

CLARA SCHUMANN, THE (WO)MAN AND HER MUSIC

CLARA SCHUMANN, THE (WO)MAN AND HER MUSIC:
AN EXAMINATION OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY FEMALE
VIRTUOSITY

By:

JENNIFER R. CAINES, B. Mus.

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Author: Jennifer R. Caines, B. Mus. (Mount Allison University)

Supervisor: Dr. James Deaville

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ABSTRACT

Women in the field of music have always occupied a tenuous position between Madonna and whore.¹ Despite music being cast as feminine, women who were performers, composers, or have occupied musical positions of power have with few exceptions been marginalized from scholarly discourse. Clara Schumann was perhaps the first and most acknowledged exception, heralded as one of the foremost virtuosi of her time. Her unusual education and her treatment by journalistic critics facilitated this acceptance.

From her early training to her mature career as a concert pianist, Clara Schumann's management by her father is not indicative of a normal upbringing for a girl of the mid-1800's. Friedrich Wieck's specialized piano method empowered Clara with the same skills that male music students received. This transgressive sidelining of her gender, as encouraged by her father, was the first stage in the subversion of societal conventions and expectations of gender evident in her life.

¹ Richard Leppert, *The Sight of Sound* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 155.

In examining concert reviews from the 1850's, we find a continuation of the negotiation of Clara's gendered identity, especially in light of theoretical insight by Judith Butler into the performativity of gender. Reviews by notable writers Eduard Hanslick and Franz Liszt offer different sides of the same gender coin. Clara was identified male either by her masculine playing or as a survivor of a potentially destructive, masculinized educational tyranny.

Focusing on Clara's letters and diaries, critical accounts of her performances, and a variety of secondary sources, this thesis will examine female virtuosity, using Franz Liszt and Jenny Lind as examples to support an alternative approach to virtuosity for women. In doing so, this study will clarify the effect of gender upon virtuosity in the nineteenth century as well as contribute new insights into Clara's attitude toward virtuosity.

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first introduced me to the music of Clara Schumann more than five years ago. Gen, literally, I could not have done this without you!

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INTRODUCTION

Having first heard about Clara Schumann through a friend in the early stages of my undergraduate degree, I have always wondered why she is one of the forgotten musical personages, in view of her fame during her lifetime. My inexperience pushed all thoughts of gender inequality from my head and my queries were left unanswered for years. Upon studying critical thought through required courses for the MA program at McMaster University, it became evident that gender played/plays an incredibly large role in reception of music and musicians.

The tongue-in-cheek title of this thesis serves two purposes: 1) It pokes fun at numerous biographies of male musicians and composers that consist of the subtitle: *The Man and his Music*. While these books are invaluable in terms of research and overviews of careers, the unimaginative titles link all these biographies together; 2) A way for Clara to legitimate her career was to behave in a manner associated with the quintessential “gentleman.” Her father’s piano method helped to give Clara an advantage over other female pianists, as it included all the aspects of a male pianist’s advanced training. The “gentlemanly” performances were recognized later in Clara’s career when critics acknowledged the masculinity of her playing. In this way it is possible to study “Clara the man and her music.” The chapter titles of the thesis show this gender

evolution by using the feminine equivalent of virtuoso—virtuosa—in the first chapter, progressing to the divided virtuosa/o in Chapter Two and finally settling on the more widely recognized virtuoso in Chapter Three.

Clara Schumann was one of the leading virtuosi of the nineteenth-century and the most celebrated female pianist of her time. Her life has been the study of numerous biographies that deal primarily with her performance career—they include studies by Berthold Litzmann, Joan Chissell, Nancy B. Reich and Clara’s students Florence May and Eugenie Schumann. However, an overlooked component of her musical life concerns her approach to virtuosity and how this relates to her antagonistic relationship with Franz Liszt. Despite the fact that Clara Wieck and Liszt shared similar careers, they maintained radically different styles of displaying virtuosity. For example, Clara Wieck and Liszt performed two joint concerts in Leipzig in 1841. A review of these concerts aptly characterized the performers’ distinct styles: “We do not like to compare... but we must admit that the quite beautiful, correct and refined playing of Frau Dr. Schumann was more effective than the stormy extravagances of Liszt.”¹ This description of Clara’s performance style indicates that her performances were not the exciting visual spectacles associated with Liszt, but rather were more restrained. Fame has favoured Liszt over Clara, as he is the topic of numerous biographies, journals, and theses while Clara has received only a fraction of the attention, despite

¹Nancy B. Reich, *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 279; as quoted from *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, 44 (1842), 16-18.

being a performer comparable in ability to Liszt. This thesis examines virtuosity and how gender differences, as represented by Clara Schumann and Liszt, made for different representations of virtuosity, which suited societal expectations of gender.

After a brief overview of her performing career as a virtuoso, Chapter One investigates Wieck's pedagogical method against the virtuosity of Franz Liszt. As we shall see, Clara accepted her father's views almost unconditionally. Chapter Two outlines Wieck's alternative educational plan and how this education supports a masculine reading of Clara's education and performing career; it draws upon Judith Butler's writings about gender as a performative act. Two examples of nineteenth-century musical writings are examined to support Clara's gender appropriation: articles by Franz Liszt and Eduard Hanslick. Chapter Three, enlightened by the first chapter's discussion of virtuosity and the second chapter's gender considerations, follows Clara's progressive portrayal in novels, and shows how myths are perpetuated without questioning previously existing sources. Through the book *Song Without End: The Love Story of Robert and Clara Schumann* (Hilda White, author 1959), *Spring Symphony* (Peter Schamoni, director 1983), and two recent works of fiction, one a children's book (by Susanna Reich, 1999), and the other a chronicle of her life with Robert Schumann (by J. D. Landis, 2000), we also see how the portrayal of Clara's character has shifted considerably from the naïve, innocent girl portrayed in 1959 to the

sexually aware, aggressive woman of the most recent fictional writing. The book *Longing*, written by J. D. Landis and published in 2000, most clearly supports the possibility that Clara performed a male body, to the extent that her career made her adopt an aggressive attitude in order to achieve success.

CHAPTER ONE

EMERGENCE OF A VIRTUOSA: CLARA SCHUMANN'S RISE TO FAME

I: Training

Clara's formal musical training was initiated by her father in 1825, at the age of five, after she had been returned from her mother's care in Plauen as decreed by the divorce agreement. Friedrich Wieck's pedagogical method, eventually codified in print in 1853, was very progressive for its time. He combined elements from Johann Logier's and Muzio Clementi's methods, interspersed with exercises and philosophies of his own. Logier's emphasis in developing quick yet thorough training methods such as group lessons and extensive theory,¹ in combination with Clementi's technical exercises and fame as a pedagogue,² appealed to Wieck's profession as a tutor.³

¹ David Charlton, "Logier, Johann Bernard," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, edited by Stanley Sadie (New York: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1980), 11: 132.

² Leon Plantinga, "Clementi, Muzio," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, edited by Stanley Sadie (New York: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1980), 4: 485.

³ Wieck found Czerny's method abominable, which may be the reason why he took a dislike to Czerny's pupil Liszt in later years.

Musical education, Wieck believed, was all encompassing and included a liberal education in conjunction with musical studies. In Wieck's eyes, Clara's future had been preordained: she was to be a virtuoso, and his teaching methods and his effort would realize his dream of creating a child prodigy.⁴ In effect, Wieck was living vicariously through his young daughter, since he had always wanted to be an extraordinary musician, but ill health as a child and his family's financial situation severely curtailed his personal musical ambitions.⁵

Clara's first years at the piano were spent playing by rote small exercises that Wieck had expressly written for her. The exercises encouraged her to concentrate on position, musical phrasing, familiarity with the keyboard, and the singing tone that would become one of the most recognizable characteristics of Clara's playing and of Wieck's method.⁶ Her natural ability enabled her to progress rapidly, and thus Wieck's method, although exceptional for the time, was not solely responsible for his daughter's success.

Clara's musical studies did not exclusively take place at the keyboard: Wieck's all-encompassing method involved daily physical exercise, in the form of long walks, as well as language studies and a modest general education.⁷ However, his goal was not as innocent as a

⁴ Nancy B. Reich, and Anna Burton, "Clara Schumann: Old Sources, New Readings," *Musical Quarterly* 70 (1984), 341.

⁵ Reich, *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman*, 26.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁷ Reich and Burton, "Clara Schumann: Old Sources, New Readings," 344.

father wishing the best for his daughter: his intentions were to provide Clara with the education and languages that would be necessary for her eventual concert tours.⁸ Deliberately, Clara was being prepared for the life of a concert musician. From the beginning of her studies, she was treated like a mature musician. Wieck's education and training gave Clara an advantage over other female performers. Her father's encouragement of her career was almost unheard of in comparison to other father-daughter musical relationships, like Abraham and Fanny Mendelssohn and Leopold and Marianne Mozart.

Clara Schumann's distinguished performance career began as accompanist in 1828, when she was eight years old, and continued for more than sixty years, despite several "leaves of absence" caused by her marriage to Robert Schumann in 1840 and family duties. Robert and Clara's marriage caused a hiatus in her usually busy performing schedule. As Clara began to bear children, her performances were even less frequent, due to the social convention that women should not be seen in the later stages of pregnancy, especially on the stage.

When Clara began to perform as a soloist in the early 1830s, the interests of German audiences were similar to their French counterparts regarding the solo performer's repertoire. The bravura style of composition popularized in France by composer-performers Pixis, Herz, et al., as well as Liszt's spectacular performance-art, was at the beginning of

⁸ Reich, *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman*, 44.

the bravura style's rise to popularity in Paris. Still considered a child prodigy who would have been treated with suspicion due to the belief "that child prodigies exhaust their capital of talent for their mature years by dipping into it when they are young,"⁹ Clara needed to be especially alert to the expectations of her audience if she were to gain the success that Wieck craved. Though Wieck adamantly opposed the Parisian bravura style and the spectacularly visual performance style of Liszt, in order for Clara to receive notoriety and fame, which would increase his reputation as a pedagogue, he had to succumb to public taste and direct Clara's repertoire toward virtuosic piano solos. This meant the selective of operatic paraphrases and variations on operatic themes. What Wieck liked least about the Parisian school of virtuosity was the emphasis on technique without, according to Wieck, all the finer aspects of piano playing:

When, at the beginning of this century, the evident perfection of the piano was combined with an extension of its range, it was inevitable that an advanced technic would be called for. But it went astray in soulless dexterity over the years, driven and administered to the point of madness and veritable destruction. Instead of concerning oneself first and foremost with "a lovely and full touch and tone" on these tonally rich pianos, susceptible of many and fine shadings—the only true basis of virtuosity—one sought to develop almost exclusively an infinitely strong, unnatural touch and the fingering and velocity required for passages and roulades, contortions and stretches that no one had ever thought of before, or thought necessary. From that time dates the cult of virtuosity with its vacant glitter without substance, musical or otherwise, and that repulsive artistic aberration, "digital heroics," accompanied by boundless vanity and self-satisfaction, while all those who had not lost their senses noted sadly that such charlatanism was hailed as the supreme

⁹ Marc Pincherle, *The World of the Virtuoso* (New York: W. W. Norton Company, 1963), 70.

goal by countless incompetents to the applause of equally incompetent teachers and composers.¹⁰

Wieck's arguments are clearly biased to serve his method: in reality he cannot separate the inventor from the performer, as the contortions, stretches, and velocity he disliked were made famous by Czerny. As for vanity and self-satisfaction, why did Wieck wish for Clara's success? Would it not also bring him success? Was it not his vanity and pride in his pedagogical methods that made Wieck believe that Clara could gain recognition on the male-dominated performance stage? Clearly, Wieck is boasting about his own method and how successful it is, yet he ignores the success of other approaches to piano technique. From this lengthy tirade and highly opinionated statement, Wieck's thoughts regarding the virtuosic style of performers are evident. Wieck had no place in his method for "empty virtuosity," and as we shall see later, his daughter was affected by these views through his teaching and his unrelenting control over her life.

II: Touring

Like many contemporary performing artists, Clara toured during her rise to virtuoso status (1830-1839), and the results ranged from extremely successful endeavours to near failures. Incidents such as the outbreak of disease, too many performers vying for the same audience, being unknown

¹⁰ Friedrich Wieck, *Piano and Song* (Stuyvesant: Pendragon Press, 1988), 58.

in a particular area, or lack of interest among the audience, number among the reasons for an unsuccessful tour or series of concerts. Many variables made the prediction of success or failure impossible, as this could only be determined upon the completion of a tour. This is not to say that Clara experienced numerous failures while on tour, though not all of her concerts were smashing successes. Most likely on any extensive tour, which would encompass as many as 40-50 concerts given in both the countryside and large cities (see Table 1), only one or two concerts would result in a loss of finances for Friedrich Wieck and Clara. Of course, financial gain is not the sole means to measure success: attendance, criticism, and audience response are markers of recognition, although the financial aspect did allow her career to continue and develop. Fortunately, Clara only experienced a few financially disappointing concerts while touring. For example, the number of attendees at Clara's concerts in Paris during the 1838-9 concert season was considerably smaller than the number to which Clara was accustomed at the Leipzig Gewandhaus as the home-town prodigy. The simple reason for this lack of success was competition and her relative obscurity outside of Germany; to her it seemed that "all pianists, male and female, were playing in Paris."¹¹

¹¹ Reich, 91.

Table 1. Location and dates of Clara's tours: 1830-39.¹²

1830	Germany—Leipzig, Dresden
1831	Germany—Weimar, Kassel, Frankfurt (en route to Paris)
1832	Paris
1833	Germany—Leipzig, Zwickau
1834	Germany—Leipzig, Dresden (to study French, English, and instrumentation)
1835	Germany—Zwickau
1836	Germany—Dresden, Freiburg, Leipzig, Weimar, Jena, Naumburg
1837-8	Austria, Hungary, Germany—Berlin, Leipzig, Bremen
1839	France, Germany—Berlin

Her concert tours can be grouped into three periods. The first period encompasses her rise to virtuoso status under her father's watchful tutelage and direction, 1830-39. During this stage, her father single-handedly planned the concert tours, no small or easy task. After several critically acclaimed performances in her home-town of Leipzig and in nearby Dresden, Zwickau, and Weimar, father and daughter ventured abroad to display this exceptionally talented prodigy. Until 1838, when Clara was still in her mid-teens, her father accompanied her.

