UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL MISSOURI

THE ESSENCE OF ROMANCE: AN ESSAY AND ANALYSIS OF
ROBERT SCHUMANN’S ROMANCE OPUS 28, NUMBER 2

A SUPPORTING PAPER SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC
IN FULFILLMENT FOR THE DEGREE
MASTERS OF ARTS IN PIANO PERFORMANCE

BY

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INTRODUCTION

“The very essence of Romance is uncertainty,” Oscar Wilde

As philosophers of the Romantic Movement searched for a new understanding, they turned from the analytical, attempted more subjectivity than objectivity, and began to embrace rather than to examine. The Romantic’s began to value man based on their passion and emotions, to strive for creativity and expression, and to cultivate intuition and imagination. Consequently, this caused a shift away from order to chaos, from answers to questions, from predictability and reason to uncertainty. Accordingly, uncertainty became the only assurance, the unwritten law of Romanticism, and the very essence of the Romantic Era. The resulting philosophy eventually led to an artistic resurgence through which music gained importance as a powerful means of expression, and a significant standing within the culture.

Editor-critic and composer Robert Alexander Schumann (1810-1856) personifies Wilde’s view of Romanticism in theory and practice: his life speaks of great imagination and pain, his compositional style of invention and ambiguity. Schumann successfully composed quality literature in several genres during the German Romantic movement; however, the piano remained his central artistic medium, ultimately symbolizing his struggles for free expression, identity, and success.

\[\text{1} \text{ Oscar Wilde, ‘The Importance of being Earnest,” Algernon, Great Neck, NY, Barrons (1959), (I.39).}\]
The pianoforte had progressed into an instrument capable of conveying ideas and emotions in settings from the salon to the concert stage gaining popularity and availability. As a result, composers utilized the pianoforte as both servant and inspiration:² and yet for Schumann, a skilled keyboardist of reputation if not formal training, the pianoforte became an ardent task master. In the ten years between 1830 and 1840, Schumann successfully devoted most of his composition to the medium of keyboard literature, during this decade he also failed at his attempt to become a concert pianist, experienced numerous health problems, and succumbed to several mental breakdowns. It is important to recognize that this emotionally entangled preoccupation with the piano, a relationship that was born of inspiration, eventually developed into one of despair and domination³ that forever changed his inner life, directly morphing his creative process into one of uncertainty and conflict.

It was at the end of this decade of pianistic sojourn and during his engagement to Clara Weick that the Romances of Opus 28 were written, indicative of his character-piece output representing compact form compositional techniques and foretelling his Lieder, which he would devote the following decade. This paper will examine, analyze, and discuss the Romance in F-Sharp Major, Opus 28 No.2 detailing how the composer used harmony, metrical tension, and formal

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development in a manner that marks it as a work representative of 19th century Romanticism aesthetics.

TONALITY

The tonality in this work typifies the ambiguous, often opaque construction techniques of Schumann's music. Schumann achieves the element of uncertainty by creating a vocally inspired dual melodic line that shifts within the texture creating chromatic sequences, use of voice leading and voice-crossing serving both to propel and prolong sequential releases, and maintaining a consistent harmonic framework supporting the melodic inventions and the tensions created.

Duet

The Romance begins with a stable first phrase in which the melody exists in a duet within an eight measure, symmetrical, modulating, parallel period that is repeated. The timbre of the voices sing from the low register, with the melody placed in the middle of the accompaniment figure. The texture is homophonic beginning in F-sharp major and ending with an imperfect authentic cadence in C-sharp major.

