

COMMENTARY

The piano piece by Robert Schumann with the title *Abnung* ('presentiment'), published here for the first time, was found in the Leopold-Sophien-Bibliothek in Überlingen by the librarian Roswitha Lambertz whilst cataloguing Leo Allgeyer's bequest (1827–1891). Allgeyer, a man of private means and art collector, lived in Überlingen in his final years. The existence of this undated composition, which is not referred to in any way in Schumann's notes, was completely unknown until recently. The manuscript is doubtlessly written by his hand. The findings of the handwriting analysis performed on the score with the various performance markings and the heading were confirmed by Clara Schumann's verification, 'Robert Schumann's handwriting.'

At the bottom of the score there is a dedication by Clara Schumann, 'to Mr. Julius Allgeyer with the wish that soft tones may always accompany you.' The dedicatee is the lithographer, photographer and writer Julius Allgeyer (*31.3.1829 in Haslach im Kinzigtal, † 6.9.1900 in Munich), who went to the art academy in Düsseldorf in 1854 to learn more about lithography from Joseph Keller. He was introduced to the Schumann household by Johannes Brahms and remained a lifelong friend of Clara Schumann. Allgeyer returned to his mother in Überlingen in January 1856 because he was ill. He was visited there by Clara Schumann with her sons Ludwig and Ferdinand, and Johannes Brahms with his sister Elise around the 21st August 1856 as they were on their way to Switzerland. Clara wrote her dedication on the score only upon her return, according to the date on 7th October 1856 in Düsseldorf. From there she sent Allgeyer the score, presumably by post as suggested by the vertical fold down the manuscript. The motive for the dedication, which hints at a close relationship, 'that soft tones may always accompany you', was Allgeyer's departure at the end of October. He went to Rome to gain further training in lithography. At some point Julius Allgeyer gave the score to his brother Leo, who subsequently bequeathed it to the town collection in Überlingen, according to his note on the top left corner: 'Gift from L. Allgeyer 1888.'

The composition comprises a total of 24 bars, of which bars 9–24 are marked with repeat signs. Obviously it is Schumann's fair copy into which he marked several corrections with cuts and deletions. The piece is in D major and has a calm 2/4 tempo which is enlivened by the quaver triplets in the accompaniment. The compositional background of *Abnung* can be reconstructed from the fact that Schu-

mann used material of this piece in one of the *Novelletten* Op. 21 written in spring 1838 – more exactly No. 5 in D major, as the passages bars 88ff. (cf. the facsimile on page 7) and bars 231ff. prove. If the clear relationship between these two compositions seems to be obvious, it can only be speculated whether the piece belongs to the series of shorter piano pieces which Schumann composed in February/March 1838 whilst also working on 'Scenes from Childhood' Op. 15 and *Novelletten*. He wrote to his bride about these compositions in a letter of 17th–19th March 1838, 'In short, I felt like a child again, and I wrote about 30 sweet little things, and of these I chose twelve and called them "Scenes from Childhood".'¹ Equally, the question why Schumann chose to include such a reserved piece as *Abnung* in the 5th *Novellette* which is to be performed in a 'lavish and celebratory' way, and which bears obvious features of a polonaise² and thus 'is pushed into the context of a ballroom scene.'³ Is it ultimately only the calm gesture of the piano piece *Abnung*, which seemed suitable to Schumann for the inclusion of this piece in the middle and final parts of the *Novellette* in the sense of an epilogue? In the new context in any case the character of the piece is even clearer, with its lightly swaying movement underlined by the change to a 3/4 meter.

Clara possibly gave away the unprinted autograph 'so early', namely only a few weeks after the death of her husband because the piece had been almost completely integrated in its compositional substance in another work.⁴

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(Translation ar-pège translations, Brussels)

¹ *Clara und Robert Schumann. Briefwechsel. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Eva Weißweiler, vol. I, Basel-Frankfurt a. M., 1984, p. 121. Cf. Joachim Draheim, 'Schumanns Kinderszenen op. 15 – Offene Fragen, neue Antworten, unbekanntes Materialien', in: *Schumann-Studien 5*, ed. Gerd Nauhaus, Köln, 1996, pp. 55–64.

² In his diary Schumann mentions the composition of a polonaise twice in connection with the *Novelletten* Op. 21 on the 11th and 12th March 1838 (*Robert Schumann. Tagebücher*, vol. II, ed. Gerd Nauhaus, Leipzig, 1987, p. 52).

³ Bernhard Appel, 'Novelletten für Klavier op. 21', in: *Robert Schumann. Interpretationen seiner Werke*, ed. Helmut Loos, Laaber, 2005, vol. I, p. 118.

⁴ Further details of the relationship between Allgeyer and Clara Schumann and others, as well as the work and compositional background of *Abnung* can be found in a study of the editor, which should appear in the journal *Die Tonkunst*.