The 1839 tour of France was the first tour that Wieck did not organize or chaperone Clara. I include it in the first period because she

¹² Ibid., 42-75, 276 and Pamela Gertrude Susskind, *Clara Wieck Schumann as Pianist and Composer* (Berkeley: University of California, 1977), 79-81.

still was emotionally under Wieck's control. Wieck intended to punish Clara for her secretive and, according to him, inappropriate contact prior to 1839 with Robert Schumann, whom he considered to be an inadequate suitor for his daughter. Sending her to Paris without him to arrange concert halls, sell tickets, deal with critics, confirm hotel arrangements, and appease battling piano firms, Wieck expected Clara to return home disconsolate and prepared to obey his orders indefinitely.¹³ However, he did not count on Clara's streak of independence and strong, persevering character. Despite a timid beginning, Clara handled everything that was normally relegated to Wieck with maturity and savoir-faire, qualities she inherited from her father that would serve her well throughout life.

Clara's independent journey to Paris was also atypical in that no male relative or friend traveled with her. A male companion would accompany the female performer for safety reasons, and also because it was expected that a respectable lady would not travel alone.¹⁴ It may have been extremely liberating for Clara to be self-sufficient and in control of her own affairs. The increased self-confidence paved the way for future, more ambitious tours to Russia and England, once she had broken ties with Wieck and married Robert Schumann in 1840. Clara's relationship with Robert infuriated Wieck so much that he literally disowned Clara during the court proceedings of 1839-40.¹⁵ A reconciliation did not take

¹³ Reich, 88.

¹⁴ Robert and Clara Schumann, *The Complete Correspondence of Robert and Clara Schumann* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 83.

¹⁵ Reich, 96.

place until just before the birth of Robert and Clara's second child, Elise, in 1843.

Clara's marriage to Schumann in September of 1840 was a happy time in her life after the strife over the parental consent for marriage caused by her father. However, at the same time, the performing career that had brought her great satisfaction dwindled. Wieck forced Clara and Robert to take legal action to be married, since he refused to grant the parental consent which Saxon law required.¹⁶ The lengthy and often emotionally taxing proceedings were eventually resolved in Clara's and Robert's favour, but not until Wieck had humiliated both of them publicly with false accusations.¹⁷ The nature of Wieck's accusations were as inane as Robert's poor handwriting, his quiet voice and social awkwardness. The more substantial allegations of drunkenness and mismanagement of finances were not as easily dismissed.¹⁸ For Clara, Wieck attacked her playing saying she would ruin the pianos she used.¹⁹ Her father's opposition to their marriage placed Clara in a difficult position. She felt as if she were forced to make a choice between her father and her lover. This topic of discussion was frequently found in Robert's and Clara's correspondence as early as 1838 and dragged on until the court decided in their favour in 1840.

¹⁶ Eda Sagarra, *An Introduction to Nineteenth Century Germany* (Essex: Longman Group Limited, 1980), 49.

¹⁷ Reich, 77.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 98.

Clara's marriage to Robert began the second touring period of her career. From her marriage to Schumann until his hospitalization in 1854, Clara was only able to undertake three large-scale concert tours: Denmark in 1842, Russia in 1844, and Austria in 1846-7. The Danish and Russian tours were both financially and critically successful, while the famous soprano Jenny Lind, as a supporting artist, financially rescued Clara's concerts in Vienna. Apparently, after a successful tour to Austria with her father in 1837-8, she had essentially been forgotten by the Viennese public. This meant significant financial loss and self-doubt for Clara.

In an age of limited transportation and many years before the invention of telecommunications, performers wanting to remain in the public's memory had to be prepared to travel almost continuously to maintain a rapport with audiences. The marriage, and Robert's desire to have them remain home, effectively took Clara out of the public gaze. While planning the tour to Austria, Clara expected the same success as she had enjoyed on her previous visit. Because of the small attendance at the Viennese concerts, the famous soprano Jenny Lind offered to sing in Clara's final few concerts without receiving remuneration. Clara and Robert firmly believed that only because of Jenny Lind's assistance was the concert hall full and the lost revenue obliterated.²⁰ Consequently, Clara learned that the drawing power of a prodigious child and a young married woman are two completely different things. No longer a prodigy

²⁰ John Burk, *Clara Schumann: A Romantic Biography* (New York: Random House, 1940), 248.

in 1846-7, she could not rely on the exceptional talents of a young girl who previously captivated audiences. For Viennese audiences this resulted in virtually empty concert halls, although newspaper and journalistic critics praised Clara's playing.

One of the goals of the 1846-7 Viennese tour was to promote Robert's music. With Jenny Lind, Clara provided for many people their first hearing of Robert's songs. Not only was this an immense joy to Robert, but it thrilled audiences to hear Lind's beautiful voice and Clara's fine playing combined in performing Robert's songs,²¹ the delicate *Der Nussbaum* among the selections.²² Women musicians were predominantly singers and thus their joint appearance was an oddity for their time. Lind habitually employed male pianists to accompany her concerts, but Clara's playing would have been equally acceptable because of her high calibre of playing and fame.

In order to understand Clara's lack of touring during her marriage, one must realize that Clara gave birth to eight children during this time. A professional performing career demands travel for extended periods. Such trips can be increasingly difficult to schedule once children are born. Male performers, like Liszt, did not have to deal to the same extent with problems such as these. In order for Clara to go on tour, her children would need to be left with family and friends.²³ It was only after Robert's

²¹ Ibid.

²² Reich, 260.

²³ This has raised issues for scholars of how much she loved her children, considerations that never plagued Liszt although he did the same thing.

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illness and death, when she was the sole supporter of the family, that Clara began to concertize anew with the drive and tenacity of a devoted performer, but now as a confident artist. Until 1854, her performing career had been governed first by her father and then by her familial duties; now her career was under her own control and she used her musical ability to provide for her family and to give herself satisfaction.

The third and final period of Clara's performing career was the longest and most personally satisfying as a performer,²⁴ beginning with Robert's hospitalization in 1854 and lasting until 1891. Clara no longer experienced any failure of tours, partial or otherwise, nor did she need to be rescued by supporting artists. Since her last tours Clara had become a widow with seven children. Clara needed to resume her performance career not solely for the artistic satisfaction, but out financial necessity as well. From an artistic perspective, Clara was now able to control and guide her career in any direction she chose and to travel as she deemed fit.

Clara began preparing for concert tours with renewed vigour in 1854. Over the next thirty years, concert tours to Holland, Switzerland, France, Austria, Denmark, and a number of return engagements in England shaped her life (see Table 2). Audiences in England especially loved her where, notably, Queen Victoria—an amateur musician—enjoyed Clara's playing. The Queen perhaps appreciated Clara's strength of character, which, coupled with her musical abilities, made her an

²⁴ Burk, 176-7.

impressive woman and similar to Queen Victoria. It was with great sadness in 1889, after her final trip to England, that Clara realized “her physical infirmities [neuralgia, arthritis] were gradually defeating her.”²⁵ Subsequently, she retired to a teaching position that she had held at the Frankfurt Conservatory from 1878. She occasionally returned to the concert stage in Germany for musical soirées and museum openings, but never to the same degree as when she was touring professionally. Clara last performed in public in 1891 in a performance at the Frankfurt Conservatory playing Brahms’s *Variations on a Theme by Haydn* for Two Pianos with one of her colleagues from the Conservatory.²⁶ She continued to teach and play in the privacy of her own home, but her public performances ceased.

Table 2. Dates of Clara’s Foreign Tours 1855-1888.²⁷

1855	Holland
1856	Austria, Denmark
1858	Switzerland
1859-60	Austria, Holland
1862-3	Switzerland, France
1866	Austria
1867-71	England, Holland
1872-3	England

²⁵ Ibid., 413.

²⁶ Reich, 183.

²⁷ Ibid., 276.

1876-7	England
1879-80	Switzerland
1888	England

III: Repertoire

Clara's repertoire changed over time, but these changes did not always coincide with the aforementioned touring stages of her career. In the first stage, Clara's repertoire consisted mainly of bravura salon pieces, embracing brilliant technique and popular operatic themes by composers who are less known today, but were at the height of popularity in the mid 1830's. Popular taste also required a soloist to compose technical showpieces as reflected in Clara's early compositions.

During the early years her father controlled every aspect of her career, from the pieces she played to whom she played them for. As already mentioned, Wieck responded to popular demands, gearing Clara's performances to please the concert-going public. A typical concert programme of Clara's early career was performed in Kassel on December 13, 1831 as follows:

Henri Herz—*Variationen über einen Marsch aus Wilhelm Tell*

Clara Wieck—*Alte Heimath, Der Wanderer* (Lost songs)

Johann Pixis—*Trio*, Op. 96

Clara Wieck—*Variationen über die Vorgehende*

Romanze für Physharmonice mit Pianoforte (most likely composed by Friedrich Wieck)

Henri Herz—*Variationen über ein Thema von Meyerbeer*, Op. 23.²⁸

There were no works by now canonic German composers, although Wieck revered Bach and once met Beethoven in 1826.²⁹ The 1831 concert programme is an example of tailoring a programme to satisfy the audience's expectations, including operatic material, songs, and theme-and-variations pieces. The concert-going crowds enjoyed compositions based upon popular opera arias, marches, and ensemble pieces of the day which they would recognize. This may seem trivial in comparison to today's canonic repertoire, but it was the popular music of its day and performers could not ignore the popularity of song and opera. The only exceptions to the salon music in her repertoire, found in other concert programmes, were early works by Schumann, and Chopin's variations on *La ci darem la mano*, Op. 2. Playing Chopin was a risk, as it was newly composed by the virtually unknown Polish/French composer in Germany, but Robert Schumann had favourably reviewed it in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* of 1831. In defense of his choice of repertoire, Wieck explained the necessity for playing popular music in his didactic work *Klavier und Gesang* in 1853: "Any kind of one-sidedness is disadvantageous to art. It's just as wrong to play only Beethoven as it is to

²⁸ Pamela Susskind Pettler, "Performers and Instruments: Clara Schumann's Recitals, 1832-50," *Nineteenth Century Music*, 70-1.

²⁹ Reich, 31.

play no Beethoven, or only to play classical music or salon music.”³⁰ As a result, it appears today that “all the pieces she played in her debut concerts were the latest trinkets from Paris or Vienna: five different sets of variations by Henri Herz, three new works by Pixis, and even a few crowd-pleasers of her own. Her father knew exactly what programs would draw audiences,”³¹ but these salon pieces were highly important on social and musical grounds. With the inclusion of Chopin’s and Schumann’s music, we see Clara for the first time in the role that would define her performing career: a champion of new works by prominent Romantic composers, such as Schumann, Chopin, and later, Brahms. Liszt did the same with Chopin and Schumann, although Clara understandably included much more of Schumann’s music.

Clara’s concert programmes closely resemble those of other performers in shape and genre. A survey of Chopin’s concerts of the same time (see below) shows he played pieces mainly of his own composition and in the genres of fantasies, variations and concertos. Ignaz Moscheles, another piano virtuoso-composer, followed the same format as Chopin and Clara Schumann.

³⁰ Wieck, 99.

³¹ Pettler, 71.

Table 3. Locations, Dates, and Repertoire of Selected Performances by Chopin and Moscheles.³²

Chopin, March 17, 1830, Paris	<i>Allegro and Adagio and Rondo</i> from the <i>Concerto in F minor</i> (Chopin); <i>Pot pourri on National Airs</i> (Chopin)
Chopin, August 28, 1831, Munich	<i>Concerto in E minor</i> (Chopin); <i>Fantasia on Polish Themes</i> (Chopin)
Chopin, January 15, 1832, Paris	<i>Concerto in F minor</i> (Chopin); <i>Variations in Bb</i> (Chopin); <i>Marche suivi d'une Polonaise</i> (Kalkbrenner)
Moscheles, December 11, 1832, London	<i>Fantasy on English National Songs, Alexander Variations, Improvisations</i> (Moscheles)

In 1835, the bravura salon pieces slowly began to disappear from Clara's concert programmes, while Beethoven, Bach, Mendelssohn, and Schumann became more central to her repertoire. A concert programme of 1835 at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig shows a balance between more concert music from the past and salon music:

Clara Wieck—*Concerto*, Op. 7 (new work/some bravura)

Mendelssohn—*Capriccio Brilliant*, Op. 22 (still bravura, but a German rather than French composer)

Bach—*Konzert für drei Klaviere*

Herz—*Variationen*, Op. 36³³

³² Frederick Niecks, *Frederick Chopin: As a Man and a Musician* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1973), 131-2, 196, 240-1; Ernst Burger, *Franz Liszt: A Chronicle of his Life in Pictures and Documents* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 70; and Emil F. Smidak, *Isaak-Ignaz Moscheles: The Life of the Composer and his Encounters with Beethoven, Liszt, Chopin and Mendelssohn* (Hampshire: Scholar Press, 1989), 89.

³³ Pettler, 73.

In comparing the Kassel programme to that in the Gewandhaus, the difference of performance venues must factor into the choice of repertoire. Other virtuosi like Moscheles were mainly following the bravura template of fantasies and concertos (see Table 4.)

Table 4. Samples of Moscheles's Concert Programmes of 1835.³⁴

October 10, 1835	Leipzig	<i>Concerto Pathétique</i> , Op. 93, <i>Concert Fantastique</i> , Op. 90, <i>Fantasy on a Theme from 'Titus,' G minor Concerto</i>
Date unknown	Mendelssohn's home	<i>Duet in D for Two Pianos</i> (Mozart), <i>Hommage à Handel</i> , Op. 92, <i>Rondo Brilliant in Eb</i> (Mendelssohn), <i>Concert Fantastique</i> , Op. 90.

The Gewandhaus was the centre of the Leipzig concert scene and Clara had established her position in Leipzig as early as 1831. Her father's position as a well-known and successful businessman was also an advantage. She could afford a slight deviation from standard practice in a familiar place. Conversely, the Kassel concert was part of a tour where the primary goal was to gain the favour of new audiences so her reputation might increase. By 1835, Clara had already cemented her position in Leipzig and had more leeway to experiment with concert programmes and repertoire.³⁵ Engagements such as the Gewandhaus gave her the

³⁴ Smidak, 108.

³⁵ Berthold Litzmann, *Clara Schumann: An Artist's Life* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1979), I:87.

opportunity to perform both older and new Romantic-school compositions, while she saved the more virtuosic pieces for her touring programmes. While on her Parisian tour of 1838-9, in a letter to Robert dated January 15, 1838, Clara reveals the two separate audiences:

I played for some local connoisseurs all morning today, and they became ecstatic. I was filled with great enthusiasm, *not* because of the company but because of the music itself. I even played your *Carnaval*. After the concert I intend to play a Beethoven sonata, some fugues by Scarlatti and Bach, and your *Carnaval* for some people.³⁶

Beethoven's sonata and the fugues could not be placed on her publicly advertised concert programmes due to a lack of awareness by the average concert attendants. These pieces had to be reserved for smaller audiences who were already familiar with the more substantial repertoire. On her Parisian tour of 1839, when Clara chose her repertoire, the technically brilliant virtuosic pieces were still in fashion. Nevertheless, Clara discovered that she could not play anything that she and her father considered serious, the music she truly loved, at the aristocratic soirees "until it were perhaps 2 a.m., when most of the guests had left and the real connoisseurs remained to hear her play Schumann, Chopin, and Scarlatti."³⁷ Eventually, the music first played for the elite found its way onto her permanent concert repertoire, replacing the salon pieces.