The dual melodic line moves in primarily conjunct motion, the voices moving in parallel thirds through to small cadential moments. Although the melody consist of other tonalities, the main theme can be analyzed as the first large phrase grouping (mm. 1-4) largely in tonic, the second large phrase grouping (mm. 5-8) similarly in dominant. See Example 1.
Example 1:
Robert Schumann, op. 28 no. 2, mm. 1-8

Notes: Within the main theme, the duet moves in parallel motion serving to unify the phrase sequences, separating only in measure seven (marked with oval) producing a D-double sharp fully diminished chord creating momentarily tension resolving swiftly back to C-sharp major for a I-V-I cadential point in m. 8. Phrase one is expository in function; phrase two is transitional in function.
The main theme is followed by a highly chromatic section providing dramatic tension; this phrase group consists of two asymmetrical phrase units in which the texture remains melody and accompaniment. The duet, however, is moved to the outer voices, and the accompaniment figure to the middle. This phrase group has an underlying tonality of C-sharp minor throughout, closing in an elided cadence to F-sharp major with the return of the main theme. The texture remains homophonic, but becomes more complex throughout a sequence of events.

The duet, now in the outer voices in soprano and bass octaves, are written in primarily conjunct motion, becoming progressively more disjunctive throughout the passage. Through the use of chromatic synthesis, Schumann obscures the duet, providing dramatic tension through a series of chromatic sequences: a phrase group made up of a four measure phrase (mm. 9-12) with an underlying sense of a two measure sub-group 4(2+2), and a five measure phrase (mm. 13-18) with a sense of one measure sub-groups 5(1+1+1+1+1).

Schumann's use of diminished seventh chords in this section is a prime example of the chromatic nature of his compositional style. With the use of these chords, Schumann negates any feeling of tonic but creates tension instead. He creates musical tension, and subsequently, the element of uncertainty, by using duet to propel a series of vii fully diminished chords which begins in m. 14 with the following suspensions: e-sharp fully diminished six-five chord, → d-sharp fully diminished four-three chord, → g-sharp fully diminished six-five chord, → a-sharp fully diminished six-five chord, → g-major six-four chord, → c-double sharp fully diminished seven → b-sharp fully diminished six-five chords…eventually
resolving to f-sharp major. See Example 2.

Example 2:
Robert Schumann, op. 28 no. 2, mm. 9-17

Notes: Understanding that the quality of the diminished seventh chord is such that any chord member can function as the root, Schumann positioned the duet outside the accompaniment figure, using chromatic melody to construct diminished chords that form sequences as well as an ascending step progression. The bass motion, and subsequent lower voice of the duet, in mm. 14-15 drives the movement of g#-a-b-c# under fully diminished chords (demonstrated in ovals) This leads very smoothly into a Neapolitan, g-major six-four, in m. 16. Interestingly enough, his combined chords in the following measure, m. 17, form a French augmented sixth in the key of f-sharp major. This serves in a dominant function that drives to a cadential six-four f-sharp major chord in m. 18, finally resolving in an imperfect authentic cadence in the second beat of m. 19. This phrase group serves a developmental purpose.
Schumann uses the dual melodic line to deliver stability within the main theme; he adversely creates uncertainty and dramatic tension in the next section by developing sequential chromatic phrases.

**Voice Leading and Voice Crossing**

Within the Romance, Schumann uses voice leading and voice crossing to bind the melodic voices together and to pull them apart, creating both harmony and discord; characteristic of his compositional style, subsequently creating a sense of restlessness.

In Example 3, containing mm. 5-6, red lines indicate the notes of the melody that are crossed. Because Schumann kept melodic contour in parallel thirds, and despite a circle of fifths sequence harmonically occurring at a sub-level, the voice-crossing serves to unify by keeping the voices in harmonious dialogue.

Example 3:

Robert Schumann, op. 28 no. 2, mm. 5-6

Notes: In the main theme including mm. 5-6, Schumann uses voice crossing (red lines), and choice of a parallel third contour to bind the melodic voices together.

In Example 4, containing mm. 9-13, red lines indicate voices crossed, blue lines indicate the singular shared pitch. Within this phrase group Schumann
keeps the duet primarily in conjunct motion within each vocal line, but distorts their vocal dialogue by using contrary motion between them, creating other interval distances within the duet melodic contour. His voice crossing occurs at the end of m. 9 and m. 11, he employs the principles of two-voice counterpoint, approaching unisons stepwise by contrary motion. Also, beats five and six of m. 10 and 12, the soprano finds her way to the next sequence before the bass, indicating that the duet is out of sync with each other. The duet becomes symbolic of the nature of a romance within this work; singing together in calm and harmony at one instance, in conflict and discord at another.

