

Is Schumann's *Album for the Young* really for the young?

Elizabeth Green

*Robert Schumann wrote his *Album für die Jugend* at a time of great personal and political upheaval. 1847 saw the death of his first son, Emil, and the unexpected deaths of his beloved friends, Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn. The revolution of 1848-9 was also causing anxiety.*

*The *Album for the Young*, despite the popularity of some of its pieces, has been generally overlooked as a major work. The assumption that it was simply a collection of pieces for children to learn has largely excluded it from serious study. That most of the pieces are too difficult for most children to play has been generally unremarked.*

*Close study of *Album für die Jugend* reveals a complex work with resemblance to William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. There is evidence for the hypothesis that Schumann may have concealed a more serious meaning within a work which brought valuable income to the struggling Schumann family by appearing to be an unusually light-weight offering from this obtuse and complex composer.*

1. Introduction

Robert Schumann's *Album für die Jugend*, op 68, is perceived widely as a pedagogical work intended to assist young children in their piano studies. A small number of the pieces are used for this purpose, but by and large these beautiful short pieces are too difficult for students to play: none but the most gifted and musical students can manage them with even a semblance of the skill required. They are also largely overlooked by advanced musicians: perhaps because the *Album* is seen as a pedagogical tool there is little consideration of it as a major work.

However close study of *Album for the Young* reveals a work carefully constructed in regard to key and thematic relationships. Analysis of the subject matter suggests interesting layers of meaning. Schumann himself described the difference between his reminiscences of childhood in *Kinderszenen*, op 15, and *Album for the Young* as follows:

Although you will detect signs of my old humour here and there, these pieces are completely different from *Kinderszenen*. The latter are the reflections of an adult for other adults, while the *Album* is rather made up of foretellings and premonitions for children. (Daverio, 1997: 408)

This statement does not necessarily suggest that children must play the pieces. For Schumann the distinction between the two works may simply have been one of perspective: in op 15 the adult looks back at his or her childhood whereas in op 68 the composer provides pictures for future children, based on his own experiences, of the life that may lie

ahead of them. The composer of *Album for the Young* from this point of view has the role of a seer, a spinner of tales, mapping out the whole pageant of life for all to see.

2.1 Background

Schumann said that the work:

...grew directly out of my family life...I wrote the first several pieces as a birthday gift for our oldest child, and before I knew it, one followed on another. (Daverio, 1997: 405-406)

It is therefore often thought that the work as a whole was given as a gift to his daughter, Marie. However there are clear differences in playing standard between the first five pieces, given to his daughter, and the other pieces in the set. It could be suggested, therefore, that what was briefly used as a simple birthday present for Marie was then used as the basis for a more wide-ranging and serious work.

It is known that the Schumanns, in 1848, were in financial difficulties. Their family was constantly growing and lack of sales of Schumann's complex works had removed the composer from his publisher's list (Daverio, 1997: 137). It would have been a temptation for Schumann to attempt a work which would earn them some money. And, indeed, *Album for the Young* was very successful from this point of view (Daverio, 1997: 406). However for a composer who took his Art so very seriously a light-weight large work with no inner meaning could well have been almost an impossibility. One should be reminded here of the sorrows and difficulties the Schumanns were experiencing at the time. In the year before, their first son, Emil, had died, and this tragedy was preceded by the sudden death of Fanny Mendelssohn and followed by the death of Schumann's dearest musical friend, Felix Mendelssohn himself. The revolution of 1848-49 (Oswald, 1985: 191) was causing anxiety to Schumann, who feared military combat. A suggestion that the composer, in the midst of all this turmoil, would write an entirely light-hearted and frivolous work seems perhaps unlikely. And here one can remember Schumann's love of cryptography.

Schumann kept as a life-long companion a book on cryptography sold in his father's bookshop (Walker, 1972: 401). Schumann's use of letters and literary allusions to create extra layers of meaning in his music has been well documented (Sams in Walker, 1972, Ch.15). Shortly before his suicide attempt in 1854, Schumann wrote in a letter to his friend, Joachim:

Between the lines of this letter there is invisible writing which will one day come out. (Walker, 1972: 415)

Schumann's reference to hidden layers of meaning in the letter to Joachim corresponds with his well-known fascination for the concept of

masked balls, where people (or ideas) are disguised (for example, *Papillons*, op.2, *Carnaval*, op.9, *Davidsbündlertänze*, op.6). It reminds us, too, of his liking for the symbolism of the word, *pupa*, (at the same time the word in German for a masked ball and for the chrysalis of the butterfly – in itself a metaphor for latent ideas in the brain before they take flight in the imagination). Both meanings come together most obviously in *Papillons*. It is therefore certainly possible that Schumann's interest in metaphor led him to conceal further layers of meaning within the *Album for the Young*.

In investigating this question of possible hidden meanings within op.68, it can be interesting to look firstly at the work by the English poet and painter, William Blake, *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. Schumann was likely to be familiar with this work, having grown up with his father's extensive personal library (Oswald,18) and being certainly knowledgeable about the works of English poets: an ongoing project of his life was researching quotations about music in Shakespeare's plays, all of which he read (Daverio: 448). It is also known that he read, as a young man, *Manfred* and *Childe Harold* by George Gordon, Lord Byron (Oswald, 41).

