Schumann’s Monument to Beethoven

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A real tradition is not the relic of a past that is irretrievably gone; it is a living force that animates and informs the present.

—Igor Stravinsky

On 8 April 1836, the Neue Zeitschrift für Musik [hereafter NZfM] carried on its front page an “appeal to admirers of Beethoven.” The authors of the article, the Bonner Verein für Beethovens Monument, announced that a monument to Beethoven was to be erected in Bonn and solicited financial aid, whether in the form of private donations or the proceeds from benefit concerts and the like, from all those who venerated the memory of the great composer. The Verein had as its president the influential literary critic A. W. von Schlegel, and Liszt, although not a committee member, played an important role, not least in the three-day music festival which marked the unveiling of the monument on the Münsterplatz in August 1845.

Another enthusiastic supporter of the project was the editor of the NZfM, Robert Schumann, who decided that he could best contribute by donating the proceeds from a new composition. In a Tagebuch entry dated 9 September 1836, he noted that he had had “an idea for a contribution for Beethoven,” and in December of the same year, he recorded that, by the beginning of that month, his “sonata for Beethoven” was


2For the Aufruf an die Verehrer Beethoven’s, dated “Bonn, an Beethovens Geburtstage, den 17. December 1835,” see NZfM 4 (1836), 121–22. An almost identical copy of the notice appeared in the Leipzig Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung 38 (1836), 247. The NZfM continued to publish news relating to the monument during the following years; initial details of the “Inauguration des Beethoven-Monuments” appeared in 23 (1845), 28. For a review of the inaugural festivities, see AmZ 47 (1845), 572–76 and 589–97.
complete down to the last detail. As is well known, this projected “sonata” eventually became the Fantasie, op. 17, which was published in April 1839 with a dedication to Liszt. By this time, it was largely shorn of any outward Beethovenian connections, although many writers note the apparent quotation of a phrase from the last song of Beethoven’s cycle An die ferne Geliebte in the first movement, mm. 295–97.

Schumann’s love of musical allusion, both to his own and other composers’ music, need not be elaborated here; the Beethoven reference in the Fantasie is by no means an isolated occurrence. Nor should his enthusiasm for the planned Beethoven monument come as any surprise, for in Schumann’s view, the Romantic movement to which he and other composers of the 1830s subscribed had its very origins in Beethoven. Writing in the NZfM in 1839, Schumann more than once revealed his firm belief in the continuing relevance of the Beethovenian instrumental tradition to contemporary composition. In a review of Henselt’s Etudes, op. 5, for instance, he urged the composer to resist the temptation to concentrate on such small-scale genres; instead, he advised Henselt “to turn to the higher forms, to the sonata, the concerto, or to larger creations of his own.” The exhortation not to remain hidebound by tradition but to reinterpret it creatively is echoed in another review, this time dealing with a group of piano sonatas. Schumann suggested that the sonata was a form which appeared now to have run its course. This, he claimed, was as it should be: “we ought not to repeat the same thing for centuries, but should also think about creating something new.” This stance may bear on his changing conception of his own op. 17, at first entitled “sonata” but published [in the same year as these two reviews] as a Fantasie.

The years 1838–39 saw Schumann himself turning to the “higher forms,” and in particular to the string quartet. In a letter to Clara dated 11 February 1838, he wrote, “For the past four weeks I’ve done almost nothing except to compose. . . . Much lies within me yet. . . . I will write three violin quartets next.” In a Tagebuch entry covering the period from 25 February to 5 March, he recorded his continuing compositional activity and “excitement about quartets.” The quartet project is mentioned in subsequent letters between Schumann and Clara, and also in the Tagebuch entries for late June. But the sketches for these works, if they existed, have not survived.

For further compositional history of op. 17, see Alan Walker, “Schumann, Liszt and the C Major Fantasie, op. 17: A Declining Relationship,” Music and Letters 60 (1979), 156–65. While the Beethoven “quotation” is a generally accepted fact about the first movement of the Fantasie, it is important to realize that its true status is rather precarious. Firstly, there is no evidence that Schumann himself intended to quote An die ferne Geliebte at this or any other point in the work. Ironically, he did admit to a reference to the Adagio of the Seventh Symphony in the third movement (originally entitled “Palmen”) of the Fantasie. See his letter to the publisher Kistner dated 19 December 1836, quoted in Josef Wilhelm von Wasielewski, Robert Schumann: Eine Biographie, ed. Dr. Waldemar von Wasielewski [4th edn. Leipzig, 1906], p. 169. Despite the view of Watler Dahms (Schumann [Berlin and Leipzig, 1916], pp. 286–87), any such reference was apparently excised during 1838, when Schumann revised the work prior to publication. Secondly, even if the passage at the end of the first movement of the Fantasie does derive from the final song of An die ferne Geliebte, it can hardly be called a “quotation” in the proper sense of that term; Schumann is alluding, even recomposing here, but not simply quoting. The earliest reference to the Schumann-Beethoven relationship is in Hermann Abert, Robert Schumann (2nd edn. Berlin, 1910), p. 64.


6See Leon B. Plantinga, Schumann as Critic [New Haven, 1967], p. 181: “Schumann long took for granted that the real future for the romantic movement, founded [he believed] by Beethoven, lay in the cultivation of Beethoven’s kind of music: the large instrumental forms.”


May, he wrote, “I very much share your opinions on Beethoven’s last quartets; the one in A minor is simply heavenly, and the Adagio is clear”; on 28 May, he told Hirschbach, “I received your preface yesterday, and liked a great deal in it very much”; and on 30 June, he apologized for not having written to Hirschbach sooner and explained that “the blame lies with some important events which will decide my whole life. I am now living through some of Beethoven's [last] quartets in the truest sense, and feel even the love and hate in them.”

