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SHATTERING THE SCHUMANN MYTH

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Robert Schumann is unquestionably one of the most misunderstood personalities in the fields of musicological and psychological research today. Schumann himself wrote, "Ich befinde mich schlecht unter Menschen, die mich nicht verstehen und die ich nicht lieben kann."[1] Born in 1810, Schumann suffered from bipolar affective disorder throughout his short life, culminating in a suicide attempt in 1854, and ultimately, he died in an asylum as a result of tertiary syphilis in 1856.

A Schumann Myth exists in the field of musicology today, namely, that mental illness supposedly pervades Schumann's later literature and music. Because of this myth, many musicologists feel that his later works are irrelevant. However, by examining the medical evidence, by testing the hypotheses of the most prominent Schumann biographers, and by comparing Schumann's early and late literary styles, we will see that the beliefs surrounding Schumann's writings are erroneous. Schumann's writings, analogous with his musical endeavours, simply matured and changed as he aged. Thus, Schumann's works after 1849 are not indicative of mental illness and are not the worthless products of a mad man.

Let us begin by examining the medical evidence. Since his death, Robert Schumann has been diagnosed as having been schizophrenic, psychotic, and having suffered from hypochondria, organic brain disease, psychosis, and borderline diabetes by different biographers. All of these speculations were disproved by Drs. Eliot Slater and Alfred Meyer in 1959, who drew two conclusive diagnoses based on the medical evidence.[2] Their study concludes that the singular explanation for Schumann's severe mood changes between 1842 and 1844 is bipolar affective disorder, formerly known as manic-depressive syndrome.[3] They believe that Schumann suffered from this disease from the age of twenty-three onwards. This disease is identified as "a form in which mania, melancholia, and sanity succeed each other at intervals."[4] Slater and Meyer's second conclusion was that Schumann ultimately died from a terminal illness, tertiary, or end-stage, syphilis, also known as general paresis -- a disease they believe he contracted during his early twenties.[5] Dr. Slater explains the reason for his diagnosis:

> The chronic type of illness is typically organic (i.e. not schizophrenic,) with its heavy incidence on intellectual capacities. Finally, the rapid physical deterioration to extreme wasting, with gross speech disorder, leading to death in convulsions, fit the picture of tertiary syphilis as no other disease.[6]

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[1] Eliot Slater and Alfred Meyer, "Contributions to a Pathology of the Musicians: I. Robert Schumann," *Confinia Psychiatrica*, II/2 (1959), 72.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid*, 84.
[4] Clarence Wilbur Taber, Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary, (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis Company, 1970) C-103.
[5] Slater and Meyer, 84.
[6] *Ibid.*

The history of the biographers concerned with Schumann's mental health can be traced back to two main sources. The first was Dr. Richarz, Schumann's attending physician in Endenich. Richarz also performed the postmortem examination on Schumann. Richarz wrote the first accounts of Schumann's illness while Schumann resided in the asylum. Medicine between the years of 1856 and 1873 (when Richarz contributed his final assessment of Schumann's illness to the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*[7]) was understandably inferior to the technology we enjoy today. Treatments throughout the nineteenth century was experimental, and in many cases, ineffective. Therefore, it is reasonable that Richarz would have drawn the following implausible and medically inaccurate conclusion, at least, according to today's standards.

> One of the chief external causes of this disease is excessive mental exertion; we might call it intellectual extravagance, – a danger to which all artists, particularly musicians, are very liable. There is no doubt that Schumann induced this disease by overwork.[8]

Richarz believed that Schumann had perished from organic brain disease, brought on by excessive use of cognitive functions.