William Blake, the English poet and painter, was born in 1757. He was equally famous as a poet and a painter. Schumann may certainly have seen a similarity between his own role as both writer and composer and Blake's dual talent (Holmes, 1992: v). *Songs of Innocence and Experience* were published in 1794, each poem accompanied by a coloured 'illumination' painted by the poet himself. Like Schumann, Blake was a believer in symbolic meaning. He once said:

“What”, it will be Questioned, “when the Sun rises do you not see a round disc of fire somewhat like a Guinea?” O no, no, I see an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God almighty.” I question not my Corporeal or Vegetative Eye any more than I would question a Window concerning a Sight. I look through it & not with it. (Holmes, vii)

Blake's views on God ran contrary to the teachings of organized religion of the day. For him, the Artist was seer or prophet, providing visions through which ordinary humans could reach God's love and mercy. Richard Holmes, in the introduction to the Folio edition of Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, suggests that Blake incorporated his 'brilliantly original and alarmingly eccentric' philosophy into a work 'purportedly addressed to children.' Holmes goes on to say that:

Songs of Innocence [is].set in a sunlit, pastoral world...Its central ideas are those of joy, comfort, tenderness and parental or divine security....*Songs of Experience* [is]... set in a

darker, more dreamlike version of the same landscape, with nightmare intimations, ... a sense of twilight and nightfall, and menacing animal and insect shapes. Here the central ideas are those of anger, jealousy, anxiety, cruelty, injustice...Seen as a complete cycle, the *Songs* develop a vision of human nature which questions our most fundamental ideas... (Holmes, ix-xi).

It is easy to see how Schumann's imagination might have been captured by this work, and there do seem to be definite parallels between Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* and Schumann's *Album for the Young*, which will be further discussed in the following sections.

2.2 Comparison of Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* and Schumann's *Album for the Young*:

The titles of the pieces in each work are listed below, Part I in Table I and Part II in Table II.

Table 1: *Songs of Innocence* and Schumann Part I

Blake	Schumann
introduction	
1. The Shepherd	1. Melodie
2. The Echoing Green	2 Soldier's March
3. The Lamb	3. Humming song
4.The Little Black Boy	4, A Chorale
5. The Blossom	5. Little Piece
6. The Chimney Sweeper	6. Poor orphan child
7. The Little Boy Lost	7.Hunter's little song
8. The Little boy found	8. Wild Rider
9.Laughing Song	9. Little folk song
10. A Cradle Song	10. The Happy Farmer returning from work.
11. The Divine Image	11. Siciliano
12. Holy Thursday	12. Knight Rupert
13. Night	13. May, lovely May, soon you will return
14. Spring	14.Little Study
15. Nurse's Song	15 Spring Song
16. Infant Joy	16. First Loss
17. A Dream	17. Little morning wanderer
18. On Another's Sorrow	18 Reaping song

Table 2.: *Songs of Experience* and Schumann Part II

Blake	Schumann
introduction	
19. Earth's Answer	19. Little Romance
20. The Clod and the Pebble	20. Rural Song
21. Holy Thursday	21.***
22. The Little Girl Lost	22. round song, Rondelet, Roundelay
23. The Little Girl Found	23. Rider's piece
24. The Chimney Sweeper	24.Little Harvest Song
25. Nurses Song	25. Echoes or reminiscences from the Theatre
26. The Sick Rose	26.***

27. The Fly	27. Little Canonic song
28. The Angel	28. Remembrance 4 th Nov 1847
29. The Tyger	29. Foreign Man
30. My Pretty Rose Tree	30. ***
31. Ah! Sun Flower	31. War song
32. The Lilly	32. Sheherazade
33 The Garden of Love	33. Vintage time cheerful time!
34. The Little Vagabond	34. Theme
35. London	35. Mignon
36. The Human Abstract	36. Song of an Italian seaman
37. Infant Sorrow	37. Sailor song)
38. A Poison Tree	38 Wintertime I
39. A Little Boy Lost	39. Wintertime II
40. A Little Girl Lost	40. Little Fugue
41. To Tirzah	41. Northern Song (to Neils Gade)
42. The School Boy	42. Figured Chorale
43. The Voice of the Ancient Bard	43. New Year's Song

Aside from the introduction to each part of Blake's work, the number of poems/pieces in each volume of the two works is identical. As the numbers are quite unusual – 18 in the first book and 25 in the second, with a total for each work of 43 items, this surely cannot be a coincidence.

Perhaps Schumann felt that because his work was a collection of musical pieces, not poems, an introduction to each book was not necessary. Blake's introduction to *Songs of Innocence* ends:

*And I wrote my happy songs,
Every child may joy to hear.* (Blake, 1991: 4)

The introduction to *Songs of Experience* begins with the words:

*Hear the voice of the Bard!
Who Present, Past and Future sees
Whose ears have heard,
The Holy Word,
That walk'd among the ancient tree.* (Blake, 1991:30)

It could be argued that Schumann saw his role as composer of *Album for the Young* as that of the 'author' in Blake: the 'bard', the soothsayer, the prophet who through his pursuit of Art can point the way towards Divinity for others.