In the years following her marriage in 1840, Clara's repertoire went through another permutation, toward championing Schumann and, in the

³⁶ Schumann, Robert and Clara, II:15.

³⁷ Reich, 262.

1850's, Brahms. The music of husband Robert, although regularly included on her programs, was still comparatively obscure and rarely performed. Clara's contemporary Liszt did perform Robert's music, but infrequently and not to the same degree as she did. After their marriage, Clara felt even more strongly that it was both her duty and privilege to champion Robert's music. Her repertoire lists of these times included more solo and chamber works composed by her husband, such as *Kreisleriana*, the Allegro in B minor, Op. 8, and the Trio in D minor, Op. 63.³⁸

Clara's evolving concert repertoire established her as a "frank propagandist for music of deeper current and fuller beauty, while pyrotechnics and other such customary tricks of entertainment took their place as a concession at the end of her programmes."³⁹ Her choice of repertoire in part furthered the development of the piano recital as we know it today, and as it was not always the most popular music, it was a risk above and beyond the larger issue of gender.

IV: The Virtuoso Clara

Having briefly traced Clara's development from a child prodigy to a mature performing artist, her training, and the repertoire that advanced her career—all elements of virtuosity—, let us look more closely at her

³⁸ Pettler, 74.

³⁹ Burk, 117-8.

particular style of virtuosity, since she was one of the foremost performers of her time. We have already encountered some of her father's opinions; his *Klavier und Gesang* is one long tirade against the recent development of spectacles on the concert stage. But the element of spectacle is not the sole component of virtuosity. A virtuosic performer encompasses advanced technical and interpretive elements to present an informed, enlightened performance that "transcends the limitations of the technical, that its prestige consists in this ability to allow music to rise above its material instruments and merge with poetic ideality."⁴⁰ The superhuman quality of virtuosity intrigued audiences and musicians alike and added to the spectacular nature of performances. Did Clara unquestionably adopt Wieck's views? Did others influence her? There is no doubt that Friedrich Wieck commanded respect. His teachings and constant lessons, both inside and outside the concert hall, largely shaped her opinions, but there were other influences. Obviously Robert's close friendship influenced and shaped her thoughts as she was growing up; thus, she had access to another musician's opinions regarding music and its current trends. In this sense she did not blindly accept all of Wieck's teachings without first weighing the options in her own mind, since she had other

⁴⁰ Susan Bernstein, *Virtuosity of the Nineteenth Century: Performing Music and Language in Heine, Liszt, and Beaudelaire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 11.

well-respected professionals, like Mendelssohn, Chopin, Carl Banck,⁴¹ and Heinrich Dorn,⁴² with whom to discuss musical issues.

Characteristics of this virtuosic style, which technically separated the virtuosi from the merely competent, were: “racing arpeggios and chromatic scales, *dolce e leggiaramente* passages, sudden dynamic changes; jaunty offbeats or alternating hands; piquant grace notes; rhythmic effects, such as three against four, *graziamente*; startling leaps, all traversing the entire keyboard, with dazzling effect.”⁴³ Although Clara had the technical ability to achieve all these exciting feats, Wieck’s focus upon tone, expression, and interpretation is less spectacular than the physical and technical effects.

One of the progenitors of the bravura style, if not the most famous representative, was Franz Liszt. Without naming names, Friedrich Wieck indirectly condemned Liszt and other virtuosi of this style in *Klavier und Gesang*: “They [virtuosi] sweat, brush their hair out of their faces, flirt with the public and themselves—and suddenly experience *feeling*.”⁴⁴ Wieck, and subsequently Clara, had great contempt for the theatrical element of musical performance. In Wieck’s afore-quoted speech (see pages 8-9) regarding “pianomania,” as he called it, his views were clearly

⁴¹ Clara’s singing teacher, a member of Schumann’s *Band of David*, and rumoured to fancy marrying Clara.

⁴² Composer and director of the Leipzig opera.

⁴³ Susskind, 29.

⁴⁴ Wieck, 57. Myths about Liszt’s performances involve him giving bits of his hair to hysteric audience members (mostly women), and tossing his hair out of his eyes during pieces.

against the musical spectacles experienced on the European concert stages. We can count Robert Schumann among Wieck's associates in the battle for a reserved physical performance on the part of the performer.

Examining Wieck's didactic writings affords a way to understand what was expected of Clara at the piano, although oddly enough, Wieck's book is not a step-by-step explanation of his method. To summarize Wieck's view as a pedagogue, he felt that too much emphasis was placed upon technique and not enough attention given to the sonorous effects then available from the improved pianos.⁴⁵ He believed and lamented that the current generation of pianists were "concerning themselves with empty artifice and misconceived technic, forget[ting] the study of tone and interpretation," which was the entire basis for his approach to piano playing.⁴⁶ This can be seen and heard in the astounding opera paraphrases and variations performed by Clara, Liszt, Thalberg, et al. These pieces gave the audience what they wanted: something familiar enhanced by the dazzling effects of the virtuoso, which made for an exciting evening. Even Clara wrote a set of bravura variations, *Variations de Concert pour le piano-forte, sur la Cavatine du Pirate, de Bellini*, Op. 8, composed in 1837, to take with her on the Austrian and French tours.

A performer's body had quite a bit to do with the success or failure of a musical performance. The particular way a performer utilizes the

⁴⁵ Ibid., 58.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

body has an effect not only on the sound produced, but what the audience physically views. Virtuosi were very much like actors, giving their activities “brilliance, flash, fanfare, zip, flamboyance—that is they turned their activities into spectacle.”⁴⁷ Documented in reviews, Clara’s body movements were rather reserved and did not create a spectacle in comparison to those of many other performers. What is a virtuoso performer then, if lacking the elements of spectacle and dazzle? A definition that hedges its own bets defines a virtuoso performer as “one whose performances have been consistently *recognized* as being virtuosic, as exhibiting exceptional musicianship and technical proficiency sufficient to set an interpretive standard.”⁴⁸ Clara certainly had the recognition from critics and audiences as a virtuoso, but with a subtle difference. This difference may have had to do with conventions regarding gender, her father’s particular preference for a lack of extraneous movement, some advice Paganini gave to her when she played for him in 1829, or all of the above. In recounting this latter experience in her diary she noted, Paganini praised me, but told me that I must not play too restlessly and with too much movement of the body.”⁴⁹ This may seem odd coming from Paganini, who also inspired Liszt—his performances may be understood to be in direct contrast to Clara’s because of their showmanship and grand

⁴⁷ Paul Metzner, *Crescendo of the Virtuoso: Spectacle, Skill, and Self-Promotion in Paris During the Age of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 221.

⁴⁸ Howard, Vernon A, “Virtuosity as a Performance Concept: A Philosophical Analysis,” *Philosophy of Musical Education Review* 5/1 (Spring 1997), 47.

⁴⁹ Litzmann, I:15.

physical gestures. Paganini's accomplishments, however, were of a technical nature, while audiences were also fascinated with his corporeal characteristics.⁵⁰ Many descriptions of Clara's playing refer to the demureness and simplicity of her stage presence and how her personal character was reflected in her performance:

There was no surface gloss to Clara, either in conversation or in the making of music. Her thoroughness and her idealism were to become so much a part of her character that they would in some way inform her every act.⁵¹

These characteristics are reflected in her performance style: her serious nature frowned upon the utilization of extraneous body gestures, which Wieck felt took away from the music. Father Wieck's stern upbringing of her manifested itself also in her playing. Performing was a serious enterprise, and there was no room for showmanship or horseplay:

She went directly at her task, played with straightforward ability, unconcerned with the dramatic gesture or the emotional pose which was the manner of the day. Clara with her refreshing simplicity, so unusual in the salons where sensationalism and artifice abounded, at once won the hearts of her hearers.⁵²

Although this older source subscribes to the sub-standard quality of salon music, Burk's judgement was written while some could still remember Clara Schumann's playing.

Interpretation was a consideration for virtuoso performers. No two performances would be identical; there would always be differences

⁵⁰ Physical descriptions of Paganini include gaunt, thin frame, and sickly, giving rise to speculations of demonic possession.

⁵¹ Burk, 44.

⁵² Ibid.

regardless of the calibre of performer, yet still there would be choices to be made. Interpretational choices based on consideration of the composer's wishes and the score contributed to the virtuosic performance and reception by the audience. In these respects, Clara was decidedly conservative. During her education, Friedrich Wieck encouraged her to "play what is written, and as it is written. It all stands there."⁵³ Embellishing as the mood struck him, Liszt would add octaves to Chopin's music and to his own. In German music circles, Clara's ideology of bringing out what is already revealed by the composer has given rise to the term *werktreu* or "true to text,"⁵⁴ which is a reasonable description for her interpretations of canonical works. The term *werktreu* is especially applicable to her written interpretations of music found in Robert and Clara's correspondence and marriage diary.⁵⁵

Clara's teaching career also embodied the less flamboyant principles evident in her playing. Her students became keenly aware that she "deplored ostentation in any form: no exaggeration of dynamics, of tempo or change of tempo, or of pedaling, no tricks that might detract from the purity of the interpretation was permitted."⁵⁶ Clara saw such alterations as inartistic, but performers who changed tempi or added notes were not

⁵³ Joan Chissell, *Clara Schumann: A Dedicated Spirit: A Study of her Life and Work* (London: H. Hamilton, 1983), 189.

⁵⁴ Reich, 280.

⁵⁵ In the correspondence Robert and Clara would discuss both their compositions. Discussing Clara's, Robert would offer minute changes, while in discussing Robert's music Clara would ask more performance-oriented questions regarding tempo and expression.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 295.

necessarily inartistic; they were giving the audience the drama and spectacle they desired. However, audiences valued Clara's performances even though they lacked excess physicality.

V: Clara as Female Virtuoso

Perhaps not directly, but indirectly, these values professed by Clara could be linked to the conventions of woman's purity, which were unquestionably scrutinized while a woman was on stage. In *The Sight of Sound*, Richard Leppert problematizes women's roles as professional musicians and their effect on audiences and society:

If the performer was a woman . . . public performance was extraordinarily difficult in that public "display" directly challenged the very category "woman": it was public, not domestic, and active, not passive; it deflected attention away from her father or husband.⁵⁷

Leppert continues with a more general discussion of music and how music is "a fear of feminine eruption, of a musical 'she' who ceases to charm us, who in effect denaturalizes 'herself' losing 'her' simplicity, becoming complex, astonishing, and more like a man."⁵⁸ In one way, Clara's refusal to lose her simplicity and become complex with gestures and extravagance allowed her to maintain a natural, more womanly and acceptable position on the stage. But as we shall see, other factors, including her carriage while performing, help to categorize her as male.

⁵⁷ Richard Leppert, 67.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

Clara's gender contributed to bringing audience members to her performances, either to see or to hear. As a woman at the height of the male-dominated music profession, Clara was an oddity only rivaled by fellow performers Jenny Lind, Pauline Garcia, and Camilla Pleyel, to name others who are not entirely forgotten today. Physically, a woman's presence on stage was "supercharged with sexuality, producing an 'interest' simultaneously encoded with pleasure and anxiety."⁵⁹ In making difficult technical passages seem effortless and not overtly theatrical, Clara transcended gender to be equal to the male virtuoso—an issue that will be developed in Chapter Two. Clara's playing did not arouse the same kind of mania as others did, but audiences loved her perhaps because of this alternative display of virtuosity that was more appropriate for female performers.

To gain a better understanding of what it meant to be a female virtuoso, I will now turn to Jenny Lind, a prominent female singer of the nineteenth century. As two well-known female performers of their century, Jenny Lind and Clara Schumann respected each other's talent, but there was much more to their relationship. Coincidentally, they crossed paths enough that they became friends mid-way through their careers. Friedrich Wieck, always searching for the next "great" performer, whether pianist or singer, played a part in the meeting of the two talented women in 1846. While living in Dresden, Clara was called home to Leipzig by

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

her father to hear the talented Swedish singer.⁶⁰ Clara was reluctant to travel to Leipzig, fearing that her father's enthusiasm was exaggerated and she felt it impossible for Lind to live up to the reputation that preceded her.⁶¹ Nonetheless, it was also an opportunity to visit Mendelssohn and get out after the recuperation imposed by her most recent pregnancy. Not only was she enthralled by Lind's singing, but Mendelssohn enticed Clara to contribute musically to the concert. Jenny was genuinely touched by Clara's gesture, so much so that it instantly cemented their long friendship, which survived occasional artistic differences such as their divergent opinions about Brahms.

Wieck's enthusiastic approval of Jenny Lind's style is expanded upon in *Klavier und Gesang*. Wieck believed that in order to create a beautiful piano tone, any decent pianist should be educated in singing. He valued Jenny's voice over all others and thought her comportment to be ideal. In a rhetorical question, Wieck again reveals his preference for a particular performance style: "Why does she [Lind] favor operas in which her entire artistic and vocal schooling can flourish, a schooling that permits no affectations, no bravado, no false sentiment, and which is chaste, disciplined and ideally beautiful?"⁶² With Wieck's endorsement of someone who appeared to conform to his method, it would have been difficult for Clara to withhold her approval of Jenny Lind.

⁶⁰ Chissell, 97.

⁶¹ Ibid., 97-8.

⁶² Wieck, 76.

Many similarities between the two women's careers are evident. Both were highly successful and managed to balance a professional career and a family. Another commonality was their manner of stage presence. Refined in her early studies with the Stockholm Opera Company (once it had been discovered that she possessed prodigious talent), Lind's stage comportment mirrors the subtlety of Clara's performance manner.

A woman of self-described plain features, Lind's physical characteristics appeared to change once she emerged on stage. Lind's beautiful voice "came ringing out, but over and above that was the wonderful TRANSFIGURATION—no other word could apply—which came over her entire face and figure."⁶³ This apparent transfiguration was noticeable by Lind in both her operatic and concert performances. She was first trained as an actress, which aided her entire career. Lind, as an actress, realized the importance of a visual as well as aural stimulation to the audience. Yet, the physical transformation of her face was not to detract from the quality of the musical performance. For all of her incredible talents, Lind, in accordance with her religious piety, was:

not a good showman. She disliked the artificial aids to effect which the actress habitually employs. . . . In her concerts she invariably wore a simple white dress, another general aspect that suggested simplicity and purity, never the complicated, highly emotional set of reactions that we habitually associate with the prima donna.⁶⁴

Parallels are easily drawn in comparison with Clara. The

⁶³ Henry Scott Holland and William Rockstro, *Jenny Lind. The Artist* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), I: 198.