Example 4:
Robert Schumann, op. 28 no. 2, mm. 9-12

Notes: In the contrasting phrase group including mm. 9-12, Schumann changes the duet melodic contour by use of voice crossing (red lines), and distorts their vocal dialogue using contrary motion. He employs the principles of two-voice counterpoint, approaching shared unisons by stepwise contrary motion.
Harmonic Framework

In the Romance, Schumann maintains a stable harmonic scheme while using varied textures and melodic invention to create a sense of change and instability. A prime example of this harmonic framework would be in mm. 22-29 in which, after a brief return of the main theme which began in m. 18 in F-sharp Major, Schumann changes the texture of the expected second phrase of the theme, and then proceeds with another phrase group featuring a contrapuntal texture with the F-sharp major tonality still in check. In this section, Schumann’s uses imitation to change the duet into a trio, allowing further use of chromatic sequences to cause musical tension.

In Example 5, containing mm. 22-29, once again Schumann uses the circle of fifths to create a phrase (22-25) of transitional function. However, instead of the expected modulation to C-sharp major, as previously in mm.5-8, after a short deceptive resolution he changes the texture from homophonic to polyphonic in beat six of m. 25. Schumann uses imitation with three voices; delaying resolutions and displacing the feel of tonic with two sets of entrances and subsequent brief resolutions. In the first set of imitation, the voices are built on a B-sharp fully diminished seventh chord which embellishes dominant C-sharp major, which functions as the catalyst for a new set of vocal entrance sequences. The resolution, and repose it creates, leads to another fully diminished a-sharp chord in m. 26, at which point he repeats the two measure process again. Eventually an e-sharp fully diminished six-four chord emerges returning to f-sharp major for a brief codetta.
Example 5:
Robert Schumann, op. 28 no. 2, mm. 22-29

Notes: Schumann uses contrapuntal texture for his contrasting section in mm.24-30. In example 5, voice entrances are circled and numbered. Even though this material sounds as though a new tonic has occurred, the basic harmonic scheme of F-sharp major remains. The combination of the new texture which is based on embellishing tones of the V and IV, new melodic contour, and short repose (m. 26, 28).

The harmonic framework becomes shrouded by chromatic invention throughout Part C. By further examining Schumann's use of chromatic chords; in

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{C/5ths: } \left[ \text{D#M7 G#m F#M F#M7 BM} \right] \text{ B#7 and extension vii}^* \rightarrow \text{imitation} \\
\text{Tonality: V7/ii ii I V7/IV IV vii}^*7/V-------------------------------
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Tonality: } \rightarrow \text{I64V42 vii}^*7/IV \text{ imitation} \rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow \text{I IV V65/vi vi V I64 vii}^*64
\end{array}
\]
the bass notes of the diminished chords in mm. 24, 26, 27, and 29, a pattern emerges of b-sharp, a-sharp, g double-sharp, and e-sharp resulting in a descending motion. Other than the last diminished chord, which is resolved as seven diminished chords usually do, Schumann uses these chords to delay expected resolutions, subsequently, changing the melody chromatically. The motion these chords create completes the upward motion of the Part C, contrasting with the downward motion of the Part B, and further serve to balance the piece as a whole. These passages, and the skewed sense of tonic they contain, cause the return of the Part A-Codetta in m. 31 to emerge with a more intimate beauty and greater sense of arrival.

**FORM AND METRICAL ORGANIZATION**

The form and metrical organization in the Romance is a significant representation of Schumann’s unique contribution to Romantic music. He demonstrates the element of uncertainty by using formal structure techniques that work within the character piece genre while predicting the arrival of his Lieder construction, using rhythmic devices to obscure the beat creating a rhythmic polyphony, and by using irregular segments to prevent predictability.

