friend, the German poet Heinrich Heine. In many respects, this symphony, "tightly" organized in a manner typical of Schumann, is a polemical counter-assault against the Romantic perversions of such composers as Hector Berlioz, and a defense of the polyphonic method of J.S. Bach. (For those who doubt Schumann's indebtedness to Bach, it is a wonderful discovery to see how many of his *Lieder* playfully borrow piano accompaniments from Bach's keyboard works.)

In the symphony, the orchestra is organized around a polyphonic dialogue, in which modal and harmonic development unfold in a clear pathway, culminating in the final movement, in a surprisingly energetic fugue that provokes the listener to think of another composer, the Ludwig van Beethoven whom Schumann so revered. Because much of the buildup to that point is not as technically demanding as Beethoven's own symphonies, the piece is perfect for developing an orchestra's capability to "vocalize" musical ideas from one section across to another. Schiff gained ground as even the string players began to realize that such designations as "soft" and "loud" are not traffic signals on a musical score, but part of a musical language based on human singing.

The final composition of the evening was Beethoven's first piano concerto, Opus 15 in C major. Because of the work done on the Schumann, the Beethoven performance was nearly spectacular. The transition between the first and second movements, from humor to melancholy, successfully conveyed Beethoven's grasp, even in this composition written in his youth, of the Schillerian concept of the *Sublime*. The energy-throughput in the orchestra kept improving; the soloist gave of himself to the fullest; and the young Beethoven's eternal Promethean view of man filled the hall.

In sum, the concert was truly an experience to remember. Thank you András Schiff, welcome to America, and please come back many times more.

*—Renee Sigerson*

*András Schiff was last interviewed in Fidelio in the Winter/Spring 2002 issue (Vol. XI, No. 1-2).*

## Schumann's Fourth Symphony in D Minor

Unlike other composers, Robert Schumann often concentrated on the problem of one musical medium at a time. His first 23 pieces were all for solo piano. In the year 1840, he concentrated on the Classical *Lied,* producing all of his great song cycles. The following year, he turned his attention to orchestral writing, producing his first two symphonies, his piano concerto, and other works. Ten years later, he revised his Second Symphony, and it became known as his Fourth.

Although Johannes Brahms appears to have preferred the earlier version (he called the later one "overdressed"), Clara Schumann decided to publish only the later version.

The work represents Schumann's struggle to master the discoveries of Beethoven, particularly his Fifth Symphony, but also J.S. Bach, of whom Schumann said: "He knew a million times more than we imagine."

Schumann referred to this work as a "symphony in one movement." As in Beethoven's more advanced works, the movements proceed directly into one another. The transition from the third movement to the fourth is especially powerful, and invokes the transition from the third to the fourth movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

Beethoven's Fifth represented a great step forward in his mastery of "Motivführung." A four-note germ, or "cell," that opens the work, recurs in ironically different forms throughout the entire symphony. The entire symphony flows from a "germ" that is not the four notes, as notes *per se,* but a concept in the composer's mind. Beethoven's mastery of the problem of the "One and the Many," allowed him to develop a more powerfully differentiated piece (the Many), but at the same time a more coherent one, and from a much more unified concept of

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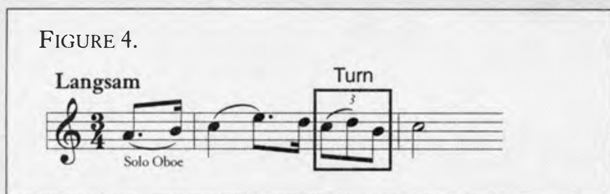

FIGURE 4.

FIGURE 5.

change (the One).

In this "symphony in one movement," Schumann was determined to master that principle. After a powerful slow introduction in D minor, the main subject proceeds in groups of four sixteenth notes, which take different forms, including a vocal "turn" [SEE Figure 1]. This idea dominates the first movement, and soon becomes an *appoggiatura,* another idea from the *bel canto* voice [SEE Figure 2]; but it also comes back, in recognizable form, in the transition to and opening of the fourth movement [SEE Figure 3], which is itself a direct quote from the first.

More becomes clear, when you discover the role that these *bel canto* turns play throughout the work, such as in the song for solo oboe in the second movement [SEE Figure 4]. See if you can discover for yourself, the Bach-like transformation of the turn in Figure 1, and the *appoggiatura* in Figure 2, in another "theme" from the first movement [SEE Figure 5].

Then, look at the seemingly completely different slow introduction [SEE Figure 6]. Not only does it end with a turn, but the first six notes, F-E-D-C♯-D-E, bear a resemblance to these six notes that stand out from the main "subject" [SEE Figure 7]. These first six notes of the introduction also undergo an ironic transformation from slow and serious, to quick and playful, in the third movement scherzo [SEE Figure 8]. The scherzo also quotes the characteristic intervals of Bach's *Musical Offering,* and the pieces it inspired by Mozart and Beethoven [SEE Figure 9].

All this barely scratches the surface, and does not even look at polyphonic ironies. Those inclined to investigate farther, will find, more and more, how the work unfolds from a single, ironic concept.

For about 25 years, this reviewer has used a 1953 performance by Wilhelm Fürtwangler as a metric for all other performances. Compared to Fürtwangler, most performances are unlistenable: they treat the symphony as a lightweight piece, and play it far too quickly. (Fürtwangler told his orchestra, that there was nothing to this piece if simply rattled off.) Particularly bad are those of the "period-instrument/period-practice" people, such as Nikolaus Harnoncourt and Roy Goodman, who make a bloody mess of the music. Harnoncourt produced a purported version of the early 1841 edition, which only succeeds in castrating Schumann.

András Schiff's performance, although different from Fürtwangler's, was in the same spirit, and does not suffer by comparison.

*—Fred Haight*

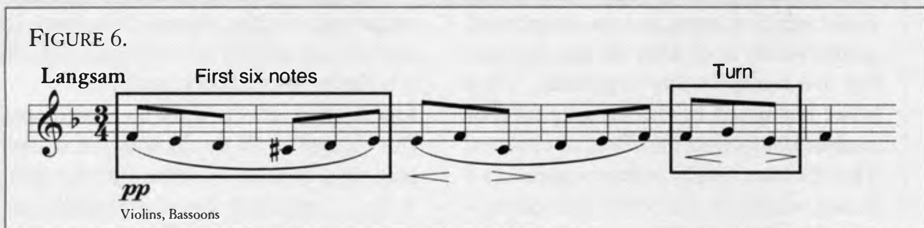

FIGURE 6.

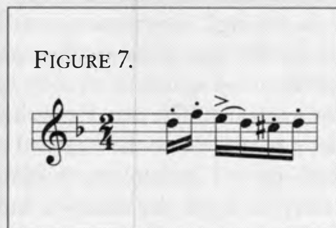
FIGURE 7.

FIGURE 8.

FIGURE 9.

Music typesetting by John Sigerson