Another school of thought believes that Richarz knew Schumann had syphilis, and may have concealed the true nature of his disease in an effort to protect Clara. Dr. Alan Walker, scholar of nineteenth century music, explains:

> Is it possible that Richarz himself, who, after all, observed Schumann daily for two years or more, suspected this disease [tertiary syphilis] and suppressed the hospital records to spare Clara further humiliation? We shall never know. Only one thing is certain. Schumann must have contracted this disease fairly early, since one or two of the symptoms on which the diagnosis is based appeared at least twelve years before he died. As early as 1844, for instance, Schumann had complained of 'singing noises' in the ears – a classic symptom of secondary syphilis. Considering the long latency period required if the disease is to run its natural course, the most likely time of infection was 1830 – 1831 during his boisterous days as a student in Leipzig. This is borne out by ... the *Tagebücher* in which Schumann chronicles his encounters with the opposite sex in extraordinary detail.[9]

Joseph Wilhelm von Wasielewski, the original Schumann biographer, asked Dr. Richarz to write the first public analysis of Schumann's illness for his book, published in 1871. Clara Schumann thoroughly opposed the biography and Dr. Richarz's conclusions, yet the book was printed without her permission. Wasielewski was a personal friend of Schumann's, and understandably desired to know how his friend had died at such a young age; he may also have been motivated to dismiss Schumann's later works because he felt they did not meet Schumann's earlier standards of

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[7] Dr. Richarz, "Robert Schumann," *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, XXXVIII (1873), 597-601.
[8] Joseph Wilhelm von Wasielewski, The Life of Robert Schumann, (Detroit: Information Coordinators, 1975), 258.
[9] Alan Walker, Schumann, (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1976), 117.

composition. However, even today, many scholars rightly feel that Wasielewski's inclusion of Richarz's autopsy results was inappropriate without having obtained the consent of Schumann's widow and other family members.

Several authors since Richarz have written articles and books stating that after his "Fruitful Year" in 1849, Schumann failed to write any significant pieces or criticisms, however, this is inaccurate. Dr. Eric Sams, scholar of nineteenth century studies, commented in 1975 that:

> Schumann never again reached or even approached the level of his 1840 masterpieces. The songs of 1849 are a decline ... Other composers of comparable status are believed to mature in their music; Schumann appears to deteriorate. A favoured explanation is mental illness.[10]

Musicologist Dr. Jon W. Finson is the most insistent antagonist towards Sams' statement:

> Of all the numerous myths surrounding Robert Schumann's life, none has been so persistent nor so pernicious as the notion that waning compositional acuity presaged his ultimate mental demise.[11]

Even Drs. Slater and Meyer, who set out to prove Schumann's period of decline, believe that any notion of decline in Schumann's late work is erroneous.

> A more profound failure is recognizable in the last two years of his life. A certain element of heavy, sometimes bombastic banality may have already appeared earlier. But such fairly late works as the *Rhenish Symphony* ... show that the general decline must not be dated too early.[12]

While Alan Walker and Eric Sams agree on the theory of syphilis being the cause of Schumann's death, they disagree on Sams' belief that Schumann deteriorated after 1849. Walker and Sams carried on a correspondence from 1968 to 1973 that is archived in Mills Memorial Library at McMaster University, in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. On November 20, 1970, Sams' expressed his views to Walker in a letter.

> Of course he [Schumann] wasn't mad before 1854 – he was just brain-sick after 18<u>44</u>. Mad people have created art; brain-sick people never ... The proof of cerebral decline seems to me to be infinitely <u>more</u> damning, not less, than the proof of mental decline.[13]

Walker contradicts Sams in a letter dated May 9, 1971.