It is interesting to note that the sixth poem in Blake is titled, *The Chimney Sweeper*:

*When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry "Weep! weep! weep! 'weep!"
So your chimneys I sweep and in soot I sleep.*

This concept matches closely that of piece no 6, *Poor orphan child*, in *Album for the Young*. The image is not common in Schumann, but Blake uses it repeatedly. It could therefore be suggested that Schumann here gives us a hint that he'd like us to delve beneath the surface of his apparently simple work. The choice of *Knecht Ruprecht* as a character, no. 12 in Book 1 of *Album for the Young*, further supports this suggestion (a point which will be further discussed below), (Siefker, 1997: 81).

It can also be seen that Schumann carried over from Blake the idea of correspondences between the two volumes. In Blake, for example, the chimney sweeper in *Songs of Innocence* is assured of divine protection by an angel:

*And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,
He'd have God for his father & never want joy.* (Blake, 1991: 12)

The chimney sweeper in *Songs of Experience* is left wallowing in misery:

*A little black thing among the snow:
Crying weep, weep in tones of woe!
Where are thy father & mother? say?
They are both gone up to the church to pray.*

*...They clothed me in the clothes of death
And taught me to sing the notes of woe...*

*And are gone to praise God & his Priest & King
Who make up a heaven of our misery.*

Similar correspondences can be found in Schumann's work: between *Soldier's Song*, no 2, and *War Song*, no 31; between, *Chorale*, no 4 and *Figured Chorale*; no 42; between *The Happy Farmer Returning from Work*, no 10 and *Rural Song*, no 20.

It should not be suggested that Schumann closely copied the earlier work: there are many areas of difference between his world view and that of Blake. However, Blake's work may have inspired him by showing how much depth and meaning can be concealed in a collection of short pieces, apparently but deceptively couched in a language simple enough for children to understand.

3. The Structure of *Album for the Young*

3.1 Keys

Album for the Young has a clear tonal structure, the first part based around C major and the second around A major/minor. C and A were musical letters in his wife, Clara's, name. A major was one of her

favourite keys. (Weissweiler, 1994: 344). It can be pointed out that C and A were also musical letters in Schumann's name, and incidentally in the name of Bach as well. When it is noted that the only unrelated key in the set, E flat major for *Mignon* in part II, was often used by Schumann to indicate the 'S' in his name (as 'Es' is the German word for the key of E flat), for example in the second movement of the *Fantasia*, op. 17, it seems reasonable to suggest that the keys chosen for the pieces in op 68 were not randomly chosen and in fact may have been the subject of underlying organizational principles.

Table 3: keys in Part I

Part I	key
1. Melodie	C major
2. Soldier's March	G major
3. Humming Song	C major
4. Chorale	G major
5. Little Piece	C major
6. Poor Orphan Child	a minor
7. Hunter's Little Song	F major
8. Wild Rider	a minor
9. Little Folk Song	d minor
10. The Happy Farmer...	F major
11. Siciliano	a minor
12. Knight Rupert	a minor
13. May, lovely May, soon you will return	E major
14. Little Study	G major
15. Spring Song	E major
16. First Loss	E minor
17. Little Morning Wanderer	A major
18. Little Reaping Song	C major

Table 4: keys in Part II

Part II	
19. Little Romance	a minor
20. Rural Song	A major
21. ***	C major
22. Round Song, Rondelet, Roundelay	A major
23. Rider's piece	d minor
24. Little Harvest Song	A major
25. Echoes or reminiscences from the Theatre	a minor
26. ***	F major
27. Little Canonic Song	a minor
28. Remembrance 4 th Nov 1847	A major
29. Foreign Man	d minor
30. ***	F major
31. War song	D major
32. Sheherazade	a minor
33. "Vintage time cheerful time!"	E major
34. Theme	C major
35. Mignon	E flat major
36. Song of an Italian Seaman	g minor

37. Sailor Song	g minor
38. Wintertime I	c minor
39. Wintertime II	c minor to C major
40. Little Fugue	A major
41. Northern Song (to Neils Gade)	F major
42. Figured Chorale	F major
43. New Year's Song	A major

Key relationships within Part I can be seen as follows:

C Major: pieces 1, 3, 5, 18

Dominant of C, *G major*: pieces 2, 4, 14

Relative minor of C, *a minor*: pieces 6, 8, 11,12

Enharmonic major of a minor, *A major*: piece 17

Dominant of a minor, *E major*: pieces 13 and 15

Enharmonic minor of E major, *e minor*: piece 16

Subdominant of C, *F major*: pieces 7 and 10

Relative minor of F, *d minor*: piece 9

Key relationships within Part II can be seen as follows:

a minor: pieces 19, 25, 27, 32

Dominant of a minor, *E major*: piece 33

Enharmonic major of a minor, *A major*: pieces 20, 22, 24, 28, 40, 43

Relative major of a minor, *C major*: pieces 21 and 34

Enharmonic minor of C major, *c minor*: pieces 38 and 39

Dominant minor of c minor, *g minor*: pieces 36 and 37

Subdominant of a minor, *d minor*: pieces 23 and 29

Enharmonic major of d minor, *D major*: piece 31

Relative major of d minor, *F major*: pieces 26, 30 , 41 and 42

Unrelated key, *E flat major*: piece 35.