In this last letter, Schumann was alluding to his growing difficulties in obtaining permission to marry Clara; on 30 June, the date of the letter to Hirschbach, he had instigated legal proceedings which would enable Clara to marry without her father's consent. It is clear that the emotional turmoil which the planning of these “important events” brought upon Schumann left him with little time or energy for composition: he had recently been attempting string quartet composition once again. In the letter of 28 May, quoted above, he told Hirschbach, “I am thinking of writing quartets this summer”, to Clara he wrote on 13 June: “aren’t I really hardworking now? But I can’t get down to any composition at all; I’ve begun two quartets—I can tell you, as good as Haydn—but now I have no time or inner calm—not even

(KGA, I, 121): “Aber Clara, was ist denn mit Dir geworden? Du schreibst, ich solle Quartetten machen—aber bitte recht klar—das klingt ja wie von einem Dresdner Fräulein.” He mentions quartet writing again in April (KGA, I, 140): “Dann schrieb ich ein Paar Violinquartette im Sommer, von denen ich Dir schon sagte.” For the Tagebuch entries, see Tagebücher II, p. 51: “Immer schöne compostirt un[nd] gelebt—Quertettbegeisterung.” and the related note on p. 475; also p. 58: “Am 1sten Juni Freitag... . Nichts compostirt die Zeit über—zum Quartett angesetzt. . . . Bis 24sten Juni Sonntag... . Nachmittag Quartett—an Componiren nicht zu denken.” For an important letter from Hirschbach to Schumann in which the former outlines something of his compositional aesthetic, see Briefe und Gedichte aus dem Album Robert und Clara Schumanns, ed. Wolfgang Boetticher (Leipzig, 1979), pp. 86–87, and the accompanying commentary on pp. 269–70. See also Schumann’s letter to Clara dated 13 July 1838 (KGA, I, 201–02): “Eine grosse Erscheinung ist diese Woche an mir vorübergegangen. Du wirst den Namen in der Zeitungscrift gelehen—Hirschbach... . Vorgestern machten wir Quartette von ihm; im Satz mangelhaft... . Die Formen ganz neu... . Die kleinen Fehler überhöht man bei solcher ordentlich und lustvollsten Phantasie.” For Schumann’s two reviews, see NZfM 9 (1838), 51–52, and 16 (1842), 159–60, where Schumann writes that “Beethoven’s letzte Quartette gelten ihm erst als Anfänge einer neuen poetischen Aera.” On Schumann’s acquaintance with Hirschbach, see Robert Pessenlehner, Herrmann Hirschbach. Der Kritiker und Künstler (Regensburg, 1932); and Plantinga, Schumann as Critic, pp. 95–96 and 183–87. (As Plantinga notes, Schumann’s 1842 review is a good deal less enthusiastic than that of 1838.)

9Hirschbach, “Ueber Beethoven’s letzte Streichquartette: Zur Einleitung,” NZfM 11 (1839), 5–6; the remaining three articles appeared on pp. 9–10 (op. 132), 13–14 (op. 131 [called op. 125] and op. 135), and 49–51 (op. 127 and 130).
days ahead bring any." A contemporary Tagebuch entry reinforces this point and also suggests that Schumann was not yet confident of his ability to tackle the string quartet medium: "I started a quartet again yesterday; but I lack the courage and the peace necessary for such work." It was not until 1842 that Schumann succeeded in completing his only three string quartets, published as op. 41; nevertheless, in 1839 he did at least get as far as sketching the openings of the two projected works, in E♭ and

Example 1

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15Tagebücher II, p. 91: “Ein Quartett fing ich wieder gestern an, es fehlt mir doch der Muth, doch auch die Ruhe zu solcher Arbeit.” “Yesterday” was presumably 9 June, for on that date Schumann wrote to Clara, saying first, “Mein Herzensmädchen, ich muss heute schliessen, das Quartett kommt in einigen Minuten” and later “Das Quartett scheint nicht kommen zu wollen” (KGA. II, 559 and 560).
D major (ex. 1). And while he may optimistically have compared his own efforts with Haydn, there can be little doubt that foremost in Schumann's mind during May and June 1839 were the late string quartets of Beethoven, works which he claimed to be "living through" in the letter to Hirschbach quoted above.

The letter to Hirschbach, however, is less famous for its references to Beethoven's music or to Schumann's premarital difficulties than for another sentence, in which Schumann suggested: "You should write more for the voice. Or are you perhaps like me, who all my life have ranked vocal compositions beneath instrumental music and never considered them a great art?" This fits well with the picture developed above of Schumann's attitude as a critic—witness his advice to Henselt—and is also consonant with his preoccupation with the string quartet around this time. But many...