> I'd like to suggest that whatever evidence of mental disturbance the late songs present is outweighed by such works as the <u>Manfred</u> Overture (1848), the Introduction and Allegro Appassionato (1849) and the Cello Concerto (1850), which show that Schumann was still capable of

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[10] Eric Sams, <u>The Songs of Robert Schumann</u>, 2nd Edition, (London: Eulenberg Books, 1975), 276.
[11] Jon W. Finson, "Schumann's Mature Style and the 'Album of Songs for the Young'," *Journal of Musicology*, VIII/2 (Spring 1990), 227.
[12] Eliot Slater and Alfred Meyer, 85.
[13] Alan Walker, letter from Eric Sams, November 20, 1970.

reaching [heights of mastery], and that the late 'degenerate' songs do not permit you to draw a general conclusion about a 'falling off' in quality.[14]

Psychiatrist Dr. Peter Ostwald is another champion of Sams' theory:

Genius and madness have often been thought to be related in some way. In the life of Robert Schumann, it is particularly difficult to draw a line between the two. The problem of distinguishing between his creative and his psychotic behaviour has confounded many biographers, musicologists and psychiatrists.[15]

Ostwald fails to look beyond the illness and sees only the broken man, instead of the "genius" composer and writer Schumann once was; he dwells only on the shell of the man Schumann became after his suicide attempt in 1854. He neglects to recognize instead the success Schumann found in the many roles he played and the many contributions he left to the world. Alan Walker contradicts Ostwald's theories. Walker and Ostwald kept up correspondence from 1980 to 1986. The contents of these letters concern their conflicting opinions on the cause of Schumann's death. Ostwald wrote to Walker, indicating his disagreement with Walker's syphilis diagnosis; Ostwald says that he suspected Schumann suffered from Ménière's disease, or perhaps borderline diabetes. He felt that these were two possible explanations for the tinnitus from which Schumann was suffering. He also wrote, "As for [Schumann's] death, I think it was suicide due to self-starvation."[16] Daverio challenges this suggestion, which I think is highly accurate:

According to one recent theory, the composer in essence committed suicide through self-starvation. The diary [kept by Dr. Richarz] does not sustain this hypothesis. Although at various points throughout his stay at Endenich he refused food or drink under the delusional belief that they had been poisoned ... these phases alternated with others when he ate normally. On 13 July 1856 [a mere two weeks before his death] ... Richarz reported: "[Schumann] ate quite well ... willingly had wine."[17]

The greatest proof of his actual illness was recorded by none other than Schumann himself in September of 1855. On September 12, 1855, Richarz recorded in his diary:

Recently [Schumann] has been writing down all kinds of brief jottings and reflections of melancholy content, e.g.: 'In 1831 I was syphilitic and treated with arsenic.'[18]

Surely we must be able to discern that this is not the psychotic rambling of a mental patient, but a historical fact given to us by Schumann himself. John Daverio summarizes this startling piece of evidence by saying:

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[14] Alan Walker, letter to Eric Sams, May 9, 1971.
[15] Peter Ostwald, Schumann: The Inner Voices of a Musical Genius. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1985), xi.
[16] Peter Ostwald, letter to Alan Walker, February 5, 1981.
[17] John Daverio, Robert Schumann: Herald of a New Poetic Age, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 484.
[18] *Ibid.*

Although there has long been a strong suspicion that Schumann had earlier contracted syphilis, we can now be reasonably certain that this was indeed the case.[19]

Daverio represents a new age of musicologists and musical thought on Schumann. Contradicting the beliefs of Ostwald in particular, he writes:

> The focal point of Ostwald's biography is the composer's final illness, which casts a pall over the entire study; witness the author's decision to devote his opening chapter to an account of Schumann's suicide attempt in February 1854 and its immediate aftermath.[20]

It is my opinion that Schumann, in addition to having suffered from syphilis, also suffered from mercury poisoning. In the nineteenth century, mercury was frequently used as treatment for syphilis. Physician Jay Arena describes the symptoms of chronic intoxication of mercury.