Key relationships between the two volumes can be further pointed out as follows:

Key centre Part I: *C major*;

Key centre Part II - relative minor *a minor*, and its enharmonic major, *A major*.

Summary: Keys in *Album for the Young*

C MAJOR.....	a minor (relative of C MAJ)
c min (enharmonic minor of C)	A MAJ (enharmonic major of a)
G MAJ (dominant of C)	E MAJ (dominant of a minor)
g min (enharmonic minor of G)	.e min (enharmonic minor of E)
F MAJ (subdominant of C)	d min (relative minor of F)

D MAJ (enharmonic major of d)

Unrelated key, E FLAT MAJOR

There are also a number of correspondences between meaning and key, for example:

Soldier's March, Part I: *G major* - *War Song*, Part II: *D major*
(Dominant)

May, lovely May, Part I, *Spring Song*, Part I, - *Vintage time*, Part II:
E major

Melody, Part I - *Theme*, Part II: *C major*.

Wild Rider, Part I: *a minor* - *Rider piece*, Part II: *d minor*
(subdominant)

3.2 Thematic structure

Album for the Young is linked by a complex system of thematic relationships, the most dominant source of thematic material being the Bach chorale, *Freu' dich sehr, O meine Seele*, from Cantata 32, *Liebster Jesu, mein Verlangen* (Boyd, 1939).

Figure 1:



Anyone familiar with *Album for the Young* will immediately recognize no. 4, *Chorale*, in which Schumann has used almost exactly the Bach chorale, in its original key.

Figure 2:



Schumann's close friendship with Mendelssohn is well known, as is Mendelssohn's role in encouraging performance of the works of Bach. But Schumann, too, had always admired Bach. His parents were from Thuringia, the home of the Bachs, and in Zwickau, where they established their family, strong links to Bach were forged by Bach's student, Ludwig Krebs, once an organist in the local church (Oswald, 1985:17). Schumann studied Bach assiduously, and said:

Bach is my daily bread; he nourishes me and gives me new ideas I think
Beethoven

said, “We are all children compared to him.” (Weissweiler, 1994:129)

Another link between Bach and Schumann is the interest in writing music based on the musical letters in names. Schumann made clear reference to the BACH motive (B flat,A,C,B) in previous works, for example the second symphony (Daverio, 319). It is interesting that three of the letters in Bach’s name, ACH, are also shared by Schumann’s name. There are clearly a number of reasons why Schumann might have chosen a theme by Bach as his principal melodic structure in this work, in which melodies are inverted and played backwards, and altered in the ways in which Bach was so notoriously brilliant.

Some of the permutations of the chorale theme in *Album for the Young* are shown below. If we break the first two phrases of the chorale theme into fragments we can see that we have: an upward scale passage of 2-3 notes (depending on where one stops and starts) and a downward scale passage of 5-6 notes. The second phrase has an upward scale passage of 3-4 notes and a downward passage of 3-4 notes.

Pieces 1 to 5, the original gift to Marie on her 7th birthday (and the only pieces in the work simple enough for most seven year olds to play) are all based on the Bach chorale theme:

Humming Song, no 3, is an inversion of the chorale theme, with a falling scale passage of three notes and an upward passage of five notes.

Figure 3:



Soldier’s March, no 2, transposes the chorale theme up a third, then skips up a further third to allow the falling scale passage to end on the tonic:

Figure 4:



Melodie, no. 1, reverses the order of the scale passages in *Chorale*, and consists of a falling passage of five notes followed by an ascending passage of three notes:

Figure 5:



Little Piece, no 5, combines an upward passage of four notes with the upward passage of three notes:



In *Poor Orphan Child*, no. 6, Schumann transposes the inversion of the Chorale melodie (as in *Humming Song*, no. 3) into the key of a minor:



In *Little Study*, no. 14, the form of the theme used in *Soldier's March*, no. 2, is used again in the same key:



In *Vintage Time*, no. 33, the *Soldier's March* form of the theme is used again, this time in E major:



Finally, in *Figured Chorale*, no. 42, the original theme of the work, the Bach chorale stated in no. 4, Part I, is replayed, this time highly decorated and in F major.

