pantalón and Columbine
 - ▶ Some are people in Schumann's life, such as Chiarina (his nickname for Clara) and Estrella (his nickname for Ernestine)
 - ▶ Some are musicians or composers, like Chopin and Paganini
 - ▶ Some are Schumann's own personalities (Florestan & Eusebius)
- ▶ At the end of the work, the *Dauidsündler* march against the Philistines

Schumann and song

- ▶ 1840 was Schumann's *Liederjahr* or (“year of the lied”)
- ▶ This great outpouring of song likely stems from his long-awaited marriage with Clara in the same year
- ▶ These songs were collected in several song cycles, including *Dichterliebe* (“Poet's Love”) with poems by Heinrich Heine
 - ▶ The cycle tells a story in three main parts, with songs 1-4 being a statement, songs 5-10 being the development, and songs 11-16 providing a sense of resolution
- ▶ Unlike Schubert, Schumann creates musical connections between the songs in his song cycles and creates tonal relationships between adjacent songs