⁶⁴ Edward Wagenknecht, *Jenny Lind* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1980), 60.

characteristics of purity and simplicity surface in the description of Lind's show(man)ship or lack thereof, and thus Clara's stage presence closely corresponds to Lind's ideals. Characterized as possessing such absolutes as purity and simplicity, the two leading female virtuosos of the time captivated audiences not through artifice, but through virtue.

An argument between Clara and Jenny, beyond their disagreement involving Brahms, pertained to Clara's reputation of being true to the text. Jenny was also faithful to a composer's text, but in her "conscientiousness in attempting to set forth his exact shade of meaning, she never made the mistake of thinking of the interpreter as a mere automaton or in any way minimized his importance."⁶⁵ While Clara doubtless did not regard herself in her interpretive role as an automaton, she did make the astute observation that "only a composer—a creator—could achieve immortality, the interpretive artist would soon be forgotten."⁶⁶ Made in reference to composition, this statement also rings true for the performer, for before the age of recordings it is impossible to know what Jenny Lind or Clara Schumann might have sounded like. Even with Clara's reputation of being true to the text, the high priestess of the piano was "known to play too fast, double an octave, or add an occasional embellishment."⁶⁷ Jenny Lind was not entirely without embellishments either. Jenny was known

⁶⁵ Ibid., 67.

⁶⁶ Reich, 295.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 280.

particularly for her pianissimo singing and her trill, but above all else, the myth existed that:

she could sustain her voice for so long that it was rumoured she had an ability to sing on the in-drawn as well as the outgoing breath. . . . She could hold on until the audience believed she must be at the very end of her resources, but then, instead of breaking off, it [her voice] would gradually swell out in an unbelievable crescendo of sound.⁶⁸

In any event, Clara's and Jenny's virtuosity was different in comparison to that of other, more theatrical male and female performers.

In contrast to the two leading ladies of the musical stage, we have Franz Liszt, who was one of the greatest, if not the greatest of piano virtuosos of all time. The professional and personal relationship between Clara and Liszt was tumultuous to say the least. Her opinion of him changed drastically from their first encounter in Vienna in 1838 to their last meeting in 1856. In Vienna, during her tour of 1838, daughter and father marveled at Liszt's talent and enjoyed their time spent with the great virtuoso. But Wieck wrote some harsh criticism in his young, easily impressed daughter's diary:

His passion knows no bound, not infrequently he jars on one's sense of beauty by tearing melodies to pieces, he uses the pedals too much, thus making his works incomprehensible, if not to professionals, at least to amateurs.⁶⁹

Wieck also noted that Liszt "will not be without influence on Clara, and that Clara does not copy his many follies and eccentricities, of that an old schoolmaster will take care."⁷⁰ The opinion of her father unfavourably

⁶⁸ Joan Bulman, *Jenny Lind* (London: James Barrie, 1956), 52-3.

⁶⁹ Litzmann, I: 149.

⁷⁰ Burk, 150.

disposed Clara to Liszt's playing. However, she made an effort to enjoy Liszt for Robert's sake, since the two had recently begun corresponding.⁷¹

This one-sided truce was difficult for Clara to execute. In their correspondence of 1839, Robert chastised Clara as he had:

often found that a person's behavior greatly influences your opinions. Admit it. Anyone who is very nice to you, who gives in to you, who agrees with your opinion, in fact anyone who has any resemblance to your fiancé (who also knew that very well) is immediately in your good graces.⁷²

The disjunction between the man and his music was unacceptable despite his status as a great virtuoso. Clara's professional jealousy was most likely at the root of her dislike for Liszt's character and style of performance.

Mild tolerance of Liszt's "charlatanism," on and off stage, persisted for Robert's sake, but an incident at the Schumann's Dresden home in 1848 caused a rift that Clara chose not to mend:

He outraged Clara by appearing two hours late for a dinner party, insulted Robert by pronouncing his Quintet "Leipzigerish," [in the old, conservative style found in Leipzig] praised Meyerbeer at Mendelssohn's expense [despite knowing of the Schumanns close friendship with the Mendelssohns], and horrified both Schumanns by his "dreadful" playing.⁷³

Given this volatile history separating the era's leading female and male piano virtuosos, a divided loyalty among performers and composers was bound to occur.

⁷¹ Reich, 211.

⁷² Schumann, Robert and Clara, II:494.

⁷³ Reich, 216.

Despite Liszt's privileged gender, he and Clara had a surprisingly similar education and career path. Long careers were the result of personal charisma, dedication, talent, and a profound love of music that spurred them on, despite their beginnings as prodigies. They both met and were influenced by Paganini, and were courted by royalty, nobility, and the wealthy. In the face of such similarity, how could these two musicians be so far apart in their performance styles? Liszt's noble nature refused to lower itself to Clara's petty shots about his character and music, of which there is no evidence of the public's awareness. After the Dresden incident:

[t]he Schumanns, in fact, had reached that most unsatisfactory of all stages in human affairs: they were not yet Liszt's enemies, but they no longer counted him among their friends. Such ambivalent feelings stifle candour and so it was here.⁷⁴

As it was, Liszt continued to dedicate works to the Schumanns without reciprocation or even acknowledgement.⁷⁵ Throughout his entire career, Liszt had only positive things to say of Clara and her playing, although he must have found her musical preferences and style conservative and old-fashioned. In writing to Marie d'Agoult in 1838, his praise for Clara seems genuine:

Just one word about Clara Wieck—disintissimo [most distinguished]—(but not a man of course). We are living in the same hotel, Zur Stadt Frankfurt, and after dinner we make as much music

⁷⁴ Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Weimar Years 1848-1861* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 138.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 342.

as possible. She is such a very simple person, cultivated. . . totally absorbed in her art but with nobility and without childishness.⁷⁶

Perhaps Liszt shared the same bias as Clara—that person and the musician were inseparable—, seeing that Liszt did not directly describe her playing, though they frequently played together in the evening.

Clara and Jenny maintained their popularity throughout their entire careers, which is a feat that eluded many other performers. There is little doubt that through their hard work and effort they deserved to remain at the top of their professions, but more than work and effort endeared them to the public. Combining talent with societal values of propriety, Jenny and Clara created a distinct approach to virtuosity that was undoubtedly female, as their acceptance by critics and audiences will show in the forthcoming chapter.

Through the supporting cases of Jenny Lind and Franz Liszt, it appears that women either chose or were compelled to be different in their displays of virtuosity in direct contrast to their male counterparts. Clara Schumann's alternative performance of virtuosic acts gave a woman's voice to the pianistic virtuosity practiced almost entirely by men. Strong kinship with Jenny Lind, although not a pianist, bolstered Clara's and—by association—women's positions in the field of music, making society's

⁷⁶ Reich, 209-10; as quoted from Franz Liszt, *Correspondence de Liszt et de Madame d'Agoult*, edited by Daniel Ollivier, 2 vols. (Paris: Grasset, 1933) 1:127 (April 13, 1838).

conventions less binding. Female virtuosity was then an entity unto itself, and contrary to male portrayals of virtuosic display.

CHAPTER TWO

THE VIRTUOSA/O: CLARA SCHUMANN'S GENDER AMBIGUITY IN 19TH CENTURY MUSICAL DOCUMENTS

In contemporary articles, biographies, and performance reviews, a trope of Clara Schumann as a masculine performer emerges. The characterization of Clara as male arguably helped to legitimate her critically and financially successful career. For example, noted critic Eduard Hanslick described “the masculinity of her playing,”¹ while Franz Liszt drew attention to her unusual musical education by criticizing her father’s method which, though typical for men in Germany, was unusual for women.²

By looking at two pieces of nineteenth-century writing, a concert review by Hanslick³ and biographical article by Liszt,⁴ and using the

¹ Eduard Hanslick, *Music Criticisms 1846-99* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1950), 50.

² Liszt also strictly maintained gender stereotypes, such as a woman’s position within the musical world, in comparison to Hanslick.

³ Hanslick, “Clara Schumann,” *Music Criticisms 1846-99*, pp. 48-52.

⁴ Franz Liszt, “Clara Schumann,” *Dwight’s Journal of Music*, 7/1 (Saturday, April 7, 1855), 1-2.

reader-response technique of affective stylistics developed by Stanley Fish,⁵ who examines style, syntax and semantics, I will develop some issues of gender subversion for Clara. These pieces of writing were chosen because of Liszt's relationship to Clara and Hanslick's prestige as a critic. I will also take supporting information from the Reich, Litzmann and Chissell biographies, a diarist's entry in *Dwight's Journal of Music*, Wieck's account of her encounter with Goethe, and thoughts by her husband Robert Schumann, and will briefly compare how other women performers were treated in criticism, using the vocal virtuoso Jenny Lind.

I: Gender Theory

Drawing on Judith Butler's theory of gender as a performative act,⁶ one could maintain that, despite Clara's biologically female body, she adopted or performed in a manner associated with a male persona, as described by the language in Hanslick's concert review and other documents of her time. Simply by performing in public, Clara was behaving in a way that was abnormal for her gender. By not adhering to normative gender practices, Clara's actions question expectations of gender and gender boundaries. Her subversion of gender, although

⁵ Stanley Fish, *Is there a text in this class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980).

⁶ See Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), and *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

subconscious, undoubtedly made her career more acceptable by societal standards in an age when society often discouraged female musicians from a public performance career for reasons such as bodily display.

The two aforementioned writings by Judith Butler raise the question of gender as a social construction. Is gender determined by physical characteristics or constructed by society and inscribed from birth?

Butler's hypothesis is the latter:

when the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one.⁷

Thus, gender is not something determined by physical characteristics alone, but involves behaviour which is taught from birth and then performed. So while a person's physical characteristics specify one gender, their actions may indicate or be associated with the behaviour of another gender. If we ignore Clara's biological gender and observe how she was treated by Friedrich Wieck, musicians, critics, and society, the "conventional" definition of "feminine" as submissive and retiring does not always apply. Dr. John Money, medical psychologist, differentiates between gender identity and gender role, which supports Butler's theories: gender identity is private while gender role is public.⁸ In

⁷ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. (New York: Routledge, 1990), 6.

⁸ John Money and Anke A. Ehrhardt, *Man & Woman, Boy & Girl: Differentiation and Dimorphism of Gender Identity from Conception to Maturity* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1972), 4.

this sense Clara subverted or overturned gender stereotypes publicly, and performed a masculine rather than a feminine body, while at home being associated with socially expected gender identities. A considerable amount of literature regarding Clara Schumann describes her and her body as man, masculine, or above gender categorization,⁹ just as Butler's theories suggest. By no means did these descriptions only occur later in her career, but throughout her lifetime.¹⁰ Undoubtedly this pleased her father, as he included her in all-male musical circles from an early age,¹¹ and treated her as he would a first born son.¹²

Arguments in Butler's more recent writing, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (1997), move away from gender as performative, focusing more on suppression of the body and gender melancholia. Butler's suppression of the body theory could also apply to Clara Schumann's use of her body in performance and provide reasons for her so-called "restrained" performance style, as "a bodily experience, broadly construed, comes under the censor of the law."¹³ To apply this to

⁹See Nancy B. Reich, *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman*, 1985; Peter Ostwald, "Florestan, Eusebius, Clara, and Schumann's Right Hand," *Nineteenth Century Music* 4/1 (1980), 17-31; Anna Burton, "Robert Schumann and Clara Wieck: A Creative Partnership," *Music and Letters* 69/2 (1988), 211-28; Dorothea Cromley "Clara Schumann: Role Model for Today's Woman," *American Music Teacher* 41/3 (1992), 16-19.

¹⁰ See Berthold Litzmann, *Clara Schumann: An Artist's Life*; Peter Cahn, *Das Hoch'sche Konservatorium in Frankfurt am Main* (Frankfurt am Main: Waldemar Kramer, 1979).

¹¹ Reich, 44-5.

¹² Wieck had two sons Gustav and Alwin. However, he treated them as burdens and made them leave the household as soon as society deemed it acceptable. Clara received all his praise and observed silently as she saw her brothers severely disciplined for minor offences such as practicing incorrectly.

¹³ Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 58.

Clara Schumann, the bodily experience of performing is subject to certain standards accepted by society. This supports Clara's reserved approach to stage performance, so as not to offend the law/society/audience, which suppressed female performers. Clara's reserved performance style was another way in which she overturned gender, considering that Liszt's extravagant gestures incited hysteria among audiences. However, there is no mention of Clara's gestures causing the furor that Liszt's performances did. Clara's lack of decadence and excess could be considered more refined or "gentlemanly."

Habitual activities learned by young women, like cooking, were suppressed from Clara's normal routine. These duties became a point of humour or serious debate between Robert and Clara during her tour to Paris in 1839, depending on the tone of the letter and the severity of Wieck's propaganda. Now secretly engaged, Clara's misgivings about cooking and maintaining a household surface in their correspondence. In a letter dated March 10, 1839, Clara recounts one of her first cooking experiences:

Emilie (who has spent the night with us) and Henriette just asked me to write you that I am exceptionally good at making breakfast, and that I look very charming doing so. . . . Sometimes you must be afraid that I can't cook. You needn't worry about that; I'll learn it quickly (once I am with you). Emilie is just saying, "So you can burn your piano fingers"!¹⁴

While Clara jokingly discussed her cooking ability, her companion Emilie

¹⁴ Schumann, Robert and Clara, II:100.

raised relevant issues with which Friedrich Wieck would have agreed. The marriage of his daughter seemingly ended all of Wieck's hard work, so she could become a homemaker.¹⁵ Wieck's suppression of womanly duties only reinforced her unique position by usurping a woman's normative actions.

As much as Butler's newer book reinterprets the performativity of gender, she does not entirely abandon this previous theory; rather, she expands upon it. Butler now links psychoanalysis "with gender performativity, and how I [Butler] take[s] performativity to be linked with melancholia."¹⁶ Sounding much like her earlier theory of gender as performative, Butler argues "what is exteriorized or performed can only be understood by reference to what is barred from performance, what cannot or will not be performed."¹⁷ Not only is this observation applicable to gender, but also especially to the virtuoso. The decision, conscious or not, regarding how one behaves on stage and in performance affects the way an audience perceives the performer. Clara's choice to feature "reserved" and "restrained" gestures can only be judged so in comparison to others, and to what she has left out. In reference to gender performativity, Butler offers another analysis pertinent to Clara Schumann:

Gender itself might be understood in part as the "acting out" of unresolved grief. The above analysis is a risky one because it suggests that for a "man" performing femininity, or for a "woman" performing masculinity (the latter is always, in effect, to perform a

¹⁵ Reich, 78.