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Example 1 (continued)

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16The sketches transcribed in ex. 1 are preserved in Berlin, Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, Mus. ms. autogr. 36. Also from 1839 there survive sketches for a piano concerto in D minor; see Georg Eismann, "Nachweis der internationalen Standorte von Notenautographen Robert Schumanns," Sammelbände der Robert-Schumann-Gesellschaft 2 (Leipzig, 1967), 35. The concerto project is mentioned in a number of letters written to Clara in January and February 1839 (see KGA, II).

writers have pointed out that it ill accords with the miraculous outpouring of Lieder in the following year, 1840.\(^{18}\) How is Schumann’s low opinion of vocal composition to be reconciled with *Dichterliebe, Frauenliebe und -leben, the Liederkreis*, op. 39, and so many other works of 1840? Contrast with the statement to Hirschbach on 30 June 1839 the following, written in a letter dated 19 February 1840 to the writer and critic Gustav Adolph Keverstein:

I can scarcely tell you how enjoyable it is to write for the voice, compared with instrumental composition, and what a ferment I am in as I sit at work. Quite new things have occurred to me, and I am even thinking of an opera, but that of course will only be possible once I am completely rid of editing [the *NZfM*].\(^{19}\)

It may be, of course, that Schumann’s *volte-face* needs no further explanation: after all, a composer may change his mind. Moreover, Schumann’s own admission that in mid-1839 he was still timid about writing for string quartet may adequately account for his sudden switch to vocal composition: he did not yet feel ready to tackle the “higher forms” bequeathed by Beethoven. But a more intriguing possibility is that the rejection of instrumental music in favor of Lieder may not be as absolute as has hitherto been assumed. It is important to realize that Schumann’s attitude to the Beethovenian tradition of instrumental music was not one of pious observance or slavish devotion: Henselt should “turn to the higher forms . . . or to larger creations of his own”; similarly, “we ought not to repeat the same thing for centuries, but should think about creating something new” (italics mine). What I am suggesting is that Schumann did not simply abandon the “higher forms” in 1840, but set about reinterpreting them in order to create “something new.” More particularly, I wish to suggest that one of the greatest vocal compositions of 1840—the song cycle *Dichterliebe*—represents Schumann’s creative response to an instrumental work which he must have regarded as immensely significant for himself and the composers of his own generation: Beethoven’s String Quartet in C\# Minor, op. 131.\(^{20}\)

As we have already seen, all the late quartets of Beethoven were much in Schumann’s mind in 1839, the year before the composition of *Dichterliebe*. But he had been familiar with the C\#-Minor Quartet for some time: his *Tagebuch* records that he first heard it on 11 November 1837.\(^{21}\) It may have been this first encounter which he recalled together with a performance of the E\#-Major Quartet, op. 127, in a “Review of Leipzig Musical Life in Winter 1837–38” published in the *NZfM* in the latter year:

We can find no words to describe the greatness [of these two quartets]. Along with some choral and organ works of Sebastian Bach they seem to me to mark the furthest limits yet attained by human art and imagination. Verbal interpretation and commentary are unavailing here, as already observed.\(^{22}\)

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\(^{18}\)Plantinga, *Schumann as Critic*, pp. 179–83, speaks of “Schumann’s Conversion to Vocal Music.” Rufus E. Hallmark, *The Genesis of Schumann’s Dichterliebe: A Source Study* [Ann Arbor, 1979], pp. 1–3, argues that Schumann’s interest in composing an opera may have precipitated his sudden turn to song composition, but concludes that “no single explanation of the Liederyahrnomenon is satisfactory.”


While Schumann was lost for words, Hirschbach had no such problems, as his articles for the _NZJfM_ plainly show. The article dealing with the C-sharp-Minor Quartet appeared in the issue for 12 July 1839. Hirschbach’s account, as of the other quartets, is full of praise, and more than once he commends the work’s comprehensibility: “It would be difficult to find [a work] which is superficially so forbidding and yet so easy to understand as this.”23

II

To demonstrate the influence of one work of art on another is all too often a delicate and frustrating matter. As Charles Rosen puts it, “the most important form of influence is that which provokes the most original and most personal work.”24 Of the internal musical evidence presented below, any single strand would be insufficient to support a suggested relationship between _Dichterliebe_ and the C-sharp-Minor Quartet; taken altogether, however, the evidence is impressive.

Let us begin in reverse, not by demonstrating Schumann’s indebtedness to Beethoven but by considering one respect in which the structure of the C-sharp-Minor Quartet aspires to that of a song cycle. The seven-movement structure of the quartet, unusual in itself, is rendered more so by the subtle connections which Beethoven establishes between the opening of one movement and the beginning of the next. The sonorous major triad at the end of the fugue is pared down until only the tonic note remains; the first violin and viola each transfer their C sharp an octave, and the same upward shift, now applied to D, becomes the opening gesture of the Allegro molto vivace. The fifth of the tonic triad is omitted at the end of this movement, and the remaining dyad F sharp/D is carried over to become the upper third of the B-minor triad with which the Allegro moderato begins. This short movement prepares the dominant of A, the key of the theme and variations (Andante ma non troppo e molto cantabile) which forms the central, fourth movement of the quartet. This substantial movement is the only one that is clearly separated from what follows; the separation is marked visually by the “heavy” double bar line, which separates the variation movement from the following Presto, and aurally by the discontinuities of register, texture, and dynamics (high-register pizzicato chords, piano, to low-register arco solo triadic figure, forte).25 The G sharp-minor tonality of the penultimate movement (Adagio quasi un poco andante) is prepared by the threefold reiteration of G sharp at the end of the Presto (moreover, the G sharp minor stands in a mediant relationship to E, the key of the Presto, just as the B-minor opening of the Allegro moderato is heard as the submediant of the preceding D major); and this penultimate movement eventually establishes the dominant of C sharp minor in preparation for the long-awaited return to that key at the beginning of the finale (Allegro).

These carefully controlled connections between movements make of the C-sharp-Minor Quartet “a work which is neither, strictly speaking, one long movement nor a succession of independent movements”26—a view which is supported by Beethoven’s unconventional decision to number each movement in the score. Now _Dichterliebe_ occupies the same grey area in formal terms, being at once a collection of sixteen individual songs and a single, continuous whole. But although one would expect continuity to be provided simply by the narrative thread in a song cycle of this sort, Schumann...
mann, like Beethoven, takes great pains to forge subtle musical links between adjacent songs. The celebrated unresolved dominant seventh in F♯ minor at the end of Song 1 is “resolved” by the passing F♯-minor harmony on the second beat of m. 1 in Song 2; the piano introduction to Song 9 is anticipated at the end of Song 8 (mm. 32–35; see ex. 2), the middle-register b♭ at the end of the extended piano postlude to Song 12 is picked up by the singer at the beginning of Song 13, and so on. These few examples merely give an idea of the kinds of connection which Schumann creates between almost every adjacent pair of songs in Dichterliebe.