> Chronic intoxication includes symptoms of 1) erethism (a mental state of fatigability), irritability, apprehension and withdrawal; and 2) tremors of the hands, feet, tongue and lip, staggering and slurred speech.[21]

This opinion is supported by Alan Walker. In a letter dated November 27, 1970 to Eric Sams, Walker writes:

> In the hands of a quack, (Schumann consulted several about then [sic]), mercury could prove lethal ... What interested me was that several of Schumann's symptoms, aural, visual (he writes somewhere of his passing fear of going blind), paralysis, etc., – are identical with mercury poisoning ... Oddly, mercury was most widely prescribed in the nineteenth century for venereal disease – presumably on the homeopathic principle that the "cure" produced in healthy persons symptoms which are identical with the disease.[22]

Schumann himself mentions the treatment of his syphilis with arsenic; this creates another possible poisoning theory. Arsenic was indeed a typical treatment for syphilis in the nineteenth century.[23] The symptoms of chronic arsenic poisoning are not as closely related to Schumann's symptoms as those of mercury poisoning, nevertheless, there is some overlap of symptoms including:

> ...generalized weakness, convulsions prior to death, eventual paralysis, muscular atrophy especially in the legs, seizures, muscle spasms, restlessness and a gradual breakdown of the central nervous system.[24]

Eliot Slater discusses the use of mercury in the treatment of syphilis in the nineteenth century:

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[19] *Ibid.*
[20] Daverio, 11.
[21] Jay Arena, Poisoning: Toxicology, Symptoms, Treatments, 4th Edition. (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 1979), 146.
[22] Alan Walker, letter to Eric Sams, November 27, 1970.
[23] Arena, 137.
[24] *Ibid*, 138 – 139.

> It is only if Schumann had treatment that Clara could have escaped infection from him, if he had it; but treatment, while rendering him non-infective, would still have left him open to a continuing latency of the infection. In a brilliant piece of biographical research, Eric Sams [in *Musical Times*, December 1971, "Schumann's hand injury"] has shown that the 'injury' to Schumann's finger which he incurred in the early 1830s, and which has long been a mystery, could very well have been a side effect, in the form of muscular paresis, of treatment by mercury, which was the standard treatment for syphilis in that era.[25]

Walker and Slater also maintained a correspondence during 1971. It has been proven that Clara was not infected with syphilis, yet at least one of her children was. This disturbing fact is mentioned by Walker in a letter to Slater from August 10, 1971.

> Ludwig Schumann (born 1848) was said … by his doctors to be incurably insane and also "Rückenmarkkrank", i.e. having a disease of the spinal marrow in 1870, [and this could have conceivably been a late manifestation of syphilis acquired congenitally.][26]

Since many of the symptoms of both mercury and arsenic poisoning overlap with Schumann's condition prior to death, I do not believe that the theories of poisoning should be entirely abandoned without further medical investigation.

It is neither just nor valid to consider only the mental illness of a "great" man and consequently exclude his later contributions. Throughout his short lifetime, Schumann contributed not only to the field of music and literature, but also to the field of music criticism. Schumann's mental health did not embody the man; instead, his musical talent and gifts for poetry and literature did. No longer should we allow Schumann's mental illness to overshadow the legacy that he left to the world in the shape of his music and literature.

Next, let us compare Schumann's early and late literary styles to determine whether mental illness is apparent in his late writings. On his twenty-first birthday, Schumann created a fantasy world for himself that would redefine his life in the years to come. Adopting the Romantic concept of twins to represent the two sides of an individual's personality, Schumann created the character Florestan.[27] The name Florestan comes from a character in Beethoven's *Fidelio*. Florestan is outgoing, masculine and assertive. One month later, Schumann completed the double personality he had imagined for himself with the creation of Eusebius, named for St. Eusebius the Confessor, a fourth century priest and martyr.[28] Ostwald suggests that St. Eusebius' martyrdom appealed to the suicidal tendencies of Schumann's youthful personality.[29] Eusebius represents Schumann's shy, feminine and passive side.