Several other thematic sources are also used to provide structural cohesion in *Album for the Young*. For example, the thematic structure of *Hunter's Song*, no 7:



is re-used in *Wild Rider*, no. 8:

Figure 11:



with similarities to that in *The Happy Farmer*, no. 10:

Figure 12:



again in *Rural Song*, no. 20:

Figure 13:



and again in *Harvest Song*, no. 24:

Figure 14:



Another interesting thematic correspondence can be pointed out in the relationship between the piece paying tribute to the death of Mendelssohn, *Reminiscence*, no. 28:

Figure 15:



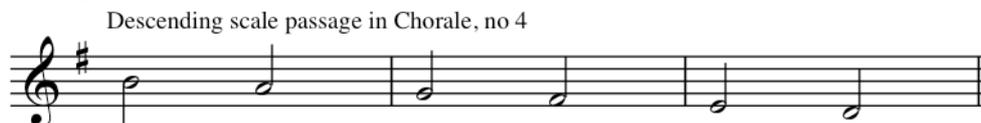
and the last piece of the work, *New Year's Eve*, no. 43, in which the melody of no. 28 is inverted, but kept in the same key:

Figure 16:



A further interesting thematic correspondence can be seen in the use of the falling scale in the *Chorale* theme:

Figure 17:



in *Spring Song*, no. 15

Figure 18:



in *First Loss*, no. 16:

Figure 19:



in *Morning Wanderer*, no. 17:

Figure 20:



in *Round Song*, no. 22:

Figure 21:



in ***, no. 26:

Figure 22:



and in *Canonic Song*, no. 27:

Figure 23:



The thematic correspondences mentioned above are by no means exhaustive, and just this brief study shows a compositional structure in *Album for the Young* which could lend weight to the hypothesis for a deeper underlying purpose in this work than has generally been supposed.

4. Subject matter in *Album for the Young*

The question of subject matter in *Album for the Young* raises, even on a cursory look, some intriguing questions. It should be borne in mind

here that Marie Schumann was only seven years old when the first five pieces were given to her for her birthday.

4.1 Mignon

The subject most obviously inappropriate for children in *Album for the Young* is Mignon, who gives her name to the only piece in the key of E flat major.

Mignon is a complex character. Beethoven, Schubert and Schumann all wrote sets of *Mignon* songs (Beethoven, op. 75, Schubert op. 19 no 2 and op. 62, Schumann: op. 98a, *Lieder und Gesänge aus Goethes Wilhelm Meister*). Liszt also wrote a piano transcription of Beethoven's *Mignon*. In 1849, the year after he completed *Album for the Young*, Schumann composed op. 98a as well as a work for solo singers, choir and orchestra, *Requiem für Mignon*, op. 98b.

Mignon is a character in Goethe's novel, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (Goethe, edited Blackall, 1995). She is ambiguous in her gender, a slight slender girl dressed as a boy, who becomes attached to the protagonist of the novel, Wilhelm Meister. An elusive child, she speaks little but shows deep emotion in her body language. She dies early, perhaps of a broken heart. Before her death she develops a habit of dressing always as an angel, in long white robes and with golden wings, and it is in this clothing that her funeral rites, the setting for Schumann's op 98b, take place.

Mignon is a displaced person. Originally from Italy, she is a personification of yearning, or *sehnsuch*. The best-known *Mignon* poem is sung by the character early in the novel:

*Know you the land where lemon blossoms blow
And through dark leaves the golden oranges glow,
A gentle breeze wafts from an azure sky,
The myrtle's still, the laurel tree grows high –
You know it, yes? Oh there, oh there
With you, O my beloved, would I fare.*

*Know you the house? Roof pillars over it,
The chambers shining and the hall bright-lit,
The marble figures gaze at me in rue:
'You poor poor child, what have they done to you?'*(Goethe, edited Blackall: 83).

When Mignon's parentage is revealed later in the novel, we learn that she is the child of an incestuous relationship between a brother and a sister. Not aware of their relationship, she and her father, known as *the harpist*, sing together:

Only they know my pain
Who know my yearning!
Parted and lone again,

All joy unlearning. (Goethe, ed. Blackall:83).

The connection between the melancholy of Mignon and the life-long depression of Schumann is obvious, but this seems to go further when one remembers Schumann's fear that he, himself, would die young (Oswald, 1995: 74, 91, 100, 187, 198, 227, 277, 289, 307). Goethe's description of the death of Mignon could have felt quite personal to Schumann:

I lived indeed untouched by care.
And yet I felt deep sorrow there,
Sorrow has made me old too soon,
Now make me young forever more! (Goethe, edited Blackall:
83).

Mignon is not only mysterious and melancholy, but she is one of several Goethe characters who have been said to represent **poetry** as a concept (Daverio, 1997: 428), and the novel's story of Wilhelm Meister's journey through life, in which the nature of Art, Theatre, and Poetry are closely studied, may have close implications for the purpose of *Album for the Young*.