Thus far, I have concentrated on the sense of connection between the individual parts of the C♯-Minor Quartet and Dichterliebe. But we should also consider the way in which Beethoven and Schumann articulate these connected wholes. As already observed, the variation movement of the quartet forms the centerpiece of the work and is the only movement to be distinctly separated from what follows. We might, then, think of the quartet as falling into two roughly equal halves (movements 1–4; movements 5–7); alternatively, we might think of a tonal arch, C♯–A–C♯, formed by the tonic keys of the outer and central movements.

Both these ways of segmenting the C♯-Minor Quartet are pertinent as well to the structure of Dichterliebe. Since it consists of an even number of songs, Dichterliebe cannot have a central movement: the “center” of the work falls properly between Songs 8 and 9. And yet the connection between these two songs is unique in the cycle: the way in which the opening of Song 9 grows audibly from the closing measures of Song 8 (ex. 2 below) makes of them a closely connected pair standing centrally between Songs 1–7 on one side and Songs 10–16 on the other. The connection is strengthened by the fact that Song 8 is in A minor while Song 9 begins on and repeatedly stresses A as the dominant of D minor. And since Song 1 is framed by a seventh chord on C♯ (more of this below) while Song 16 and its piano postlude are in C♯ minor and C♯/D♭ major respectively, the tonal arch C♯–A–C♯ may be said to span the outer and central movements of Dichterliebe as well as those of the C♯-Minor Quartet.28


28Indeed, Schumann’s choice of keys in Dichterliebe bears closer comparison with Beethoven’s in the C♯-Minor Quartet. Consider the tonal scheme of the quartet: C♯–D–[b–V/A]–A–E–g♯–C♯. In Dichterliebe, the succession C♯–D–♭ spans Songs 1, 3, and 5, with A and G intervening in Songs 2 and 4. A further similarity concerns the position
The tonal ambiguity of Song 1 has been much discussed and need not be dwelt upon here.29 Less often remarked is the fact that a comparable ambiguity distinguishes Song 9. Ostensibly in D minor, there is in fact surprisingly little real tonic emphasis in the song. It begins squarely on the dominant, as remarked above; but following the eight-measure dominant pedal, there is only a passing glance at the tonic (m. 9) as the music drives on around the circle of fifths to B♭, following which there is a cadence in F. (This progression, V/D minor–I/F major, runs parallel to that in Song 1, mm. 1–6: V/F♯ minor–I/A major.) Not that this arrival at the relative major provides any stability: mm. 1–16 are now transposed down a fifth and repeated in mm. 17–32, so that the first verse ends with a cadence in B♭ major in m. 32. A two-measure link brings the harmony back to the dominant of D minor, whereupon the entire process is repeated for the second verse. In m. 69 it begins again, in the piano alone. This time, however, things go differently. After the first four-measure phrase (mm. 69–72; cf. 1–4), the first phrase of the transposed version (mm. 17–20; see mm. 73–76) breaks in, an octave higher than in its previous appearances. The phrase is built over the dominant of G minor, and this harmony is simply prolonged until the end of the song.

The nine measures of D major with which Song 9 ends admittedly provide a tonic grounding of sorts — this is a more conclusive ending than that of Song 1 — but D functions more strongly as a dominant than as a tonic. And the interpretation of Song 9 as charting a course from the dominant of D minor to that of G minor is immediately confirmed at the beginning of Song 10, which is unambiguously in G minor. The dominant at the end of Song 9 resolves in the opening tonic of Song 10, whose initial b♭3 provides a melodic continuation and resolution for the repeated a♭ that lingers beyond mm. 76–80 of Song 9. The end of Song 10 clinches the matter: mm. 26–27 clearly refer back to mm. 74–75 (and their earlier appearances) of Song 9, but tonic resolution of the dominant pedal now follows immediately in m. 28.

These considerations weaken the claims entered above for a central, A-based pair formed by Songs 8 and 9, for it seems preferable to think now of Songs 8–10 as forming a connected subgroup within the cycle: the postlude to Song 8 generates the opening of Song 9, the tonal ambiguity at the end of which is resolved on two levels in Song 10. In addition to these relationships, we may note that these three songs are conspicuous by the fact that they represent the most extended passage of minor-key writing in Dichterliebe (the only other series of three songs using the same modality is Songs 2–4, all of which are in major rather than minor). The point is important in that the return to the major mode in Song 11 seems all the more telling for its juxtaposition with this lengthy minor-key episode. Certainly, one can hardly fail to identify a change of tone between Songs 10 and 11, however ironically Schumann may have intended the cheerful character of the latter.30 The change of musical tone is matched by an important development in the poetic narrative. Song 11 is the first — in fact it is the only — song in the cycle to break away from the world of “I” and “you,” of the poet and his lost beloved. To be sure, the alte Geschichte which the poet relates in Song 11 tells his own story, but it is the manner of its telling which is new and significant. It is told as a timeless, universal tale, one which offers the poet the chance to put his own misery in a more general, even rational perspective. Song 11 provides a foil for the closed, introspective world inhabited throughout most of the rest of the cycle, not least in the minor-key trio formed by Songs 8–10.