¹⁶ Butler, 144.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 144-5.

little less, given that femininity is cast as the spectacular gender), there is an attachment to . . . masculinity by the woman.¹⁸

Butler identifies two relevant issues: femininity is understood as the spectacular gender and a woman performing the male gender has an attachment to masculinity. In reviews, Clara's lack of spectacle impresses certain reviewers; she performed with less flamboyance, less extraneous gesture, and less showmanship, which in accordance with the above quotation may be read as performing in a way ascribable to masculinity. This element redefines her performative gender since her physical gender does not correspond to the manner in which she publicly performed, which Butler accounts for in theorizing that once considerations of biological gender are removed, there exists the possibility for numerous genders. With these developments in gender theory, let us now examine how they first apply to her training and education and then to selected concert reviews.

II: Education

Friedrich Wieck began Clara's indoctrination into masculinity early with a progressive educational curriculum. Clara's education was in no way common for a German woman of the 1830's. Wieck engineered and limited her lessons to skills that she would require as a concertizing female musician who would compete with established and accepted male

¹⁸ Ibid., 146.

performers. Wieck neglected the traditional instruction of gendered duties like cooking and cleaning, in order to focus on composition, counterpoint, and the study of French and English, which would serve Clara well on international tours. It was not impossible for Clara to learn such gendered skills despite her mother's absence; there were always female servants in the household and after 1828 her step-mother Clementine would have been able to educate her. Clara's advanced musical education was extraordinary for her young age, and is even more impressive considering her gender. Counterpoint and composition were unavailable to the few women who managed to study music in institutions, and the study of languages is also remarkable since members of the working class rarely could afford language tutors.¹⁹ As much as Friedrich Wieck considered himself a member of the privileged class, such as the Mendelssohn family, Wieck's family belonged to the merchant class, and thus, the middle class.

Language that describes Clara as masculine and feminine first appeared in 1831. At this time, Clara and Wieck embarked on their first significant concert tour of German cities, with the eventual goal of Paris. Heralded as a child prodigy by Leipzig's music critics, Clara captivated her audiences with her talent. She also impressed the eighty-three year old Goethe on a stopover in Weimar. After she gave some successful private concerts, Goethe summoned the eleven-year old girl and her father for a private audience. Goethe, although not a professional musician but

¹⁹ Nancy B. Reich, "Women as Musicians: A Question of Class," *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, Ruth Solie, ed. (Berkeley:

someone whose endorsement could open musical doors, thoroughly enjoyed her playing. Goethe's appreciative comment found its way into Clara's diary: "The girl has more power than six boys put together."²⁰ This is one of the first times Clara is referred to in masculine terms, but it was certainly not the last. Goethe's hyperbolic ratio of one Clara to six boys is astonishing considering that a female child was generally attributed a lesser value than male child, and in most cases of law and inheritance, a girl received less favourable treatment.²¹ Of course, it was hyperbole.

Friedrich Wieck reversed gender demarcations in his home by privileging Clara's needs and wants over those of her brothers, Alwin and Gustav. Clara's education is one of many areas where her brothers' marginalization materializes. Wieck's undivided attention turned to his prodigious daughter's education, while the brothers attended public school and struggled for any sign of recognition and affection from their father, which they never received, even though they were moderately talented. Wieck sent Gustav and Alwin packing as soon as they were of age; he would support them no longer.²² Wieck encouraged Clara's adoption of the masculine gender, since he usurped laws of inheritance and gender importance to privilege his daughter. Her education is another area where

University of California Press, 1993), 135-6.

²⁰Litzmann, I: 25.

²¹Sagarra, *A Social History of Germany* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1977), 405.

²²Reich, 80.

Clara received attention normally reserved for male students and performed her adopted role accordingly.

After a certain point, Wieck supervised Clara's entire education, while Gustav and Alwin attended public schools. The only time Clara spent in the public school system was an eighteen-month period beginning in 1825.²³ Every moment of Clara's day was highly organized: various facets of musical instruction, vigorous walks, and lessons in the early morning and evening. This left her very little unstructured time to participate in typical youthful and girlhood activities.²⁴

If women happened to study music in an institution, they studied the fundamentals of music in the form of theory, but not to the same extent as their male counterparts. Two examples from musical strongholds bolster this concept of educational streaming. Male students at the Leipzig Conservatory were required to undertake an extensive three-year theory course, while female students had only two years of instruction.²⁵

Similarly, the Paris Conservatoire:

offered to male students two classes in written harmony as well as two in keyboard harmony and accompaniment; women were offered only the practical courses in keyboard harmony and accompaniment and were not permitted to study written harmony until 1879.²⁶

In comparison with the Parisian women, Clara received infinitely more instruction than the practical courses, considering that she published three

²³ Ibid., 44.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Reich, "Women Musicians: A Question of Class," 135.

²⁶ Ibid., 135-6; as quoted from Lassabathie, *Histoire du Conservatoire*, 323.

preludes and fugues by the age when the Conservatoire-taught women would just be completing their studies.²⁷ Clara's musical education more closely resembled that of the Parisian and German male students, if not exceeding their course of study. Wieck's philosophy followed the bold opinion that if she is going to compete in a man's world she needed to be educated as one.

From her education to the concert hall, gendered ambiguity followed Clara Schumann, framing her career. As the discussion of her education has shown, her father's guidance geared her for a male-dominated field, into which she was molded to fit, without causing alarm among audiences or undue attention to herself unlike Georges Sand. Concert reviews mirror her assimilation and acceptance, for they use masculine descriptive language in recognition of her success.

III: Nineteenth-Century Writings

Franz Liszt's 1854 article about Clara Schumann maintains gender stereotypes, making them the norm rather than the exception. Published initially in the December 1, 1854 issue of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (see Table 5 for an outline of Liszt's article), Liszt's article first applauds Clara for surviving her unusual education, which somewhat paralleled his own, and then turns to a classification of Clara as a priestess, a term of

²⁷ Reich, 300.

gendered significance that will be developed later with reference to Jenny Lind. Liszt's writing provides a stark contrast to the Hanslick concert review where Hanslick uses masculine terms to describe Clara's playing. Liszt's lengthy article was divided in translation between two installments of *Dwight's Journal of Music* in 1855, and has a distinctly biographical tone. After reading paragraph-long sentences and countless mystical metaphors, the reader is no closer to an understanding of Clara Schumann's musical preferences or a discussion of a particular performance. Liszt's incredible fame, not his reputation as a critic, would be an instant attraction for many readers.

Table 5. Outline of Liszt's 1854 *Neue Zeitschrift* Article on Clara Schumann.

Section 1	Paragraph 1	Editor's introduction
	Paragraph 2	Performing wife/composing husband as a perfect couple.
	Paragraph 3	Wieck's educational engineering
	Paragraph 4	Clara's development of musical understanding
	Paragraph 5	Liszt meeting Clara 15 years previous in Vienna/translation of Franz Grillparzer's poem
	Paragraph 6	The appropriateness of Clara's and Robert's union.
Section 2	Paragraph 1	Robert Schumann's influence on Clara
	Paragraph 2	Clara's performances in her youth
	Paragraph 3	Clara's resumed touring/severe priestess
	Paragraph 4	Clara's dedication to Art
	Paragraph 6	Clara's conscientiousness

Well aware of Friedrich Wieck's manipulative ways since Robert Schumann asked Liszt for support during the court battle, Liszt criticized Wieck's sometimes-tyrannical treatment of Clara's education and childhood.²⁸ Himself a child prodigy whose general education was sacrificed for musical education, Liszt applauds Clara for emerging "unscathed from a training almost wholly absorbed in the practical learning of an instrument."²⁹ Apparently, Liszt was unaware of Clara's supplementary training away from the piano, which was nevertheless related to it. Nonetheless, comments buried among a string of images taint Liszt's heartfelt praise: "in spite of all this danger it [Clara's art] acquired an early strength, and unfolded harmoniously, which in a feminine organization [person] is deemed to be doubly fortunate."³⁰ In other words, Clara's survival was doubly amazing because she was a woman. Similarly, Liszt's education was also spent almost entirely at the piano. Liszt's criticism of Wieck's educational regimen is highly romanticized: Clara for the most part enjoyed her youth. It was not until she was older that she had regrets, but music was always a solace for her and for that she was grateful to her father.³¹

²⁸ Ibid., 211-2.

²⁹ Liszt, 1.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Reich, 291-2.

In relation to Butler, Liszt's "spectacular pianistic displays" represent an adaptation of the feminine gender on his part, since women are cast as more spectacular. Clara's survival and subsequent success are almost a double negative. As her survival is "doubly fortunate," this doubled quality enforces her maleness, while Liszt, being singularly fortunate, embraces a female form of expression. Within the review, Liszt criticizes the efforts of many pianists spent "upon the attainment of a fruitless virtuosity, a for the most part soul-less, often senseless delivery of masterworks, which for sheer thumping and thrashing cannot be comprehended."³² This may seem ironic considering how Wieck characterized Liszt's virtuosity as fruitless and frivolous, but by this time in his career Liszt has moved on in his own work and thought.³³ Liszt's description of virtuosity replicates many of the myths surrounding *his* characterization of virtuosity. He sounds much like Friedrich Wieck, not the man at whom Wieck had directed similar comments. In any case, Liszt excluded Clara from the school of fruitless virtuosity, showing that two of the leading virtuosos may have been closer in opinion than many think today.

The second half of Liszt's tribute to Clara Schumann focused on the musical relationship of Robert and Clara, as if she were unable to stand on her own merits and accomplishments. If Liszt's comments on gender remained paradoxical in the first section, more biases slipped into the

³² Liszt, 1.

³³ Walker, 3-4.

second. Liszt scrutinizes their relationship and rules in favour of Robert's positive influence on Clara. Robert "was inevitably called to exercise a great influence upon a female virtuoso gifted with a like propensity from birth."³⁴ In the conventional paternal role of the husband, Robert "stamped the indelible impress of his profile upon Clara's talent."³⁵ While Robert undoubtedly influenced many aspects of Clara's life and career, the tone of this section implies that he molded her talent. In truth, however, just as Wieck's method was not the sole reason for her success, neither was Robert's influence.

One of Liszt's observations discusses the imperceptible transition from maiden to matron. Without any further explanation toward the end of the article, Liszt stated, "And in fact CLARA WIECK was very far from what Madame SCHUMANN has become."³⁶ What exactly does this mean? Schumann inevitably validated Wieck's career? Clara was well known and established as a performer before she married Robert Schumann. If anything, Schumann hindered her career because he wanted a *Hausfrau*.³⁷ In effect, Schumann wanted to transform Clara into a Fanny Mendelssohn, with whom he was only slightly acquainted, but he knew of her musical suppression.³⁸ Robert even told her in their correspondence

³⁴ Franz Liszt, "Clara Schumann," *Dwight's Journal of Music*, 7/2 (Saturday, April 14, 1855), 9.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Chissell, 74.

³⁸ Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel, as directed by her father, Abraham, and her brother, famed composer/performer/conductor Felix Mendelssohn, only performed in private. She also composed prolifically, but rarely published or performed in public because her

that she would still play after their marriage, but “less in public and for the money and more for a select few and our own happiness.”³⁹ Clara played in public for many reasons, including fame and fortune, but she genuinely loved performing and it was the only life she knew. As much as current scholars and writers paint Robert as a progressive thinker regarding gender equality, he still enjoyed the husband’s superior role.⁴⁰ Liszt’s article dates from shortly after Robert’s institutionalization in a mental asylum, which may account for his romanticized view of Robert, but not for his diminished perception of Clara’s influential position as Robert’s musical companion. At the same time the purpose of Liszt’s article was “to draw attention to her [Clara] as she picked up the pieces of her shattered life and launched herself afresh into her old career of concert pianist. Clara simply ignored Liszt’s gesture.”⁴¹

Moving away from male-female relationships, Liszt then discussed Clara by herself, without a comparative “Other.”⁴² Within this section of the article Liszt identified Clara as a “severe priestess,” thus confining her body to stereotypes of people holding religious offices. The image of a priestess may bring to mind various things for different people: pagan, chaste, ritualistic, or infallible. Liszt’s use of his priestess metaphor is problematic because he uses pagan imagery such as polytheism and

family felt it inappropriate for a woman. Robert Silverman, “Fanny and Clara: What Women!,” *Piano and Keyboard*, 183 (1996), 31.

³⁹ Robert and Clara Schumann, 1:48.

⁴⁰ Cromley, 19.

⁴¹ Walker, 343.

⁴² Liszt, 9.

oracles while employing the word “priestess” in a quasi-Christian context, not as a minister, but as a religious guide or leader. In keeping with Butler’s gender theories, the priestess is a distant body, perhaps void of biological gender.

Clara was named a musical priestess because of her reverence for music, the conveying of “truth,” her evolving repertoire, and her following.⁴³ Later in the review, Liszt developed the woman transforming into the priestess by writing, “when she mounts the tripod of the temple, the woman speaks to us no more.”⁴⁴ Clara the woman is silent, meaning that someone or thing must take her place. According to Liszt, she becomes an oracle of the Delphian god, one who acts as an intermediary between the gods and the mortals.⁴⁵ The moral and social implications of a priestess are intriguing. Generally speaking, Clara’s myths of conservatism and self-righteousness are the antithesis of the myths surrounding Liszt’s career. Topoi such as promiscuity and overt showmanship followed Liszt, while Clara’s career did not cause the same levels of mania and hysteria.

Similarities can be easily drawn with Jenny Lind. The characteristics of purity and simplicity, ascribable to a priestess, also surface in concert reviews and articles about Lind.⁴⁶ Possessing such

⁴³ Reich, 264.

⁴⁴ Liszt, 9.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Henry Appy, “Characteristics of Jenny Lind,” *Century Magazine*, N. S. 32 (1897), 554; H. R. Haweis, “Jenny Lind,” *Contemporary Review*, LIX (1891), 901; John

characteristics, the two leading female virtuosi of the time appear to have legitimated their respective careers by upholding female virtues in the socially tainted venue of the stage, which usually did not lend itself to virtuous displays in society's view.

Religious description also surrounds Jenny Lind's character, although not quite in the same manner as with Clara. Liszt's bestowing the title of "severe priestess" implies a more ritualistic or powerful role for Clara, while the religious terms used to describe Lind are more iconographic and ethereal, perhaps due to their differing instrument of choice. Lind's strong religious beliefs were a prominent feature in her performance and repertoire decisions and were known to the public, much more than the religious beliefs of Clara Schumann. A particularly striking example of the religious language surrounding Lind appeared in the New York *Home Journal* of April 26, 1851: "the nightingale has cut her wings, the ANGEL has become a woman, the divinity has descended from her pedestal."⁴⁷ The image created here is one of a fallen angel, fallen because marriage intimates a human rather than god-like presence, most likely made in reference to her courtship and marriage to her accompanist, Otto Goldschmidt. However, the mere mention of an angel conjures up different imagery than a priestess. The mortality and self-sacrifice

Sullivan Dwight, "Editorial Correspondence," *Dwight's Journal of Music*, 8 (May 29, 1852), 61.