4.2 Knecht Ruprecht

The introduction of Knight Rupert in part I is also interesting. Phyllis Siefker (1997) suggests that Knight Rupert is a manifestation of an old pagan figure she calls the 'wild man':

dark, sooty, hair-covered ... a remnant of a pre-Christian god
of
awesome power...[who] has shaped our core mythologies in
the
guise of common legendary characters in mythology, plays and
literature; Santa, Adonis, Harlequin, Robin Hood, Robin
Goodfellow,
Peter Pan, Satan, the Pied Piper, the court fool, Merlin. ...
Originally
a beast-god who reminded people of the cyclical nature of the
world, of death and rebirth, this Wild Man was part of fertility
performances
throughout Europe. (Siefker, 1997:5-6)

In 19th century Germany, Knight Rupert, sometimes called 'Servant Roberts' (incidentally, Schumann's first name), accompanied Saint Nicholas in his house calls. He did little, but 'just stood by growling, his lolling tongue obviously ready to taste the flesh of young wrong-doers.'(Siefker: 155)

Ruprecht here plays the part of the bogeyman, a black, hairy,
horned,
cannibalistic, stick-carrying nightmare. His role and character
are of

unmitigated evil, the ultimate horror that could befall children...He was hell on earth. (Siefker: 155)

Schumann had already portrayed Harlequin in *Carnaval*, op 9, and knew the historical role of the 'fool' as prophet or seer through his close study of the plays of Shakespeare. In his review of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* he specifically mentions the link between Oberon, King of the Fairies and Bottom, the play's Fool (Pleasants, 1965:194). When we remind ourselves of Blake's words in his introduction to *Songs of Experience*: "Hear the voice of the Bard! Who Present, Past and Future sees." (Blake, 1992:30)

It is tempting to imagine that Schumann has introduced Knight Rupert deliberately, with all of his historical implications, to point us towards a prophetic purpose in *Album for the Young*. At the very least, it can be said that Knight Rupert is not the sort of warm, cuddly character we would expect to see in a book of beginner pieces for small children.

4.3 The concept of *love* in *Album for the Young*:

Schumann does not mention 'love' overtly in *Album for the Young*. However it is interesting to note Schumann's use of a three-asterisk title in three of the pieces in Part II. Presumably there was a symbolic meaning in these pieces which Schumann chose to keep hidden. A striking parallel is the insistence by the composer that the original titles in his *Fantasie*, op. 17, be omitted and three asterisks placed at the top of each movement. He openly stated that his *Fantasie*, op 17, was about Clara:

The first movement is probably the most passionate thing I've ever done – a profound lament for you. (Weissweiler, 1994: 129)

The keys of the three asterisked pieces in op 68 are C major for the first and F major for the others. C major has been said to symbolize Clara (Daverio, 1997: 159) and it is also the case that, around the time of the composition of *Album for the Young*, the composer had begun to note in the marriage diary, with the letter, *F*, acts of sex between Robert and his wife, (Oswald, 1995:207), incidentally both of them true Artists in the context of *Album for the Young*.

Interestingly, the asterisked pieces in F major in the Schumann correspond in location with the two Blake poems symbolizing Love: the poems, *The sick rose* and *My pretty Rose tree* (nos. 26 and 30, respectively) (Chevalier, 1996: 815). While it would not be possible to prove that the asterisks symbolize love in the work of this composer, it certainly does not seem unreasonable to hypothesize that this might have been the case.

In regard to other patterns of meaning in *Album for the Young* it is worthwhile looking briefly at several further issues:

5. Romantic thinking

5.1 The word, *Romantic*:

A common understanding of the meaning of the word, *romantic*, involves love and sentimentality. However the Oxford English Dictionary defines it as:

...imaginative, remote from experience, visionary... (Oxford English Dictionary, 1978).

The word, *roman*, in its original French, means simply a story or novel, and the word, *romance*, means a ballad. Schumann's title, *A Little Romance*, for his first piece in part II of op 68 is more likely to reflect the French origin of the term than the more sentimental meanings of the word which have evolved more recently.

5.2 David against the Philistines

Schumann, in common with many of his Romantic period contemporaries, saw 'Art' as a pathway to true knowledge and spirituality. In his famous review of Brahms's work, Schumann said:

When once (Brahms) lowers his magic wand over the massed resources of chorus and orchestra, we shall have in store for us wonderful insights into the secret of the spiritual world... We welcome him as a staunch combatant. Every age has a secret society of congenial spirits. Draw the circle tighter, you who belong to one another, that the truth of art may shine ever more clearly, spreading joy and blessings everywhere! (Pleasants, 1965, 200)

The Philistines are those who don't appreciate the Artist's inspired teaching, or who create unpure Art, like Meyerbeer. (Pleasants, 1965). The Artist, like the fabled David against the Goliath (a Philistine), cleverly defeats Philistines by aiming with purity and strength of purpose. Schumann expressed the battle metaphor in one of his journal reviews about Chopin:

[Chopin] made his entrance, not with an orchestral army, as great geniuses do;... he stood, equipped with profound knowledge of his art, confident of his own strength and armed with courage ... (he) was one of the first to scale the wall, behind which lay a cowardly restoration, a dwarfish Philistinism fast asleep. Blows fell to right and left; the Philistines awoke, angrily... (Pleasants, 1965, 114)

Those pieces in *Album for the Young* which describe warfare, and perhaps also hunting, can be therefore understood as legitimate activities of an Artist, young or old. .