If we respond to Dichterliebe in this way, then we may discern an articulation of the


30Song 11 bears no tempo designation, one is tempted to borrow further from Beethoven’s late quartets and to supply the heading neue Kraft führend.
whole which parallels closely the division of the C#-Minor Quartet into two roughly equal halves, consisting of movements 1–4 and 5–7 respectively. In the case of Dichterliebe, the division comes between Songs 10 and 11; moreover, the subgroup formed by Songs 8–10 might be said to form a counterpart, in terms of weight and density, to the set of variations which concludes the first half of the quartet.

That these two views of the large-scale articulation of Dichterliebe may seem mutually contradictory—on the one hand, Songs 8 and 9 form a uniquely connected pair standing centrally between Songs 1–7 and 10–16 and embeded in a tonal arch C#–A–C#; on the other, Songs 8–10 form a concluding subgroup followed by a fresh start in Song 11—is symptomatic of the formal complexity and richness of much of Schumann’s music. Nor do these exhaust the ways in which the structure of Dichterliebe may be understood, particularly when textual issues are brought to bear. Rufus Hallmark, combining musical and textual analysis, has proposed a three-part division of the cycle as follows: Songs 1–4 (“exposition”); Songs 5–11 (“development and crisis”); Songs 12–16 (“resolution of the story”). And of Songs 5–11 he writes that they “build in sorrow and anger
d. *Dichterliebe*, Song 16, mm. 44–52.

![Musical notation](image)

Example 3 (continued)

...to the climax or crisis of song 9.” Stephen Walsh also feels that Song 9 marks an important stage in the cycle: “spiritually the cycle now reaches its nadir.”

Withdrawing from textual exegesis to the domain of abstract musical relationships, we may turn to a particularly noteworthy feature of the C♯-Minor Quartet. Joseph Kerman has pointed out that in this work “for the first time in Beethoven’s music there is an emphatic and unmistakable thematic connection between the first movement and the last.” Kerman is referring to the appearance in the last movement of a reordering of the opening four-note figure of the fugue subject: G♯–B♯–C♯–A becomes C♯–B♯–A–G♯ [ex. 3a; the reordering first appears in mm. 21–23 of the quartet finale]. It may come as no surprise that the outer movements of *Dichterliebe* are related to one another in a similar way. Example 3b shows the very opening of the cycle: the repeated IV°–V7 progression in F♯ minor which remains unresolved throughout Song 1. Examples 3c–d show two passages from Song 16, the final song, in which this progression—or its harmonic substance, at least—returns quite audibly. Example 3c shows mm. 19–23; the basic relationship to the opening of Song 1 is obvious, but it is worth noting the similarity of the vocal line b¹–a¹–g♯¹–f♯¹–e♯¹ [ex. 3c] to the piano line b¹–g♯²–f♯²–e♯² [ex. 3b]; the piano dynamic of both passages draws them

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31 Hallmark, *The Genesis of Schumann’s Dichterliebe*, p. 142; Stephen Walsh, *The Lieder of Schumann* (London, 1971), p. 47. See also Arthur Komar, “The Music of Dichterliebe: The Whole and Its Parts,” *Robert Schumann: Dichterliebe*, ed. Arthur Komar (New York, 1971), pp. 77–81. Richard Kramer, to whom I am grateful for a perceptive reading of an earlier version of this article, also senses a breach following Song 9: “Songs 7, 8 and 9 all express the immediacy of a broken relationship. After that, the image of the beloved recedes” (personal communication). My own view is that the “resolution” referred to by Hallmark begins with Song 11. As I have suggested, it is at this point that the poet first senses the possibility of coping with his predicament in some way. Hallmark himself makes much the same point when he writes that “Song 11 objectifies the experience [of lost love] and points to a resolution to follow” (p. 142), although he holds to a more significant musical division between Songs 11 and 12.

further together (the preceding section of Song 16 is entirely forte; no diminuendo is marked prior to the piano in m. 19).

The harmonic connection between exs. 3d and 3b is also underscored by their shared piano dynamic marking. Example 3d shows Schumann's setting of the last verse in Song 16—a verse which may be said to stand somewhat apart from those preceding it, by virtue of the strong thematic recapitulation at m. 35 and the equally strong perfect cadence at mm. 35–36. The song—and with it the cycle—seems set to close at this point, but in fact the final verse is yet to come. Schumann turns the C# tonic of the cadence into a dominant seventh of F# minor, and this harmony, together with the C#–D–C# neighbor motion in the vocal line (doubled in the piano bass), clearly recalls the opening measures of the whole cycle (ex. 3b). Like its distant progenitor, the dominant-seventh chord in ex. 3d does not resolve conventionally. Instead, it gives way to a dominant seventh in D (m. 48) and to a second thematic recollection, this time of mm. 12–14 in Song 2 (ex. 4). This is a particularly subtle move, for the neighbor-note figure c#2–d#–c#2 that occurs in these and earlier measures of Song 2 can be thought of as growing out of the incomplete neighbor-note figure d–c# in the bass of Song 1 (see ex. 3b), which has just been recalled (in complete form) in mm. 44–47 of Song 16.33