In 1834, Schumann created the progressive music journal, the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. He acted as both critic and editor of the journal. In his early writing style as

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[25] Eliot Slater, "Schumann's Illness" in Alan Walker (ed.), Robert Schumann, 413.
[26] Alan Walker, letter to Eliot Slater, August 10, 1971.
[27] Daverio, 74.
[28] Ostwald, Schumann, 26.
[29] *Ibid*, 77.

exemplified in the *Neue Zeitschrift*, Schumann's characters, Florestan and Eusebius, dominate his critical writings. In the journal, Schumann signed articles with his own name or with the names of either Florestan or Eusebius. Schumann's fictional personalities Florestan and Eusebius are used to discuss pieces for which Schumann has great admiration, in particular those of Beethoven. Florestan's criticisms are habitually blunt and harsh. Eusebius, on the other hand, writes poetically. His remarks are generally written in the first person. Eusebius often adds a comedic effect to his reviews by enlightening the audience about Florestan's eccentricities, as in the following passage.

> And now we stood before the old castellan with his face like the commander's (in "Don Juan"), who had a great deal to do, and at least admitted us, though with a very morose look, for Florestan, as usual, had left his entrance ticket behind him.[30]

Musicologist Dr. Leon Plantinga writes:

> It would strike us as peculiar if a present-day critic should write little stories instead of telling us in a straightforward fashion about the things he is reviewing, and Schumann's behaviour as a critic certainly seemed peculiar to some of his contemporaries. However, to attribute any part of Schumann's style to mental disturbance would be a real error.[31]

Therefore, Plantinga agrees that Schumann's use of fantastical criticism in his early career was not a result of mental illness; it was simply an eccentric side of Schumann's personality.

On the other hand, the late psychologist Dr. Peter Ostwald suggests that the purpose of Florestan and Eusebius was

> as companions, who – in his imagination – spoke to him, gave him ideas for literary as well as musical projects, and supported him at times of emotional distress. It is not unusual for children to create imaginary creatures who provide companionship, but when an adult does so, it is a sign of either a very vivid imagination or a psychotic tendency. In Schumann's case, it indicated both. The 'birth' of his two friends followed a great deal of turmoil and suffering caused by personal and artistic problems.[32]

Ostwald unjustly assumes that Florestan and Eusebius were the products of mental illness. Instead, I believe that Florestan and Eusebius were a defense mechanism created by Schumann as a protection against those people who disagreed with his opinions. Through the use of Florestan and Eusebius, Schumann was able to distance himself from his criticisms in the event of a negative reaction to them. In the field of psychiatry, this phenomenon is known as projection:

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[30] Robert Schumann, On Music and Musicians, 1st Series, 8th Edition, (London: New Temple Press, 1880), 35.
[31] Leon Plantinga, Schumann as Critic, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 70.
[32] Ostwald, Schumann, p. 74.

> Projection is a frequently used [defense] mechanism that relieves tension and anxiety by transferring the responsibility for unacceptable ideas, impulses or thoughts to another person. This mechanism is used when the individual cannot accept responsibility for his own hostile, aggressive thoughts.[33]

Schumann had a fear of rejection, which originated in his early childhood. Dorothy Mereness emphasizes that, "the earliest and probably most important and lasting influences are from the mothering adult."[34] If we look at Schumann's biography, we see that the young Robert, until his third year, was a child like any other. However, by age three, this had changed; Dr. John Daverio explains:

> Then, after his mother contracted typhus, he was placed under the care of a Frau Ruppius. The child's stay, which was supposed to last no more than six weeks but in fact covered a two and a half year period, was a source of separation anxiety that fed into the composer's later depressive condition.[35]

Therefore, as a result of Schumann's early separation from his mother, his normal childhood development was interrupted and he consequently developed projection as a means of defending himself. I believe that Schumann's adoption of Florestan and Eusebius was as a defense mechanism to distance him from further rejection and abandonment.

Finally, to establish that the Schumann myth is indeed false, let us compare Schumann's early style, which was poetic and imaginative, with the shift in style that occurred during his later years. Robert Schumann's critical activities waned in the last decade of his life. As he grew older, Schumann's fanciful and poetic style began to disappear. In his more restrained style of the late 1830s and 1840s, Schumann began to use more technical theoretical language.[36] Schumann's fictional Eusebius and then Florestan, faded away completely by 1842.[37] Dr. Leon Plantinga discusses Schumann's mature style and the abandonment of the use of poetic imagery.