**Form**

Schumann’s character piece works are considered to be his largest musical contributions. According to Kirby, the elements of a character-piece are: “simplicity of form, the ternary plan being found in most, prevailing lyricism, coloristic aspect of harmonic changes⁴, and (in Romantic-Era character-piece) the

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intentional descriptive conveyance of extra musical associations."\textsuperscript{5} The Romance has been found to contain all of these elements; however the form of this piece in discussion is an exception to the ternary principle of character piece format.

While a case can be made that the Romance is in ternary form, describing the sections as such: Statement(mm. 1-8), Contrast(mm. 9-17), Restatement(18-28), and codetta(mm. 31-34); this author believes a more accurate description of the Romance in rondo format prevails, classifying the sections as such:

Statement(mm. 1-8), first Contrast(mm. 9-19\{mm.17-19 extension\}), Restatement(18-24), second Contrast(24-31), and brief Restatement, codetta(mm. 31-34).

The characteristics of the main theme qualify it as a unit; homophonic texture, rhythmic motive, melodic contour within the duet, continued pedal-point, and stable harmonic structure. Technically, it is an eight measure, symmetrical, modulating, parallel period which is repeated, marked with an imperfect authentic cadence in F-sharp Major at m. 4 and another in C-sharp Major at m. 8. The first phrase (mm.1-4) is expository in nature, the second phrase (mm.5-8) transitional in nature. Therefore, the main theme can be described as such:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Part A} & \\
\hline
||: I-----------------------V-----------------------------:|| & \\
\hline
Phrase & Phrase \\
mm.1-4 & mm.5-8 \\
Sub. (2+2) & Transitional \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textbf{Figure 1:}
Robert Schumann, op.28 no.2, mm.1-8

\textsuperscript{5} Kirby, \textit{Music for Piano}, 167.
The first contrast section is developmental in nature. It remains in homophonic texture; however the melodic contour of the duet changes as well as the placement of the melody to the outside voice, the pedal-point disappears, two-voice counterpoint occurs within the melody voices, and the harmonic structure becomes skewed as chromatic sequences are explored. Technically, it is a nine measure, asymmetrical, modulating phrase group beginning in C-sharp minor and is marked with imperfect authentic cadences in C-sharp minor at m. 13, a delayed imperfect authentic cadence at beat four at m. 19. Therefore, the first contrast can be described as such:

| Part B |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Phrase          | Phrases         |
| mm. 9-12        | mm.13-19        |
| Sub. (2+2)      | 5(1+1+1+1+1)    |
| Developmental   | Developmental   |
|                 | Terminative/Expository |

Figure 2:
Robert Schumann, op.28 no.2, mm.9-19

The return of the main theme begins at m.18; however, it is placed in the position of a cadential 6-4 chord that does not resolve completely until the cadence in m. 19. The homophonic texture, melodic contour, rhythmic motive, and pedal point of the main theme resume, with the exception of the expected return of the second phrase of mm. 5-8. Instead, Schumann employs a “stretto-like” technique, overlapping the voices and shortening the phrase. Technically, this unit is an asymmetrical, non-modulating period that ends in a deceptive
resolution of B-sharp fully diminished seven of the dominant, further marked by a
ermata in m. 24. Therefore, the return of part A can be described as such:

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{Part A-Return} \\
| I-----------------------V------------------------| \\
\text{Phrase} & \text{Phrase} \\
\text{mm.18-21} & \text{mm.22-24} \\
\text{Expository} & \text{Transitional}
\end{array}
\]

Figure 3:
Robert Schumann, op.28 no.2, mm.18-24

After a well marked cadential moment in m. 24 Schumann introduces new
material, the contrapuntal texture and harmonies non-reminiscent of previous
material; from this we can postulate that Schumann conceived this as a
contrasting unit. The voices begin in imitation changing the texture to
polyphonic; Schumann brings the voices together for brief reposes, and then
repeats the process providing a sequence of events that negate the “feel” of a
stable tonic. This phrase group is marked by an imperfect authentic cadence at
the downbeat of m. 30, which is extended resulting in the only perfect authentic
cadence of the piece at the downbeat of m. 31. Technically, this unit is a non-
modulating phrase group that has the underlying harmonic structure of F-sharp
major, and yet serves a dominant function providing both tension and motion
towards the final main theme reprise. Therefore, Part C can be described as such:

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{Part C} \\
| V-----------------------------------------I------------------------------| \\
\text{Phrases} & \text{Phrase} \\
\text{mm. 24-29} & \text{mm.29-30} \\
\text{Sub. 3(mm.24-26) +4(mm.26-29)} & \\
\text{Developmental} & \text{Terminative}
\end{array}
\]

Figure 4:
Robert Schumann, op.28 no.2, mm.24-30
The final return of main theme material occurs in from mm. 31-34. The original texture and melodic contour return; however, the complete accompaniment figure does not. It consists of the main theme sub-group phrase of mm.1-2, and then is extended in melodic and cadential repetition. Technically, this is a four measure phrase that alludes to both the antecedent and consequence, both expository and terminative. Therefore, Part A-Codetta can be described as such:

Part A-Codetta
|I-------------------------||
Phrase
mm. 31-34
Sub. (2+2)
Expository/Terminative

Figure 5:
Robert Schumann, op.28 no.2, mm.31-34

Part A-Codetta presents difficulties within the rondo format analysis, lacking the dimension the main theme contains; most instrumental pieces in rondo form repeat the complete main theme at each return. At this juncture, the author would suggest that the Romance is similar to his Lieder. It is important to remember that Schumann was nearing the end of his piano composition decade in 1939 when the Romance was written. The next year Lieder became his main focus. In 1840, Schumann composed Der Soldat, Op. 40 no. 3 (Appendix B), which shares many similarities with the Romance. In Der Soldat, Schumann devises a format of piano prelude, verse, piano refrain, verse and piano postlude, he uses rhythmic device for the main theme and “morphs” it on each subsequent return, he changes the piano
texture significantly for the last verse, and he provides a surprise sequence directly before the abbreviated and changed postlude. Due to these similarities, an appropriate proposal can be made that during the time the Romance was written, Schumann had already devised or was in the process of developing a scheme that he would employ during next decade. Given the fact the Romance is filled with melodic contour development, exhibits the melody in the form of a duet, and the formal organization; one could conjecture that it is vocally conceived and does not fall directly into the category of instrumental formal organization. The form of the Romance is a rondo, however, it also indicates Schumann’s future Lieder format.

Rhythmic Devices

One of Schumann's unique gifts, and a characteristic that classifies him as a Romantic composer in the most traditional sense, was his use of rhythmic polyphony. As the romantic composers expanded the classical forms using expression and passionate means; Schumann's unique compositional genius further expanded on the romantic forms using rhythmic devices, specifically his metrical divisions, to create a sense of ambiguity within his works.

Harold Krebs addresses metrical conflict in his article “Robert Schumann's Metrical Revisions” for the Music Theory Spectrum. He cites resources found within Schumann's finished compositions, as well as his original sketches, as proof that the composer intended this “metrical conflict” as a means to provide section contrast, and as to unite relationships. The Romance in discussion captures the intentional elements of Schumann's rhythmical devices, which

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emerges from his use of hemiola, tied notes, syncopations which obscure the beat by alternating between subdivisions of two, three, or more.

In the Romance, written in 6-8 time, in Part A the rhythm is felt in two in mm. 1-4 and is altered by hemiola in mm. 5-8 drawing new attention to the third eighth-note beat of the measure, indicated by accent marks. In the Part A return the meter is established once again in two, and then altered by hemiola in mm. 22-24. Schumann uses hemiola in the context of a stable theme, to provide an element of unrest. See Example 6.

Example 6:
Robert Schumann, op. 28 no. 2 mm. 1-2, 5-6
In addition to melody and tonality, he uses rhythm to add uncertainty in the B section. The rhythmic pulse is felt in three in mm. 9-15, and in six in m. 16. See Example 7. The syncopations and off beat octaves in the bass provide an expanded sense of rhythmic uncertainty within the sequential harmonic scheme.

Example 7:
Robert Schumann, op. 28 no. 2 m. 16

Notes: As Part B progresses through the chromatic sequences, Schumann uses rhythmic variations to change the “big-beat” feel from two, to three, and eventually to six in m. 16.