For all its greater intricacy, Schumann's web of thematic connections, like Beethoven's, relies heavily on the reappearance of a particular melodic figure. The correlate in Dichterliebe to Beethoven's four-note figure G#–B#–C#–A is the neighbor-note figure C#–D–C#, the incomplete form of which underpins the recurring progression in Song 1 and inaugurates that problematic C#-seventh chord. There is a further connection to be made here, however, for the C#–D–C# figure is itself bound up with the C#-Minor Quartet, albeit in the guise of a Neapolitan rather than a neighbor-note relationship. Much has been made of Beethoven's exploitation in the quartet of the Neapolitan step D–C#: the subdominant answer in the fugue brings in d1 as early as the downbeat of

liebe," p. 92. The reference is all the more subtle in that the dominant seventh of the F#-minor chord which gives way to V7/D in m. 48 of Song 16 stands not only for the "framing" harmony of Song 1 but also for the C#-major triad (again implying V7/F) standing immediately before V7/D at the beginning of m. 12 in Song 2. Moreover, only mm. 12–14 of Song 2 contain the G which momentarily tonalizes the subdominant scale degree in the opening I–IV–I progression supporting c#2–d#–c#2 in the vocal line. This momentary tonalization of D in Song 2 may be understood as a reference to the tonic of the ensuing Song 3; thus the recollection of Song 2 at the end of Song 16 includes also the earlier "premonition" of Song 3.

33The reference back to Songs 1 and 2 has been pointed out by others; see, for one, Komar, "The Music of Dichter-
m. 6, and D is stressed in both outer parts toward the end of this movement (mm. 112–16) before C♯ gives way to D at the beginning of the next. The finale is also strongly colored by Neapolitan harmony, not only within the opening theme itself (for example, mm. 17–21) and in the coda (mm. 328–36) but at the level of large-scale tonal structure: the second group, heard in E in the exposition (mm. 56–78), is recapitulated in D major (mm. 216–38). The Neapolitan connection is largely absent in Dichterliebe (although in mm. 49–52 of Song 16 D functions momentarily as the Neapolitan degree in C♯ minor); nevertheless, the importance in the quartet and the song cycle of the figure C♯–D–C♯ forms another link between these outwardly dissimilar works.

The strong Neapolitan coloring of the outer movements of the C♯-Minor Quartet complements their thematic connection. But the relationship between these two movements bears discussion beyond such thematic and harmonic issues. In his late music, Beethoven showed an increasing tendency to alter the normal “weighting” of movements within a multimovement work. In particular, the main dramatic weight of a work may be transferred from the first to the last movement: this is particularly true of those works which end with fugal finales (ops. 106, 110, 130/133) or with variation sets (ops. 109, 111). The C♯-Minor Quartet represents an extreme example of this tendency and turns the normal conventions of movement-succession on their head, in that a full-scale Sonata-form movement in the tonic key is delayed until the finale while the opening movement is a slow and tonally unstable fugue. (Perhaps the closest Beethoven had come to this scheme in any previous work was in the Piano Sonata in A, op. 101, although there the first movement is not a fugue but a much compressed sonata form.) Compared to the tonally stable Allegro molto vivace second movement, the fugue can seem almost like a prelude, a disproportionately long slow introduction, to the work proper. The tonic “structural downbeat” of the quartet is delayed until the beginning of the finale (ex. 5a–b).

Schumann adopts an identical strategy in Dichterliebe. The contrast between the opening of Song 1 and that of Song 16 (ex. 6a–b) directly mirrors the contrast between the outer movements of the C♯-Minor Quartet. The opening of the final song in Dichterliebe is especially interesting in this respect, since it is unique within the cycle. No other song opens at this dynamic level, or with such a widely spaced initial chord. This could be the opening of a piano sonata, a concerto, a symphony; it certainly seems more akin in character to the opening of the quartet finale than to anything else in the song cycle. One might even compare the relentless marchlike rhythm in the piano part of the ensuing measures of the song (\(\text{C}^{\text{VIII}}\text{vi}^6\text{V}^7\)) with the similar (and similarly intense) rhythmic ostinato figure (\(\text{C}^{\text{VIII}}\text{vi}^6\text{V}^7\)), which sets in at m. 5 of the quartet movement. By comparison, the opening movements of both works are both alike in their tonal instability and unfocused introductory character.34

The peculiar (and related) tonal properties of the opening movement of the C♯-Minor Quartet and the opening song of Dichterliebe have implications for the tonality of each work as a whole. In Dichterliebe, the tonal ambiguity of its opening song stems from two interrelated factors. The piano phrase, which acts as prelude and postlude to the song as a whole and plays a double role (postlude to verse 1, prelude to verse 2), in mm. 12–15 repeatedly iterates a harmonic progression that is most immediately construed as IV\(^6\)–V\(^7\) in F♯ minor. One expects some tonic resolution of this inconclusive progression, but no resolution is forthcoming, at least not within the song itself. Instead—and this is the second factor—the voice sides any implication of F♯ minor and cadences in A major, B minor, and D major: three keys which will soon emerge as tonics of individual songs (Songs 2, 5, and 3).

Song 16, as we have seen, is not tonally ambiguous; there is no doubt that the tonic key is C♯ minor. But, at two points within the song, Schumann refers back to the ambiguous piano

34Neumeyer, “Organic Structure and the Song Cycle,” p. 98, refers to Song 1 of Dichterliebe as “only a prelude: the poetic and tonal action both, so to speak, begin in song 2.” I have suggested above that the fugue of the C♯-Minor String Quartet seems partly to function like a prelude to the beginning of the “action” proper.
phrase from Song 1. The IV\(^6\)–V\(^7\)/f\# progression intrudes in mm. 20–23; but it is now granted the resolution expected in Song 1 (see mm. 24–27), and F\# minor is assimilated within the prevailing tonality as the subdominant. Resolution is again withheld following the second appearance, in mm. 44–47, following which Schumann introduces the allusion to Song 2 discussed earlier (ex. 3d). This second return to the ambiguous phrase from Song 1 is potentially more disruptive than the first, for it follows the cadence in mm. 42–43 which, I have suggested, appears at first to signal the end of Song 16. What seems to be a concluding C\#-minor tonic here is immediately reinterpreted as the dominant of the subdominant, F\# minor.\(^{35}\) This subdominant pull is subsequently negated in mm. 50–52, where F\# functions as part of a conventional V–VI–IV–V cadential formula in C\# minor. True, the ensuing piano postlude turns out to be in C\# (notated as D\(b\)) major rather than minor, but any lingering subdominant implications are completely dispelled here by the strong V–I cadential preparations and resolutions in the tonic. Example 7 suggests that the opening and closing measures of the postlude transform the ambiguous phrase from Song 1 and ground it in rather