5.3 The role of nature in Romantic Period thought

To look at this issue it seems best to go straight to Goethe. The journal, *Nature*, has featured many of Goethe's statements about nature.

we are surrounded and embraced by [nature]: powerless to separate ourselves from her... Without ... warning, she snatches us up into her **circling dance**, and whirls us on until we are tired... She is ever shaping **new forms**: what is, has never yet been; what has been, comes not again. Everything is new, ... Her life is in her **children**...

Each of her works has an essence of its own ...and yet their **diversity is unity**...

She performs a play... With all men she plays a game for **love**, and rejoices the more they win...She rejoices in **illusion**...Over **greatness** she spreads her shield...She wraps man in darkness, and makes him forever long for light....She has neither language nor discourse; but she creates tongues and hearts, by which she feels and speaks.

Her **crown is love**...She is all things... She is her own **joy** and her own **misery**. She is rough and tender, lovely and hateful, powerless and omnipotent. She is an eternal present. ...She is complete, but never finished...

She hides under a thousand names and phrases, and is always the same... (*Nature*, 1932, 425-6).

These quotations from Goethe shed some light on the concepts of *Album for the Young*, and assist in the process of sorting out the fundamental meanings of this work: the focus on children, on regeneration, on the interplay of new and old, on love, on illusion, on unity in diversity. And, above all, man's subjection to nature, his powerlessness in her grasp.

5.4 Neils Gade

The fact that the theme of no. 41, *Northern Song*, is based on the name of the Danish composer, Neils Gade, is well known (Daverio, 1996: 406). The significance of the reference to Gade at this point in the work requires further elaboration.

Gade was a younger composer whom Schumann, in 1848, seems to have thought was starting a brilliant career. He may have symbolized for the older composer that constant beginning of the new, and the phasing out of the old, which was so central to his fundamental beliefs. Schumann said about Gade:

He is said to be the living image of Mozart... Nothing quite like him has come our way among the younger composers for a long time... We have to do here with an entirely new personality... the newly emerging... Scandinavian poets cannot have failed to provide a powerful stimulus to young

musicians, assuming that the latter had not already been reminded by their mountains and lakes, their runes and northern lights... (Pleasants, 1965: 192).

It should also be noted that it was Gade who, in 1848, inherited Mendelssohn's position as conductor in Leipzig, a job with deep emotional resonance for Schumann and also, incidentally, a job he would have dearly loved himself (Pleasants, 1965: 193).

5.5 The symbolism of 'the child' in Romantic thought

To discuss this aspect of Romantic beliefs it seems simplest to go to the poetry of William Wordsworth, and especially his *Prelude*.

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
Thou Soul that art the Eternity of Thought!
...from my first dawn
Of Childhood didst Thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human Soul...

A Child, I held unconscious intercourse
With the eternal beauty... (Gill, 1984: 386-7)

Most famously, Wordsworth said, 'The child is father of the man' (Gill, 1984, 246). To the Romantics, children were still in touch with their spirituality, and therefore receptive to the opening up of their souls. It is highly suggestive, therefore, that Schumann chose a work ostensibly for children as the location for his serious reflections on Art and Nature, in keeping with Romantic beliefs.

5.6 The role of the individual in Romantic thought

According to Eugene Stelzio (Stelzio in *Neohelicon XVIII/2*):

...the emergence of literary subjectivity... is one of the significant developments of the later eighteenth century... Clearly the growing literary preoccupation with the singular self is one of the leading indicators of the transition from the age of Enlightenment to that of Romanticism (Stelzio: 249).

Stelzio has studied autobiographical material in the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Goethe and Wordsworth in this context. The influence of Goethe on Schumann was clearly profound. Goethe believed that the Artist reached his goals through a process of self-building (*Bildung*). A form of novel developed called the *Bildungsroman*, (Stelzio: 256), which tracks the development of a young adult as he develops his moral character. This is an exact description of Goethe's novel, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*.

Another way to look at the issue is to go back to William Blake, this time in his *Auguries of Innocence*:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand,
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour. (Hayward, 1956: 243)

The Romantics looked inwards (or as Schumann so often directs on his music, *innig*) to find their spiritual truths.

For Schumann to write a set of foretellings for young children, based on his own experiences, would have seemed, not an egotistical act, but rather an expression of the most logical place to seek for truths, within his own individual soul. And here we can now be reminded of the Bach chorale which formed the thematic basis of much of *Album for the Young: Freu'dich sehr, O meine Seele*. Schumann, in choosing this particular chorale, has given us yet another insight into the deeper purposes of this work, for the title of the Bach chorale translates as *You are very joyful, O my soul*.

Despite the deep depression which plagued him throughout his life, despite the many tragedies of his life, and much suffering, Schumann gave an optimistic message to the young of future generations: you will suffer and you will die, but life will always renew, and there will always be joy, and love.