> This tardy maturation of a latent musical genius may help to explain the change in Schumann's literary style. It seems reasonable to suppose, in retrospect, that with the flowering of his compositional talent, that music replaced literature as a vehicle for his poetic imagination. What remained of the writer was a solid professional, producing music criticism of a far more conventional cast than one would ever have expected from the author of 'An Opus 2.'[38]

As Plantinga suggests, composition became Schumann's primary vehicle for self-expression. However, I do not agree that "conventional" is necessarily a negative aspect; it was merely a shift in style indicative of Schumann's maturity and his desire to discuss many pieces in a shorter period of time. Schumann's later criticisms do not

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[33] Dorothy Mereness, The Essentials of Psychiatric Nursing, 8th Edition, (St. Louis: C.V. Mosby Co., 1970), 24-25.
[34] *Ibid*, 17.
[35] Daverio, 21.
[36] Leon Plantinga, Schumann as Critic, 78.
[37] *Ibid.*
[38] Leon Plantinga, "Schumann the Critic", in Alan Walker (ed.), Robert Schumann: The Man and His Music, 183.

indicate mental illness; rather, they are the work of a man who has become more attuned to his own personality, life and needs; he has visibly matured before his audience's eyes.

In September 1853, Schumann was introduced to young composer Johannes Brahms. The following month, he wrote an essay entitled, "Neue Bahnen" which was subsequently published in the *Neue Zeitschrift*. This article heralds Brahms as a genius. As he bestows his highest praise on Brahms, Schumann reverts once more to his poetic literary style:

> ... a musician who would reveal his mastery not in a gradual evolution, but like Athene would spring fully armed from Zeus' head. And such a one *has* appeared; a young man over whose cradle Graces and Heroes have stood watch. His name is *Johannes Brahms*, and he comes from Hamburg, where he has been working in quiet obscurity, though instructed in the most difficult statutes of his art by an excellent and enthusiastically devoted teacher ... Even outwardly, he bore the marks proclaiming: 'This is a chosen one.'[39]

This coherent article was written despite Schumann's failing health during 1853. Schumann's judgement in heralding Brahms as a future great composer was not wrong; posterity has proven this notion correct.

Both prior to and after his suicide attempt on February 27, 1854, Schumann asked to be transferred to an asylum. During his two-year incarceration there, Robert continued to write letters to his wife Clara. The final letter to Clara was written on May 5, 1855. Even this last testament from Schumann demonstrates an amazing amount of coherence despite his deteriorating physical, and supposedly mental, health.

> Dearest Clara!
> On May 1st I sent you a spring message; but the following days were very restless; you will soon learn more about it from my letter which you will receive the day after tomorrow. There is a shadow in it, but what else it contains will make you happy, my dearest. I don't remember the birthday of our beloved [Brahms], therefore I must grow wings so that the score will arrive in the mail tomorrow. I have enclosed a drawing of Felix Mendelssohn that you can put in the Album. A priceless memento!
> Live well, I love you,
> Your Robert[40]

After this letter to Clara, Schumann descended into a perpetual silence, and whether this was his choice or not is currently under investigation. If more letters were written as Schumann indicated they would be in this letter, the staff at the asylum either confiscated them following the orders of Dr. Richarz, or it is possible that Clara did receive letters from Robert and destroyed them as she did with some of Robert's late music, claiming that they exhibited signs of mental illness. By comparing Schumann's early and late literary styles, we can observe that Schumann matured in his prose, but

[39] Robert Schumann, On Music and Musicians, edited by Konrad Wolff. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 1946), 253-254.
[40] Slater and Meyer, 81-82.

he did not decline as suggested by several musicologists, and there is no indication of mental illness in either his late criticisms or his late letters to Clara or other correspondents.