⁴⁷ April 26, 1851, New York *Home Journal*; quoted in Ware W. Porter, and Thaddeus C. Lockhard Jr., *P. T. Barnum Presents Jenny Lind: The American Tour of the Swedish Nightingale* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 127.

associated with the priestess contrast with the immortality and divinity of the angel. Lind's strongly defined and foregrounded religious beliefs may call for a more divine personification than Clara, but in any event, powerful religious imagery followed the female virtuosi, as we see in Liszt's article.

While Liszt's portrayal of Clara upheld society's gender conventions, Hanslick's review of Clara's Viennese concerts of 1856 makes frequent references to Clara that employ decidedly masculine references, but with fewer potentially dismissive comments about her gender (see Table 6 for an outline of Hanslick's review). In his high praise for Clara's playing, Hanslick describes her physical strength in masculine terms: "She could be called the greatest living pianist rather than merely the greatest female pianist, were the range of her physical strength not limited by sex."⁴⁸ Sounding much like Liszt in his assignment of gender roles, Hanslick's classification of Clara in the first rank of pianists, except for her gender, may show a softening of gender stereotypes to some. However, the following sentence of the review reverts to the male pronoun in speaking generally of pianists: "The compelling power of a pianist resides principally in his touch."⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Eduard Hanslick, *Vienna's Golden Years of Music 1850-1900*, translated and edited by Henry Pleasants III (New York: Books for Library Press, 1950, 1969), 41.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Table 6. Outline of Hanslick's 1856 Concert Review of Clara Schumann.

Paragraph 1	Initial impressions of Clara's second concert
Paragraph 2	Virtuosity
Paragraph 3	Greatest living pianist versus greatest female pianist
Paragraph 4	No effeminacy in her playing
Paragraph 5	Emotion/Wilhelmine Clauss
Paragraph 6	Clara's selectivity of her programmes
Paragraph 7	Clara's programming of Robert's compositions
Paragraph 8	Robert's setting of two poems by Friedrich Hebbel

Hanslick's masculine characterization of Clara's performance supports the tenuousness of her performing career. The accepted role for women as "projected by writers, painters and others, and viewed with complacency by society—including the majority of women—was that of female submissiveness."⁵⁰ Hanslick's acceptance of Clara's stature through masculine language acknowledges no submission on Clara Schumann's part: she chose to perform in that manner. Most women could never have exuded the power Clara learned to produce through her father's unrelenting instruction. She learned by example, a man's example being inscribed upon her body.

The remainder of Hanslick's review unquestionably associates Clara with masculinity, rather than femininity, as described in the following definition of gender divisions:

Masculinity tends to be defined as active, rational, inventive, experimental, scientific, unified, as a catapult to culture and an

⁵⁰ Sagarra, 241-2.

emblem of the controlling powers of the mind, femininity tends to be defined as passive, reproductive, caring, emotional, contrary, as a part of nature, controlled by the body.⁵¹

Even after apologizing for Clara's lack of strength, Hanslick proceeds to gush that "in what she does play she rather shames the brilliant virtuosi of our time, by the masculinity of her playing."⁵² Essentialized masculinity in accordance with the above categorization privileges the mind over the body, whereas femininity prides emotion, relegated to the body, over the mind.⁵³ Hanslick discusses Clara's playing with direct references to mind/body traits: "There is nothing effeminate and retiring, nor any overabundance of emotion. Everything is distinct and clear, sharp as a pencil sketch."⁵⁴ Clearly positioning Clara's mind over her body, Hanslick places her in the same field as the other prominent male performers. Clara's playing is clear, sharp, which suggests something scientific, clinical, and analytical: all features associated with the mind, thus male.⁵⁵ Reiterating this point by using a synonym for the "unmasculine"—effeminate—, Hanslick supports and defends his earlier masculine description.

After focusing on these masculine adjectives, Hanslick dwells on one particular feminine characteristic—emotion—and explains it in such a

⁵¹Lucy Green, *Music, Gender, Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 119.

⁵² Hanslick, 42.

⁵³ Elizabeth Groz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 3.

⁵⁴ Hanslick, 42.

⁵⁵ Groz, 3.

way that it can be understood not to hinder Clara's playing. Hanslick's discussion of emotion takes up two lengthy paragraphs—a substantial portion of the review. The first mention of emotion occurs in the above quotation, depicting Clara's lack of emotional excess, which once more removes her from the feminine realm. Hanslick then brings in a discussion of other female pianists, in particular Wilhelmine Clauss (1834-1907), first generally and later specifically, and contrasts their manner of playing with Clara's: "The frequent small accents which she [Clara] affects differ remarkably from the stresses which the majority of female pianists use to place a personal emotional imprint upon every single note."⁵⁶ So, if a female pianist played from behind a curtain, Hanslick would claim that her gender would be revealed by the inherent "emotion" within her playing. According to Hanslick, Clara's interpretation lacked this affected characteristic, making her technique sound more masculine.

Hanslick elaborates by delving further into this comparison. What passes for expression with other female pianists is "an affectation of subjective emotion, [but] with her [Clara] is only a careful elucidation of rhythmical and harmonic contrasts."⁵⁷ Their expression is of the body; Clara's is of the mind. Hanslick also identifies elements of musical construction, rhythm and harmony as mathematical and therefore masculine. Mentioning these masculine elements of music within Clara's review indirectly solidifies her difference from other female pianists.

⁵⁶ Hanslick, 42.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Clara's body and playing are not always referred to in masculine terms. Hanslick oscillates between using male and female typologies within the review. Hanslick accedes that "she [Clara] succeeds best with tender, light, graciously moving pieces. But also in this typically feminine realm of emotion, I observe more profound understanding than feeling."⁵⁸ Such adjectives in the first sentence essentially relate to the feminine sphere; however, Hanslick tempers this limiting description with the juxtaposition of understanding and feeling: Clara understands (masculine); other woman pianists feel (feminine).

A specific example within the review supports the displacement of Clara's gender. Near the end of the review, after discussing female pianists in a general manner, Hanslick identifies a contemporary female pianist within a comparison. In addition he allows, a slightly negative observation about Clara's interpretive choice creep into what is otherwise a glowingly positive review:

Some may have been surprised by her [Clara's] metronomical playing of the middle movement of Chopin's D-flat Impromptu, sharply marked even in the bass. Nobody can object to it, but whether Chopin's music gains by the dispersal of its misty nostalgia is open to question. I fancy that the softly affectionate, thoughtful expression with which the less robust Wilhelmine Clauss plays such pieces is more to the point.⁵⁹

Hanslick's criticism involves converging gendered considerations.

Tangential to the issue of Clara's gender subversion, Chopin's music,

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 42-3.

more specifically the genre of the Impromptu, is gendered female.⁶⁰ Its tempo is flexible, its misty quality is nostalgic, both characteristics of the body and implying that Chopin's music is acceptable for female pianists.

Wilhelmine Clauss, a female pianist fifteen years younger than Clara Schumann, presented six recitals in Vienna in 1855. Of her performance, Hanslick said, "[t]he characteristic reflective quality of her playing, the tenderness and gentility of her interpretive style, more than made up for what she lacked in strength."⁶¹ In both the 1855 and 1856 references to Clauss, Hanslick clearly reveals his gendered perception of Clauss's playing: lacking physical strength and playing tenderly, she is the quintessential female pianist. Clara could be thrown into the same category as Clauss, but Hanslick makes some distinctions between their physique and interpretive styles, using Chopin as the connecting element. Clauss's body is less robust than Clara's, and Clauss's playing is more gentle. That Hanslick prefers Clauss's interpretation of Chopin tells us that he subscribes to Kallberg's theory that Chopin's music was gendered toward the feminine.

Hanslick takes issue with Clara's metronomic treatment of Chopin, but when Hanslick stated "nobody can object to it" exactly what is the "it" to which he is referring? Is he objecting to the metronomic playing? In the original German, the punctuation does not coincide with Henry Pleasant's

⁶⁰ Jeffrey Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History, and Musical Genre* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 63.

⁶¹ Hanslick, 50.

translation, which may have altered Hanslick's meaning for English readers. After Hanslick brings up her metronomical treatment of Chopin and set off with a period from the other sentences rather than by a comma, he says, "Niemand kann ihn tadeln."⁶² He almost seems to defend his initial criticism of Clara's metronomical playing within the next sentence. On the other hand, is Hanslick objecting to the effeminate qualities within Chopin's oeuvre? In using the comparative adverb "whether,"⁶³ Hanslick creates an ambiguous meaning both for Chopin's music and the way Clara Schumann interprets it. Either interpretation questions standard gender conventions.

Within the review of Clara, Hanslick engages with the mind/body split and how it relates to performers. All musical performance, "as a twin product of the body and mind, must obey the terms of both."⁶⁴ Interestingly, Hanslick never discusses Clara's body, other than mentioning its physical inadequacy, whereas other nineteenth-century reviews of male performers, such as of Liszt and Paganini, focus specifically on their bodies and gestures.⁶⁵ The titles for Clara, such as the

⁶² Eduard Hanslick, *Geschichte des Concertwesens in Wien* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1979), 105.

⁶³ The translated sentence reads: "Nobody can object to it, but whether Chopin's music gains by the dispersal of its misty nostalgia is open to question." (Hanslick, 50).

⁶⁴ Hanslick, 41.

⁶⁵ See Leigh Hunt's "Paganini," *Words on Music: From Addison to Barzun*, edited by Jack Sullivan (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1995), 387-90; Heinrich Heine's "Paganini," *The Music Lover's Literary Companion*, edited by Dannie and Joan Abse (London: Robson Books, 1988), 142-7; and Robert Schumann's "Liszt," *On Music and Musicians*, edited by Konrad Wolff (New York: Norton, 1969), 155-63.

“severe priestess,” as bestowed by Liszt, and “queen of the piano,”⁶⁶ arose to characterize not only her firm beliefs about music and piano playing, but also her carriage on and off stage, emphasizing her lack of theatricality.

Hanslick avoids discussing her body in the 1856 concert review. In the opening, he discusses his thoughts on virtuosity and how Clara Schumann follows his concept of virtuosity, but he never directly addresses her physical playing. He stated that her playing represents:

a most truthful representation of magnificent compositions, but not an outpouring of a magnificent personality. This is not only more appropriate to the true task of virtuosity; it is also its fulfillment, and we should be compelled to declare her playing ideal, if everything human were not imperfect, and if every virtue did not have its deficiencies.⁶⁷

Her distinctive, unassuming style, which Hanslick both upholds and dismisses, is what sets her apart from other pianists of the same period. Clara believed she was promoting the music of highest merit and performing it in such a way as to give a definitive performance with little room for deviation and variation. This confidence influenced her choice of repertoire and stage deportment, but it was this confidence, perhaps more than anything, that facilitated her longstanding success and acceptance.

⁶⁶ Reich, 26. This title was most likely ascribed during her tour to Vienna where Austrian royalty gave her the post of “Imperial Chamber Virtuosa”.

⁶⁷ Hanslick, 49.

In another concert review of 1855 that covered a shared recital in Berlin with Joseph Joachim, an anonymous diarist applauds Clara's quieter manner on stage:

The first appearance of a virtuoso—I mean the manner in which he or she comes forward to the task—goes no small way with me in my feeling toward them. I could ask nothing better here. It was just as it should be. Clara Schumann and Joachim came forward together from behind the choir as calmly, as if in their own room—as if everyone knew them and they knew everyone. There was no bowing and scraping, and fidgeting or fussing, and simpering and smirking, until every person of common sense was almost “sick unto death.” They came forward to the pianoforte, where she quietly took her seat, and he just as quietly took one of the unoccupied chairs near. When she finished her Sonata, she quietly sat down by him, and there they sat and listened, both *quietly*, to the *Lieder* by the choir. This art of quiet and repose was so refreshing!⁶⁸

Again, without slinging mud, the diarist indicates his preferences in virtuosi; his particular joy is the quietness of the whole affair. In his description of their entrance and subsequent performance, the calmness of the event pervades the passages. Virtuosity, for this observer, is not the falsity of expression such as smirks, or the distracting fussing of artists, but the confidence and grace to make it seem natural. Within the entry, the diarist makes one concession to bodily description, “I had expected to see a woman of at least middle age, perhaps a little grey already (think of how many years we have been reading about Clara Wieck and Clara Schumann!), of course rather muscular. . .”⁶⁹ The image of the “little woman,” juxtaposed with that of the muscular artist, follows Hanslick's

⁶⁸ “Diary Abroad No. 12,” *Dwight's Journal of Music*, 6/25 (March 24, 1855), 196.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

hearty descriptions of Clara's playing in comparison with that of other female pianists.

The portion of the review that focuses on Clara is small, with the bulk of the writing centring on Joachim. But frequent comparisons are drawn between the two artists, one female and one male, which supports Clara's equality with male artists. One specific comparison involves a discussion of virtuosity that occupies the final half of the review. The diarist preferred a virtuosity that emphasized effortlessness and transcendence rather than theatricality, like Hanslick:

Each [Clara and Joachim] has so completely overcome all technical difficulties of his or her instrument, that you forget totally that virtuosos are before you—instead of thinking of them, you commune with Bach and Beethoven—you learn to appreciate Bach—his thoughts become yours and a pure musical enjoyment is a result, instead of stupid wonder at “How *can* they do it.”⁷⁰

Clara and Joachim, according to the diarist, share the same conception of virtuosity with positive results. Another comparison involves the topoi of Clara's simplicity and conservative performance nature. The diarist reiterates his former statement detailing the performers' calm stage deportment: “I declare I cannot forget the simple, unaffected ease of their appearance before that audience.”⁷¹ These seemingly ordinary comparisons between Joachim and Clara offer much more insight than they perhaps did at the time of publication.

The noticeable absence of a description of Clara's body substantiates

⁷⁰ *Dwight's Journal of Music* 6/25 (March 24, 1855), 197.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

the hypothesis put forward by most recent biographer Nancy B. Reich; that to such male colleagues as Mendelssohn and Chopin, she was above gender.⁷² But making gender a non-issue is a cop-out in itself, since gender was and is such a point of contention within society. Clara's career was respected and supported by Joseph Joachim, Johannes Brahms, Julius Stockhausen, et al., with whom she performed as an equal, not as a subservient accompanist or partner.

Unlike some prominent nineteenth-century female writers such as Georges Sand, who dressed like a man and adopted a masculine persona to "infiltrate" the male dominated arts community and subvert society in general, Clara wielded power on the concert stage and at home through a more subtle subversion of gender: not by dress, but by action. Clara's way of cracking the masculine musical world's gender barrier was by discrete assimilation. She fused biological gender with characteristics from the "dominant" sex to create a hybridity that at once challenged and conformed to society's ideal of a female musician. In this respect, Clara Schumann made female virtuosity acceptable through (un)conventional means and readily accepted by her adoring public.