5.7 Summary of meanings in *Album for the Young*

An overall meaning and purpose of *Album for the Young* can now be proposed, through the mapping of the various symbolic meanings of the pieces and looking at the work as a whole. Figure 6 groups the titles of the pieces into categories:

Column 1: *The Artist* lists pieces which symbolize the various manifestations of the Artist: as child, as warrior, as tiller of the 'soil' of the imagination, as traveller (through the world, but also through life), as spinner of tales (Sheherazade,) and as the composer, using Mendelssohn (no. 28) and Gade (no. 41) as examples. Further, the hidden presence of Bach throughout the work keeps the composer/Artist ever-present.

Column 2: *Love* lists pieces with asterisks, hypothetically symbolizing the act of love, and by extension the act of creation itself, featured more openly in Blake but disguised in Schumann.

Column 3: *Art* shows us the various forms of Art featured in the work, on the basis that Schumann has foregrounded his central pre-occupation simply by illustrating various manifestations of it. Here, too, constant allusions to Bach (chorale, Canonic Song, Fugue, Figured chorale create a deeper sense of the mastery of Art and its spiritual role.

Column 4: Nature shows us the cycles of nature, beginning in May and Spring (youth), passing through maturity (harvest, vintage), onto death (wintertime) and then to the promise of new life again on New Year's Eve, onto death (wintertime) and then with the promise of new life again on New Year's Eve.

Looking across at the four columns it can also be seen clearly that Schumann has reinforced this message of rebirth after Wintertime (no 39) with the introduction of a young new composer, Neils Gade (no. 41), and strengthened it with a more complex version of Art (no. 42) by the greatest Artist of all time, Bach.

Figure 5: categories of piece titles in *Album for the Young*

The Artist	Love	Art	Nature
2. Soldier's March	21 ***	1. Melodie	13 May, lovely May
6. Poor orphan child	26 ***	2. Soldier's March	15. Spring Song
7. Hunter's song	30 ***	3. Humming Song	18. Reaping song
8. Wild Rider		4. Chorale	20. Rural Song
9. Folk Song		5. Little Piece	24. Harvest time
10 The Happy Farmer		11. Siciliana	33. Vintage time
12. Knight Rupert		14. Little Study	38. Wintertime
16 First Loss		19. A little Romance	39. Wintertime
17. Little morning wanderer		22. Rondelet	43. New Year's Eve
23 Rider's piece		23. Reminiscences of the Theatre	
28 Remembrance		27. Canonic Song	
29 Foreign Man		34. Theme	
31 War Song		35. Mignon	
32 Sheherazade		40. Little Fugue	
35 Mignon		42. Figured chorale	
36 Song of Italian seaman			
37. Sailor's song			
41 Northern Song			

Conclusion

There is reason to suggest the presence of a hidden agenda by the composer in Schumann's *Album für die Jugend*. Schumann may have designed the work as a foretelling of life for future generations, based on the experiences of the composer himself. Each piece tells a different story of happiness, of grief, of discovery and of loss, of love and despair, of youth and of age, and finally of death and renewal as the young again look to the future at New Year's Eve.

Unlike *Kinderszenen*, op 15, *Album für die Jugend* is not a nostalgic look back at childhood by an adult. Schumann is Scheherazade herself, spinning tale after tale, night after night; the characters and the events

that he has observed — both in the world around him and within his own psyche — travel together across the great landscape of life accompanied by the master seer, Bach, himself.

Bibliography

- Blackall, Eric A. (1995). *Goethe: The collected works*. Vol. 9: *Wilhelm Meister's apprenticeship*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Blake, William *Songs of innocence and experience*. (1992). London: The Folio Society.
- Boyd, Charles N., Albert Riemenschneider. (1939). *Chorales by Johann Sebastian Bach, Book 1*. New York: G. Schirmer.
- Chevalier, Jean and Alain Gheerbrant. (1996). (John Buchanan-Brown, Trans.). *Dictionary of symbols*. London: Penguin Books.
- Daverio, John. (1997). *Robert Schumann*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gill, Stephen. (Ed.). (1984). *William Wordsworth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hayward, John. (Ed.). (1956). *The Penguin Book of English Verse*. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books.
- Nature*. Vol. 129, no. 3255, Nature Publishing Group, March 19, 1932.
- Neohelicon*. Vol. 18, no. 2, Akadémiai Kiadó, September, 1991.
- The New Oxford Illustrated Dictionary*. (1978). Kensington, NSW: Bay Books and Oxford University Press.
- Ostwald, Peter, *Schumann: The inner voices of a musical genius*. (1985). Westford, Mass.: Northeastern University Press.
- Pleasants, Henry. (Ed.). (1965). *The Musical World of Robert Schumann*. London: Victor Gollancz.
- Schumann, Robert. (1977). *Album für die Jugend*. München: G. Henle Verlag.
- Siefker, Phyllis. (1997). *Santa Claus, last of the wild men: the origins and evolution of St. Nicholas spanning 50,000 years*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland.
- Walker, Alan, (Ed.). (1972). *Robert Schumann: the man and his music*. London: Barrie and Jenkins.
- Weissweiler, Eva. (1994). (Ed.). *The complete correspondence of Clara and Robert Schumann*. (Vol. 1). New York: Peter Lang.