Further disturbing proof of Schumann's unquestionable mental coherence during his stay at Endenich has recently surfaced. During his stay at the asylum, Schumann was visited by several friends. One friend, Joachim, wrote to Clara and said that during their visit, Robert behaved as he always had in the past. He also wrote, "Robert said that he wanted to leave the place. He had to leave Endenich because the people there completely misunderstood him."[41]

Jensen also wrote of Schumann's visit with Bettina von Arnim in mid-May, 1855. A long-time champion of the mentally ill, Bettina sought Clara's approval to visit Robert in the asylum, as they had been friends for 4 years. After her visit, Bettina informed Clara that:

> [Robert's] surprising illness was only an attack of nerves that would have ended sooner if he had been better understood or if there had been any insight into his inner nature.[42]

Bettina found Schumann to be completely coherent and sane. In the letter, Bettina attacks Dr. Richarz stating that he "completely misunderstood Schumann," referring to Robert's mannerisms, his undecipherable handwriting and his soft-voiced manner of speaking that had been personality traits of his since youth.[43] Bettina recommended that Schumann be returned home to his family as soon as possible, or at least, transferred to another asylum.[44] Brahms temporarily looked into moving Robert to another asylum, but this was never followed up, perhaps at the insistence of Dr. Richarz.[45] After all, being a private institution, Clara had to pay for Robert to be in the asylum at Endenich, and this was not an inexpensive endeavor.

Additionally, Clara's support of her husband during his final years needs to be called into question. Clara did not visit Robert in the asylum until two days before his death, although he had resided there for over two years. Some musicologists have suggested that she was forbidden to see him yet Jensen claims:

> it seems clear that by this stage of Schumann's confinement, Clara had no desire to see him ... Since Schumann's move to Endenich, Clara had established a new life for herself. This new life, and the freedom associated with it, permitted her to live as she had always wanted: as a concert artist.[46]

Clara also ignored Bettina's and Joachim's pleas for Robert to be released from the asylum. Although no one realized it at the time, the rejection of Bettina's advice ultimately led to tragedy. Unfortunately, although Clara received Bettina and Joachim's reports that appeared to contradict the validity of Schumann's treatment, the opinions of

[41] Eric Jensen, "Schumann at Endenich, part I: Buried Alive," *Musical Times*, March 1998, 15.
[42] Eric Jensen, "Schumann at Endenich, part 2: Buried Alive," *Musical Times*, April 1998, 14.
[43] *Ibid.*
[44] *Ibid.*
[45] *Ibid.*
[46] *Ibid.*

the physicians at Endenich carried greater weight.[47] Although Schumann's condition was obviously much improved, his wishes were at odds with those of the doctors, so he continued receiving ineffectual and detrimental treatment, which tragically shortened his life.

All of this information leads to the disturbing realization that Schumann was indeed misunderstood; his true mental decline did not occur until after he had realized that there was no hope of him ever being released from Endenich. Without reducing the effect that syphilis obviously had on Schumann's deteriorating physical health, eventually he recognized that the only control he had over his life was whether he lived or whether he died. He resigned himself to death, in a sense, to regain the control that he had lost over his life. There was no mental decline in 1854, only a temporary mental breakdown, similar to two other episodes he had had in 1833 and 1844.

In conclusion, throughout his career as critic, Robert Schumann was a brilliant, articulate and perceptive individual for whom criticism was an avocation rather than a calling. Unfortunately, the Schumann myth still runs rampant today, and it has been my intent to shatter this myth once and for all. By reviewing the medical evidence and comparing his early and late styles of writing, we can see that Schumann's writings simply matured as he aged. There is no evidence of deterioration in even his latest writings, despite his declining physical health beginning in approximately 1844. Although he was plagued by illness throughout his short 46 years of life, Schumann left behind a legacy of music and criticisms for all to cherish -- his late works must not continue to be discarded as worthless.

[47] *Ibid*, 17.

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