⁷² Reich, 208.

CHAPTER THREE

VIRTUOSO REVEALED: CLARA SCHUMANN'S PERSONA IN LITERATURE AND FILM

Clara Schumann's story has enjoyed success in the entertainment world: short stories, poems, novels and films about her life periodically surface. While many people outside of musicological studies may have heard of Robert Schumann, few will have heard of his once famous wife. Fictional literature and film remain one of the few ways for the general public to learn of Clara Schumann and for women to discover her as a role model in a male-dominated field. However, literature and film are also a way of perpetuating topoi found in earlier writings that need re-examination.

As we have already seen, literary critic Judith Butler deals with the use of the body and gender identity in literature. Butler's *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993) examines Willa Cather's writing, looking for Cather's identity, which has been heatedly discussed in literary circles.¹ Was Cather a lesbian or was she adopting a male

¹ Judith Butler, "“Dangerous Crossing”: Willa Cather's Masculine Names," *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, 143.

persona in her writings, or both? Literary scholars see Cather's use of masculine names while narrating her novels as reflecting her identity. In a way similar to Butler, I wish to examine Clara's persona in fiction and film and how her portrayal follows scholarly writing. Interestingly, the more recent the novel or film, the more progressive the portrayal of Clara Schumann, which reflects societal trends as well.

From the apparent innocence of children's literature to the complicated psychoanalytic allusions of the contemporary author J. D. Landis, many facets of Clara Schumann's persona emerge and are challenged in the time-lapse between the early and later works examined. This study is not an all-inclusive review of literature and film, but rather a comparison of selected works. I will look at the works in chronological order, as the new trends in scholarship and current societal standards become reflected in the novels and film.² Much like the reviews by Liszt and Hanslick and the editorial correspondence in *Dwight's Journal of Music* examined in Chapter Two, the novels and film are contemporary criticisms of Clara Schumann's life and career. Clara as a subject of literature is nothing new: poems, such as Franz Grillparzer's ode likening her to Beethoven during her Viennese tour of 1838,³ and other literary portraits, filled her career.

² This is not a comprehensive study due to the vast amount of material available.

³ Reich, 25.

Table 7. Books and Film Examined.

Hilda White	<i>Song Without End: The Love Story of Robert and Clara Schumann</i> , 1959.
Peter Schamoni	<i>Spring Symphony</i> , 1983.
Susanna Reich	<i>Clara Schumann: Piano Virtuoso</i> , 1999.
J. D. Landis	<i>Longing</i> , 2000.

I: Fictional Biography

Hilda White's historical fiction *Song Without End* (1959) focuses mainly on Clara's childhood and ends just after her marriage to Schumann. This formula of following Clara's life until her marriage reflects earlier biographies such as Florence May's *The Girlhood of Clara Schumann*⁴ and John N. Burk's *Clara Schumann: A Romantic Biography*.⁵ Aside from short articles based on biographies, biographical monographs were the main source about Clara Schumann in the early twentieth century. Studies about women were in relatively short supply in comparison to the literature on male composers of the same time period. However, in comparison to other performers, such as Clementi, Gottschalk, Moscheles, Clara is well represented in historical and musicological documents.

⁴ Florence May, *The Girlhood of Clara Schumann* (London: Edward Arnold, 1912).

⁵ John N. Burk, *Clara Schumann: A Romantic Biography* (New York: Random House, 1940).

White's dialogue and interpretation are fiction, but the events she relates are based upon events recounted in scholarly biographies. What White seems to have done is to take the biographies of Clara and Robert Schumann and insert dialogue, extracted from letters and other sources. In a discussion on biography, meaning and intention, Stanley Fish argues that these three elements are inextricably linked.⁶ Fact is to fiction, what fiction is to fact; it is a vicious circle of signification. Further, Fish expands upon biography as a genre that cannot be ignored or trivialized since eventually everything is a return to biography.⁷ Since fiction and biography share "structural and thematic aspects. . . biography can add to our understanding of a given life, and vice versa."⁸ As a result of White's blurring of fiction and fact, the book suffers from a lack of identity. The dialogue implies fiction, but the extensive quotations from diaries and letters are exactly as they appear in scholarly writings. White's research is thorough. The accuracy of her biographical recounting of events is evident, but it is this strict adherence to the facts that contribute to the book's ambiguous identity.

The writer also appears to be unaware of the fictional element of romance. The dustcover, displaying locket-sized portraits of the young Robert and Clara, implies a historical romance novel based on actual

⁶ Stanley Fish, "Biography and Intention," *Contesting the Subject: The Theory and Practice of Biography and Biographical Criticism*, edited by William H. Epstein (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1991), 15.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Pilar Hidalgo, "Are You Writing Fact or Fiction," *All Sides of the Subject: Women and Biography*, edited by Teresa Iles (New York: Teachers College Press, 1992), 36.

occurrences. While these characteristics are the basis of the story, there is little romance in the sense of the genre. A few stolen kisses and an assumed innocent secret rendezvous are the only types of private contact mentioned, perhaps indicating more about White and the era in which she wrote than historical events. And as these events undoubtedly occurred at first without Wieck's knowledge, their inclusion is important, but the sexual speculations that have surrounded Clara and Robert are absent.

Hilda White's telling of the story reflects her world. Her patronizing preface says more about White than it does Clara, for scholarly biographies, such as Nancy Reich's, do not share White's interpretation of Clara's youth:

As she appears in these pages, Clara is still a groping young girl, finding her way to maturity. But the time was to come when she would prove herself all that Schumann knew her to be, a woman of outstanding courage and strength, steadily gaining through the years artistry and understanding.⁹

White's gender demarcations are clear even before she weaves her vision of the young virtuoso. In her eyes, Clara—young, impressionable, innocent—blossoms under Robert's encouragement to become a strong woman. In fact, while Robert certainly influenced Clara upon entering her life in its adolescence, it is naïve to think that Robert “made” the woman whom music history remembers. Certain events involving Robert, e.g. the lengthy trial, strengthened her character, because a well-adjusted individual already existed. Saying that Robert undeniably created Clara,

⁹ White, xiii.

the strong woman, resembles those who have said that Wieck's method created Clara, the virtuoso. Each man's influence on her is evident, but neither is solely responsible for her strength or success. The preface also romanticizes the relationship of Robert and Clara. Where loyalty to one's mate often lasted beyond "death do us part," it is no surprise that White canonizes and romanticizes Clara as a virtuous and noble widow:

And when her time of mourning came, when only too soon Schumann's fragile health gave way and she was left alone to provide for their children, she fearlessly went out into the world to keep her [and his] name alive by playing his music in every capital of Europe. And because she made it the business of her life to live for him, she too is not forgotten. Through her labors and her endless devotion, she fulfilled her husband's greatest dream—" . . . that posterity may regard us as one heart and one soul and may not know which is yours and which is mine."¹⁰

From White's examples, we see one of the accepted topoi that prominently follow Clara even today—she is inseparable from Robert Schumann.

Because she premiered his piano music and he wrote often with her in mind, it is true that a profound bond existed. However, it *is* possible to study Clara Wieck with only a few biographical references to Robert Schumann, even though White's Clara is made out to be dependent on Robert, inseparably linked to him, and known only through him. This last assumption is untrue. Clara has been remembered by those who value performance over composition, privilege the body over the mind, and interpretation over creation.¹¹ She has always been included in writings

¹⁰ Ibid., xiv.

¹¹ For example, in music critic Harold Schonberg's *The Great Pianists* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963) a sizable section is devoted to Clara Schumann.

on virtuosity, but it was not until recently that textbooks incorporated her into the canon. She still remains inseparable from Robert in canon-based textbooks, such as K. Marie Stolba's *The Development of Western Music: a History*¹² and Joseph Machlis's *The Enjoyment of Music: an Introduction to Perceptive Listening*.¹³ It is for these once-problematic reasons that I chose to include White's book in this cross-section. *Song Without End* is such a contrast to the more recent examples that it is a good starting point for Clara's fictional development.

The narrative unfolds in the same fashion as a biography. The first part, "The Innocent Years," follows Clara from her youth up until her 1835 tour to Paris. No biographical stone is left unturned. The reader encounters Marianne Wieck, her oft-neglected mother; Wieck's overbearing nature and power over his child prodigy; and her initial thoughts regarding Schumann. As the first section progresses, Clara develops an almost sixth-sense awareness of Robert, sensing when he is distressed or upset. This bond intimates Clara's destiny with Robert and further romanticizes their relationship. It also indicates an element of mysticism surrounding Clara. Mysticism is found in writings on Liszt, but rarely, if ever, regarding Clara. This is the first instance where White stops recounting a biography and begins weaving fiction.

¹² K. Marie Stolba, *The Development of Western Music: a History* (Madison, Wis.: Brown and Benchmark, 1994).

¹³ Joseph Machlis, *The Enjoyment of Music: an Introduction to Perceptive Listening* (New York: Norton, 1984).

The second and third sections, “Trial and Fulfillment,” deals with Clara’s mixed emotions about having to choose between Wieck and Schumann. One event expanded upon in every example of adult fiction that presents this episode is the clandestine meeting of Robert and Clara in Dresden in 1836. In trying to keep Robert and Clara apart, Wieck took Clara to Dresden to visit with friends. Once Wieck left town on business, Robert, alerted of Wieck’s absence by friends, hastened to Dresden to see Clara rather than attending his mother’s funeral. White’s account has Clara guilt ridden due to the betrayal of her father’s wishes. Nonetheless, Clara still rushes into Schumann’s arms and enjoys “moments of great tenderness in their brief time together.”¹⁴ White’s vague description of Robert’s and Clara’s unsupervised moments allows the readers to supply their own narrative.

The co-dependence of Robert and Clara explained by White in the preface resurfaces in the pre-trial distance between the lovers. This pre-trial period, where they essentially had no visual contact and communicated only through letters, supports the theory that Clara and Robert were inseparable, not only in love but also in music. Regarding Clara’s concert appearances where she boldly programmed Robert’s unknown compositions, White observes, “[t]he music was his, the interpretation hers, thus uniting them in this one way which her father could never prevent.”¹⁵ While this statement is true, White’s oversight is

¹⁴ Ibid., 185.

¹⁵ Ibid., 222.

that Robert and Clara served the dual position of composer-performer out of necessity because of Robert's injured hand, a role that Mendelssohn, Liszt, and others fulfilled without assistance. While the combined role of composer-performer solidified Robert and Clara's musical co-dependence, it was not a customary occurrence.

Robert's and Clara's musical union made their separation doubly difficult as retold by White in the later chapters. Clara's time in Paris during the 1839 concert season features her dissatisfaction with her father because of his enforced separation from Robert. White's recounting of this trying time is told with frank honesty and shows Clara's vulnerability. In scholarly writing, Clara often emerges as a strong, stubborn woman, but in this fictional account, Clara's strength is seen as a front, masking her insecurities, which may very well have been the case. Causing this insecurity were the Parisian music lovers who saw Clara sans Wieck as:

bold, indeed too bold for a young girl. She was conscious of critical eyes; and sometimes even heard acid comments: "Look! She travels alone [without a man]! So that's the kind of life these artist-women lead!"¹⁶

Within this passage, White aptly summarizes a female musician's precarious life as one of unsupervised journeys without "proper" guidance or instruction. Wieck protected her from such comments, which was most likely not an issue since his presence was required and accepted, but left to her own, she would suffer society's restrictions.

¹⁶ Ibid., 252.

II: Film

In director Peter Schamoni's 1986 film *Spring Symphony*,¹⁷ many more myths about Clara's life and her relationship with Robert Schumann are foregrounded. Because of the film's German director and writer, Clara Schumann's life is filmed through the eyes of her countryman, unlike the 1956 Hollywood account *Song of Love*, which gives rise to speculations of differences in reception of Clara Schumann in Europe and America. *Spring Symphony* compromises chronological accuracy for, perhaps, a more cohesive and energetic story, as opposed to an all-encompassing but epic-length film.

As the film opens, Robert and Clara are seen at a concert given by Paganini. As this is before Robert's studies with Wieck, he sits separately from Clara and her father, with no contact between them. Paganini's presence as virtuoso foreshadows Clara's eventual virtuoso career. However, rather than having her sitting wide-eyed with wonder at his talent, she sits quietly next to her father. Her action or lack thereof establishes her quiet, mature nature even at an early age, both at and away from the piano bench.

The image of Clara's stillness continues throughout the film. Despite Nastassja Kinski's reputation as a temptress in previous films, her portrayal of Clara's musical interpretations is not exactly restrained in

¹⁷ Peter Schamoni, *Spring Symphony* (Greentree Productions Inc., 1984).

physical movement, but every motion is close to the body. The playing comes from the shoulders and the attack is close to the keys, not from high above, extending the earlier portrayal of a quiet, mature Clara throughout her entire life. In these respects, Wieck's somewhat vague method is visualized. Clara does look just as one might imagine based on accounts in biographies and reviews: serious, wearing an off-the-shoulder gown (as confirmed in various portraits), and motionless in comparison with certain male pianists, which tells us that the film was well-researched and the director subscribes to these observations.¹⁸

In accordance with Judith Butler's gender considerations discussed in Chapter Two, this depiction of Clara's stage deportment could be described as a "gentlemanly" rendering of pieces rather than the excessive gestures of other pianists, male or female. While her gown betrays her sex, Clara's body as she plays is so proper and controlled that notions of impropriety are readily dismissed.

While the essential facts are depicted with little alteration, in other respects the film promotes some fictional scenarios that may prove difficult for scholars of the 1980's to accept, thus, challenging accepted judgements. Two new fictional embellishments involve Clara's sexual body and its relationship to Schumann and Wieck.¹⁹ According to *Spring Symphony*, once Robert moved into the Wieck household, he and Clara

¹⁸ Films recounting the lives of male musicians, such as Mozart in *Amadeus* and Liszt in *Lisztomania*, depict the respected individuals as spectacular in gesture and persona.

¹⁹ This is also an issue that J. D. Landis explores in his novel *Longing* with as much success, which will be examined later.

shared a piano bench while improvising. While this sounds innocent, the sexual energy and tension seen in their long gazes look ahead to their courtship and marriage. Scholar Philip Brett acknowledges that “two people at the same piano in a domestic setting is a situation that. . . could cause some embarrassment,”²⁰ caused by the proximity of the players on the piano bench. During the trial, the screenplay specifically addresses their proximity on the bench. Robert believed that because Wieck allowed him a certain liberty with his daughter, he knew of Robert’s intentions. This argument occurs in scholarly writing,²¹ but no mention of piano benches is used to support it. Biographies maintain that while perhaps sub-consciously Robert always loved Clara, it was not until after her 1835 tour that he realized his love for her and subsequently broke off his engagement to Ernestine von Fricken.