Irregular segments

Schumann’s Romance contains several irregular segments that lend to the element of unpredictability. Schumann did this to prevent monotony due the nature of the setting; the piece is slow, dynamics are soft, and the accompaniment of the main theme is repetitive. Structurally, Part A and the Part A-Codetta are the only sections of this piece containing predictable phrasing treatment. Further examination of the sub-phrase groupings contained in Part B, Return of A, and C, reveals that Schumann devised this aspect of the Romance to lend an unpredictable element.
Phrase sub-groups graphed by Section

Part B: measure 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19
       (2) + (2) + (1) + (1) + (1) + (1) + (1) + (2)
↑predictable↑  ↑unexpected↑  ↑surprise↑

Part A-return: measure 18 19 20 21 22 23 24
       4 (2) + (2) + (3)
↑expected↑  ↑unexpected↑

Part C: measure 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
       (3) + (4) (2)
↑new↑  ↑unexpected↑  ↑what?↑

Figure 6:
Robert Schumann, op.28 no.2, mm.9-30

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined and discussed the F-Sharp Major Romance by Robert Schumann representative of the 19th Century prevailing aesthetic due to the composer’s treatment of harmonic structure, metrical tension, and formal development; finding, that the essence of Schumann’s Romance, is uncertainty.
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APPENDIX


F# Major:
I   (V-V7  I64  vi65  V) I   I   (V7IV  I64  vi65  V) I

[C/Vths:D#M7  G#m  (vii)  C#M7  F#M] V7/ii  ii  C#M:V65  I  (vii/iii)  I  V7  I

D# Major:
IV  V7  i6  (ii6)  i6  V42  i6  (ii)  C#M:ii7/V  I  ii6  i64  V42  i6(ii)  I

ch series: e#65 → d#43 → g#65 → c#7 → a#65 → N64 → Fr6 | comb cx7  b#65
F#M: I₆₄  (V  V₇)  I₆₄  (vi₆₅)  V  I  I  (V₇ IV  I₆₄  vi₆₅  V)  I

[C/Vths: D#M7  G#m  F#M  F#M7 BM7]  B#₇ and extension vii₇ → imitation

→→ I₆₄V₄₂ vii₇/IV extension→ → → I  IV  V₆₅/vi  vi  V  I₁₆₄  vii₇₁₆₄

I  (vii₁₆₄)I  V₇/V  I  (V  V₇  I₁₆₄  vi₆₅)  V  I  V  I  V  I₁₆₄  →  I
Der Soldat.
Soldaten.

N° 3.

Nicht zu langsam.

geht bei ge-dämpfter Trom.-mel Klang. Wie weit noch die Stüt.zte, der Weg wie lang! O
dam.pe.de Heirzler Trom.mer-ne gane. Ak skal vi da al driq til Ste.-det nane. At

wür' er zur Ruh und Al.-les ver-heim Ich glaub', es bricht niemals Herz ent-zwei. Ich
han kan fine Ro i sin Ki.-ste! Jeg troer mit Hjer-te vil bri-ste! Jeg

hab' in der Welt nur ihn ge-liebt, nur ihn, dem jetzt man den Tod doch gieht. Bei
hau-de i Ver.den en e-ne-ste Ven.Ham er det, man brin-ger til Do-den hen. Med

klin-gen-de Spilgennem Gu-den, Oy jeg er mei i Pa-ra-den.

Nun schaut er auf zum letz-ten-mal in For-sid-ste Gängskner han nu Guds Sod, Der

Get-fles Son-ne freu-di-gen Strahl. Nun bin-den sie ihm die Au-gen zu. Dir-

sid der han alt-puu Do-deus Stol de bin-de haa fast til Per-len, For-

R.8.128.
schenke Gott die ewige Ruh!

Es haben dann Neum wohl ausgelegt, acht

Kugeln haben vorbei gefegt; sie zitterten alle vor Jammer und Schmerz.

ich aber, ich traf, ich traf ihn mitten in das Herz!

Recit.