\(^{35}\) Schumann’s decision not to clarify the mode—minor or major—of the cadential C\# in m. 43 may not be coincidental.
The quality of ambiguity, the pull toward the subdominant, which Schumann exploits in *Dichterliebe*, is one which hangs heavy on the outer movements of Beethoven’s C♯-Minor Quartet. Reference has been made several times in the preceding pages to the tonally unstable first movement of the quartet, and that instability stems precisely from the fact that C♯ functions more as the dominant of the subdominant than as a stable tonic. The issue is joined even in the first four notes of the fugue subject, which might easily be harmonized as V/V–V–I in F♯ minor. But it is the unorthodox subdominant answer, allowing Beethoven to stress the Neapolitan degree (mm. 4–6: c♯¹–e♯¹–f♯¹–d¹) as 6 in F♯ minor, which most seriously and consistently undermines the tonic force of C♯ in the postlude is notated enharmonically in order to facilitate comparison with *Song 1*).
this movement. A relatively firm orientation toward C# minor seems to be emerging by m. 90, which ends poised on the dominant in that key. The last two entries of the opening four-note figure (cello, m. 110; violin I, m. 111), however, are again on the subdominant side, and the closing major-key triads, despite the insistent B♭-C# resolutions in the cello, hang precariously between C# major and F♯ minor.

If the close of the first movement is ambiguous, the end of the finale is even more so. This movement opens safely enough in C# minor and turns to E major for its second group. A firm cadence in that key is denied by the sudden sharpening of e♭ to e♯ (cello, m. 76), and the development opens with the first-group material now in F♯ minor; before long, this subdominant will be displaced by its own subdominant, B minor (m. 117). The long dominant preparation preceding the recapitulation again gives remarkable emphasis to the subdominant, but once again the re-establishment of C# minor at m. 160, where the opening material returns, is not in doubt. Another subdominant shift takes place with the return of the reference to the first-movement subject {mm. 184ff.}, which was heard in the tonic in the exposition {mm. 21ff.}. The tonic status of C# minor once more seems firmly settled by the beginning of the coda, but from m. 339 onward the tonality pulls more and more strongly toward F♯ minor. The result is that the final C#-major chords have the same genuinely ambiguous status as those which brought the first movement to its indecisive end.

We say that Beethoven’s quartet is “in” C# minor; Dichterliebe, however, is not commonly thought of as being governed by any single tonic. But it should be clear by now that in his first song Schumann plays with precisely the same tonal ambiguity that haunts the outer movements of Beethoven’s quartet. And in the last song Schumann recalls that ambiguity and dissolves it in favor of C#/D♭ as tonic major; at its close, Dichterliebe is more firmly “in” C# than is the C#-Minor Quartet. There are large issues here, and we might want to question the tonal distinction that we habitually make between a seven-movement instrumental work whose outer movements—the only ones ostensibly in the tonic—are so tonally ambiguous and a sixteen-song cycle whose outer movements assert but eventually dispel that very same ambiguity.

Robert Winter’s fascinating and detailed study of the genesis of the C#-Minor Quartet reveals the integration of the subdominant into the tonal scheme as one of Beethoven’s major compositional concerns: “the traces of Beethoven’s most serious affair with the subdominant have left their impact on virtually every phase of the quartet.”

There was originally to have been a scherzo in this key, but this plan was eventually abandoned {the scherzo material formed the basis of the finale, with its strong subdominant bias}. One of Winter’s most interesting discoveries is that at one stage Beethoven considered concluding the finale with the D♭ theme which eventually became the basis of the Lento assai in the F-Major Quartet, op. 135. Winter relates this plan to other sketches in D♭ and suggests that “by invoking a notational shift which neutralizes the altered scale degrees {in particular, the mediant E♯ suggests a resolution to F♯, whereas F is notationally stable}, Beethoven may have been attempting—at least on paper—to stabilize the tonic.” But as we can hear, he “finally opted for the truly radical solution, that of leaving the tonal ambiguities established in the opening measures of the fugue unresolved.”

In the published version of Dichterliebe, the postlude to Song 16 is notated in D♭ major. Schumann, however, at first wrote it out in C# major and then added a marginal note: “?NB: Hier ist besser Des Dur vorzuzeichnen.” In his study of Dichterliebe, Arthur Komar opines that “the enharmonic renotation has no structural significance and was merely intended as a convenience for the reader.” It would be going too far to propose that Schumann had seen Beethoven’s sketches for the quartet and had

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37Ibid., pp. 124–125. In The Beethoven Quartets, p. 349, Kerman states that “the ultimate page of the quartet finds itself poised half in the tonic, half in the subdominant—until six bars sweep up five octaves in still another abrupt gesture of assertion. The question is closed.” My own view is that the quartet leaves the question unanswered.
38Hallmark, The Genesis of Schumann’s Dichterliebe, p. 110. This earlier version of the postlude, transcribed by Hallmark, differs from the final one.
come to the same conclusions as Winter; but in view of the similar tonal ambiguities pursued in *Dichterliebe* and the C♯-Minor Quartet, the idea of a “notational stabilization” of the closing tonic of the song cycle, underscoring its freedom from the subdominant pull experienced in Song 1, deserves some thought. The allusion to Beethoven’s *An die ferne Geliebte* in the closing measures of the first movement of the *Fantasie*, op. 17, has been discussed above, but further consideration is now relevant. If we take the generally accepted view that there is an intentional reference to the Beethoven work here, we may note that the Beethoven phrase is the true source of much of the thematic material in the movement. Schumann reveals his source, however, only after the derived material has been introduced and thoroughly worked through. Very much to the point, a generic cross-fertilization occurs: a song cycle by Beethoven is imported into an instrumental work by Schumann. In the present case, we are confronted by a reciprocal state of affairs, for here an instrumental work by Beethoven is held to inform Schumann’s song cycle. In *Dichterliebe*, as in the *Fantasie*, Schumann seems to reveal his musical source most openly near the end of the work, and at an appropriately important juncture. The singer’s final words, “und meinen Schmerz hinein!”, take us from Schumann to Beethoven—indeed, into the very beginning of the C♯-Minor Quartet [ex. 8].

a. Beethoven, op. 131, movt. I, mm. 1–2.

b. *Dichterliebe*, Song 16, mm. 49–51.

It is a crucial moment. *Dichterliebe* ends with a much celebrated postlude in the piano, in echo of the epilogue in Song 12. Vocal music yields to instrumental as the singer enacts the transformation from song cycle to string quartet.

### III

If there is a message to be read into any of this, perhaps it is in Schumann’s profound grasp of the musical tradition which most mattered to him—in the extraordinary way in which he was able to marry critical principle and compo-

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40 Schumann, however, was interested in Beethoven manuscripts and had examined some of the sketchbooks; see Tagebücher II, p. 79: “Mittwoch, d.[en] 31sten October [1838], . . . Um 3 Uhr hatt’ ich Fuchs zu besuchen versprochen, der mir viel Interessantes mittheilt, . . . so . . . Skizzenbücher v.[en] Beethoven.” The endnote (p. 487, n. 279) attached to this sentence reads “Gemeint ist Beethoven's Skizzenbuch 1801–1806.” No single Beethoven sketchbook spanning these dates survives, however, and it seems that what Schumann must have been shown was the sketchbook known today as Grasnick 2, which belongs to the period February/March–Summer 1799, see Douglas Johnson, Alan Tyson, and Robert Winter, *The Beethoven Sketchbooks: History, Reconstruction, Inventory* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1985), pp. 41–45.

41 Although this article is not intended as a study of text-music relationships in *Dichterliebe*, it is worth considering the enharmonic notation of the postlude to Song 16 from this angle. Specifically, the “notational stabilization” of the final tonic might be thought to reflect the “resolution of the story,” which Hallmark (see n. 31) and other commentators detect at the end of this cycle. This reading is supported by a motivic detail illustrated in ex. 7: the transformation of the tonally unstable motive x in Song 1 to become the stable x′, accompanied in parallel sixths by x itself, at the final cadence in Song 16.

42 On this and other aspects of the first movement of op. 17, see John Daverio, “Schumann’s ‘Im Legendenton’ and Friedrich Schlegel’s *Arabeske*,” this journal 11 (1987), 150–63. Daverio refers to Schumann’s “quotation” from *An die ferne Geliebte*.

43 Schumann does not fail to make explicit the latent subdominant context of Beethoven’s a♯. In addition to that shown in ex. 8, a further possible reference to the C♯-Minor String Quartet is worth considering. In Song 1 of *Dichterliebe*, the dotted rhythm allotted to the figure b♯–d♯–c♯ in m. 2 is unique: on all other occasions three sixteenth notes are used. Provided that this anomaly is not simply due to an error on Schumann’s (or the engraver’s) part, it is interesting to note that the identical dotted rhythm—setting the figure b♯–d♯–c♯—occurs at the end of movement VI in the quartet, leading directly into the finale.
sitional practice. In 1840 Schumann already appreciated what Stravinsky was to say exactly a century later: “Far from implying the repetition of what has been, tradition presupposes the reality of what endures. It appears as an heirloom, a heritage that one receives on condition of making it bear fruit before passing it on to one’s descendants.”44 The Fantasie, op. 17, may have been Schumann’s intended contribution to a public Beethoven memorial, cast in bronze; Dichterliebe, I believe, is a much more private monument, one cast in music and not intended for the eye (or ear) of the casual musical tourist.

“We ought not to repeat the same thing for centuries, but should also think about creating something new.” Schumann’s draft of the final song of Dichterliebe is dated “31 Mai u.[nd] 1 Juni [1840],” a mere nine days after his first sketches for the work. Also on 31 May, he wrote to Clara: “sometimes I feel as if I were finding out quite new ways in music.”45 One is reminded of Beethoven’s throwaway comment on the C♯-Minor Quartet: “Thank God there is less lack of fancy than ever before.”46 And these, one must conclude, are understatementsto leave us all speechless.

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44 Stravinsky, Poetics of Music, p. 75. Stravinsky delivered these, the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, at Harvard during the academic year 1939–40; they were first published in 1942.

45 On the dating of the sketches and drafts, see Hallmark, The Genesis of Schumann’s Dichterliebe, pp. 23, 123, pending the publication of KGA III, see Jugendbriefe von Robert Schumann, p. 315, for the letter to Clara: “Manchmal ist es mir doch als käme ich auf ganz neue Wege in der Musik”; the translation is taken from Herbert, Early Letters, p. 303.


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