The film’s portrayal of the pre-marital sexual relations of Robert and Clara is in direct contrast to the scholarship at the time of the film’s release in 1986. As summarized in the discussion of White’s novel, the Dresden reunion between the lovers offers an excellent opportunity for speculation. When Robert arrived in Dresden, Clara did not realize that Robert’s mother died and he was missing her funeral. They had been separated for so long that their first tentative kisses quickly escalate to what appears to be their first sexual adventure together mid-way through

²⁰ Philip Brett, “Piano Four-Hands: Schubert and the Performance of Gay Male Desire,” *19th Century Music*, 22/2 (1998), 153.

²¹ Reich, 70.

the film. Joan Chissell's 1983 biography²² makes no mention of any such occurrence and Nancy B. Reich's 1985 biography maintains silence on this event in speaking of the first months of their marriage: "her sexual fulfillment, after so many years of postponement, must have been an overwhelmingly joyful experience; the diaries and letters of this prudish age are silent on the subject."²³ While these biographies uphold Clara's propriety, Robert's documented promiscuity calls into question their pre-marital sexual history, a history that Schamoni explores in the film.

Clara's relationship with her father also adds to the emerging paradox of an innocent and bold Clara. The director intimates that Wieck both physically and sexually abused Clara, while scholars remain silent on this issue. Numerous scenes in the film depict an abnormal closeness between father and daughter that continued well into Clara's late teens. A particularly striking scene shows Wieck bathing Clara while on their earlier concert tour of Paris. If the director followed the actual chronology of events, Clara would have been twelve or thirteen years old, well past the age when a child would require a parent's assistance while bathing. Making the situation even more alarming is the use of a younger actress playing Clara, Nastassja Kinski's first scene not appearing until later in the film. A journalist has also recognized this dimension of the film, while reporting on a conference at the University of North Carolina:

In one scene, Friedrich is shown sponge-bathing 13-year-old Clara. In the other scene, Clara is shown cuddled up with Friedrich,

²² Chissell, 1983.

²³ Reich, 103.

nibbling his neck while his hand slips down to her thigh, and she gently pushed his hand away. I was certain the filmmakers clearly implied an incestuous relationship.²⁴

This viewer's reception and the film-maker's implication of incest says much about the power Wieck held over his daughter; he controlled her career, her social life and, by the director's dramatization, her body.

Schamoni uses Clara's and Wieck's bodies to indicate a relationship, but dramatizes their closeness in such a way that the inappropriateness of their relationship is revealed. German director Schamoni's conception of the relationship between Clara and Wieck may represent how she is viewed in her home country or to attest to criticism of Wieck's harsh nature.

Continuing with the film, Wieck's treatment of Clara borders on the infantile. Wieck braids her hair and tells her when to go to bed even in her late teens. While these actions may be considered motherly, as Wieck needed to fill both parental roles, the continuation of these rituals until adulthood tries to establish Wieck's delusional power relations involving Clara. Kinski's characterization of the older Clara creates a paradox problematic to Wieck's dominant personality, involving an innocent and childlike approach. She constantly flashes her "doe" eyes and has the awkwardness of a child's movements. This makes unbelievable the confident Clara, for example, when she berates an all-male string quartet on her 1838 Parisian tour. Since both personality traits come forward in the biographies, it is a combination of the director's and actress's

²⁴ Robert Silverman, "Fanny and Clara: What Women!" *Piano and Keyboard* 183 (November/December 1996), 31.

depiction that the meek and the bold aspects of her personality appear disconnected.

Some issues raised in Chapter Two of this thesis find their way into the film—specifically Goethe’s quotation regarding Clara’s talent, and societal images of female performers. Clara’s father most likely copied Goethe’s aforementioned statement into her diary.²⁵ The screenplay alters the translated quotation, making Clara speak it as opposed to Wieck writing it. The director, allowing Clara to deliver Goethe’s praise, acknowledges Clara’s awareness of the events surrounding her and her unique position in musical circles. It also adopts a precocious and boastful tone when Clara utters, “No boy is as powerful as I am.” Supporting this comparison of Clara with boys is a scene that takes place during Wieck’s group theory instruction, in which Clara is the only female student. When a few of the male students incorrectly answer Wieck’s question, he turns to Clara for the answer, which she provides without hesitation. As she was included in the theory class, Clara received special treatment from her father. Based on the discussion in Chapter Two of this thesis, other young girls would most likely not be allowed to participate in theory classes such as the ones Wieck taught. Condoned and encouraged by Wieck these actions show Clara’s atypical negotiation of gender. The film’s representation upholds the more modern interpretation of Clara treatment as male.

²⁵ Reich and Burton, 334.

Related to Clara's unique gender position is a sub-theme examining women's role in public performance. Making this even more interesting is the fact that the commentary is from the lips of women and not men. In numerous scenes, Clara performs in the background while ladies whisper behind their hands about the spectacle's (in)appropriateness. In an example involving the young Clara, two older women refer to her as a "poor child," claiming that her father forces her to practice and recounting that Clara can neither read nor write. These myths, taken directly from Wieck's anecdotes in *Klavier und Gesang*, were a way for society to justify her exceptional musical talent. She was a child prodigy, but not illiterate, nor was her intellect a concession to her talent. The director recounts such scenes to depict not only the precariousness of any female performer's career, but also the social criticism they received.

In yet another example of social commentary, a later scene involves Clara playing for the Viennese royalty when an aristocratic woman says to another, "How can she bear to let herself go like that?" The meaning is not in the sense that she is past her physical prime, but that she is a woman improperly on display. During the exchange, the camera alternates between the women and Clara. To the late twentieth-century eye there is nothing alarming or improper about the performance. In fact, it mirrors the other concert scenes that uphold the ideal of Clara's conservative performance style. The issue for the aristocratic women was not Clara's "outrageous" showmanship, but her performing in public at all.

Peter Schamoni's film surpasses White's novel in terms of coverage. The film includes Robert and Clara's marriage and their life beyond, albeit in truncation. In the penultimate scene, Clara is in the final trimester of pregnancy as Robert and Felix Mendelssohn discuss the premiere of the *Spring Symphony* in 1841. Robert ignores Clara as she makes suggestions; only Mendelssohn acknowledges her presence. Based on the film, it would seem that Wieck's fears about Robert's social inadequacies are confirmed. Robert also complains that their small apartment cannot contain two pianos because Clara's playing distracts his composing. During the premiere, Clara remembers this comment and a voice-over begins that summarizes the rest of their lives, emphasizing Clara's role as a mother. Ending the film here draws attention to Clara's reservations about her career as a pianist, Robert's support of her career, and the consequences of motherhood with respect to a career in performance. It also avoids making Clara's life synonymous with Robert's.

At first a romantic, heartwarming story, Clara's uncertainty at the end of *Spring Symphony* contrasts with the earlier passion which is probably closer to reality than the happy ending to Hilda White's novel. The director implies that Clara's life still encountered trials after her marriage, forcing the audience to empathize with her ongoing struggles. It also shows a shift in societal values between the 50's and the 80's—from a woman's sole focus on marriage to the added duties of marriage, career,

and family. In the eyes of the 1980's, Clara had everything because of her intricate balancing of family and career.

As Schamoni comments on two different societies, he also follows trends in scholarship. Reich's biography,²⁶ published in the year preceding the film, places Clara Schumann's life within an exhaustive historical context that draws attention to many issues that were either taken for granted or unexplored, such as her compositions, education, and her relationships with various prominent performers of the time. While the film does not always follow Reich's research, e.g. regarding Robert's and Clara's sexual relations, its narrative nevertheless is believable. Reich's hero worship and willingness to endorse the image of an innocent and naïve Clara Schumann is present, and that in itself may well be fiction. As a whole, the film presents a realistic glimpse of the lives of Robert and Clara, but takes probability a step further by leaping into fiction to add a certain excitement lacking in the bare facts. But such is the medium of film!

III: Children's Literature

Perhaps the most unusual piece in this sampling of literature is Susanna Reich's 1999 book *Clara Schumann: Piano Virtuoso*.²⁷ Written

²⁶ Nancy B. Reich, *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Women* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985).

²⁷ Susanna Reich, *Clara Schumann: Piano Virtuoso* (New York: Clarion Books, 1999).

for an intelligent eight-year-old, the book is a tribute to her mother, Nancy Reich, whose research engulfed Susanna's childhood and made Clara seem like an imaginary friend rather than an historical person.²⁸ In many ways Susanna's book is a condensed and adapted form of her mother's 1985 biography of Clara Schumann. The facts are ultimately the same.²⁹ I have included the book in this examination because of the way Susanna Reich portrays Clara for a younger audience, and more importantly for young girls. Certain sections read like a fairytale that is captivating, but in the genre of children's literature the fanciful retelling can work.

Biographical books for children are similar to their adult counterparts: "somewhere between biographical chronicle and fictionalized biography... These are works that do not intentionally represent or invent facts of the person's life but do select and arrange them for dramatic effect in the reading."³⁰ In this way, Susanna Reich's book is comparable to White's novel with the exception that children's biography tends to focus on the childhood of the individual rather than their adult accomplishments.³¹ While Reich's book encompasses most of Clara's life, she begins the book with Clara's achievements as a prodigy and thoroughly recounts her childhood.

²⁸ Ibid., iv.

²⁹ This is odd because Nancy Reich's scholarship continues to the present day, and continues to reexamine the events and influences upon Clara's life.

³⁰ Kay E. Vandergrift, *Child and Story: The Literary Connection* (New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers Inc., 1980), 141-2.

³¹ Ibid., 141.

In discussing Clara the child prodigy, Susanna defines virtuosity in a way that limits the various shadings of the term virtuoso. A virtuoso is defined as “an expert musician with dazzling technical skill,”³² a definition that is left open to numerous interpretations and does not encompass all that a virtuoso is and does. Would Clara agree with this definition? Given Wieck’s dislike of mere technical skill, it seems unlikely that he and his daughter would defend such a vague definition without mentioning the different facets and values of virtuosity, even though he considered her a virtuoso. Within the same chapter, Susanna upholds her mother’s beliefs that Clara’s performance style was quiet and reserved, which undercuts her definition of virtuoso: “Clara was expected to sit silently and obediently on the bench.”³³ This image of Clara has survived since her youthful performances. However, her unique performance style died with her—as none of her students went on to have careers that rivaled their teacher’s and thus are unsuitable evidence for what she would have sounded like. Without concrete visual evidence we can never be entirely certain of what Clara looked like as she played, but that does not mean we cannot speculate about her appearance. Short descriptions in reviews do not refer directly to her body, but focus on technique, fashion, and physical strength. This absence of descriptions may mean that there was nothing visually exciting or extravagant about

³² Reich, 1.

³³ *Ibid.*, 4.

her physicality in performance, that it was entirely within normal provisions, or that it was unacceptable to describe a woman's body.

Throughout the biography Susanna emphasizes the depth and thoughtfulness of Clara's performances. Again, boldly and without gray areas, Susanna claims, "She [Clara] didn't play mechanically, like a monkey that had memorized a few tricks. Clara's performances were expressive. She showed genuine feeling and musical sophistication."³⁴ Not using footnotes or citing sources, Reich continually reiterates the description of Clara's performance style to her readers. With no mention here of dazzling technical display, but rather her interpretative virtuosity, Reich needs to reevaluate her initial definition of virtuoso, which has proved problematic. Susanna Reich subscribes to some of the same kinds of absolutes as nineteenth-century critic Eduard Hanslick,³⁵ that Clara's playing embodied "beauty and truth." Reich's focus on the "thoughtfulness and depth" of Clara's playing is similar to Hanslick's verbal rhapsodies. But in terms of children's literature, after the explosion of children's books about male musician-composers in the early 1990's, such as Barbara Nichol's *Beethoven Lives Upstairs* and Susan Hammond's *Mr. Bach Comes to Call*, it is uplifting finally to have a female next to the masterful males. Perhaps these books made Reich's work finally possible.

³⁴ Ibid., 15.

³⁵ See Chapter Two's discussion of Hanslick's criticisms about Clara Schumann.

Reich focuses more on the relationship between Robert and Clara than on Clara's performing career, although the two are so intertwined that one is never far from the other. Within two chapters, "Success and Secrets," and "Does Mr. Schumann Play, Too?," an internal dialogue emerges that should spark the curiosity of young girls whose fairytale notions of love and marriage would be challenged by the troublesome courtship and married life of Clara and Robert. Reich's discourse about Robert is one of jealousy and it subscribes to the hero worship of Clara evident in her mother's writings. Susanna follows Nancy's hypothesis that although Robert loved and supported Clara, he was envious of her fame, so much so that it clouded his judgement of her as a wife:

"Meanwhile, Robert could not hide his mixed feelings about Clara's independence. The young composer was jealous of her career. He felt unsure about marrying a woman with a life outside the home, even one whose artistry he so admired."³⁶ Again, Robert's feelings mirror those of Felix Mendelssohn's toward his sister Fanny, who was an accomplished musician, but was relegated to performing in private because of her brother's beliefs.

In the following chapters of the book, this theme of jealousy continues after their marriage. Marriage habitually meant the end of public performances for female musicians, "[f]ortunately, Clara was so popular that no one criticized her decision [to continue performing], and

³⁶ Reich, 46.

Robert's respect for her artistry was so immense that he made no effort to stop her from appearing in public."³⁷ Robert's feelings regarding Clara's career ranged from jealousy to admiration, which are really varying degrees of the same basic emotion. Reich emphasizes Robert's ambiguous role in Clara's career, which characterizes the diversity of scholarly opinion on this point; as discussed in Chapter One, some scholars believed that Robert supported Clara, while others feel that he curtailed her performances in order to have children.³⁸ Since there is evidence to support both arguments, a definitive answer is unlikely. However, Reich focuses solely on the former with no mention of Robert hindering her career choices. Conversely, some Robert Schumann scholars feel Clara stunted his career, a point which receives no consideration from Susanna or Nancy Reich.

One relationship is noticeably underplayed from Reich's account, that with Johannes Brahms. Brahms is first mentioned on page 79 of the 118-page story. She quickly explains the relationship between Clara and Brahms as a purely "platonic" friendship. While children need not know of the probable love affair between them, to ignore it is making a fairytale out of reality. The gloss over Brahms creates a large void within the narrative, even for children.

Susanna Reich follows the same chronological survey as her mother. Reich begins with Clara's youth, Reich then discusses Brahms, and Clara

³⁷ Ibid., 52.

³⁸ See Chapter One.

as a mother and priestess. In choosing Clara the priestess, Susanna touches on many topics covered in Chapters One and Two, such as Clara's influence on the pianistic repertoire, audience reception, and pianism. Again, Susanna reinforces the characterization of Clara that her mother presented in 1985. In the chapter entitled "Priestess," Susanna fails to refer to the one who first called her priestess, Franz Liszt. Omitting Liszt does nothing but promote a false representation of what Clara Schumann actually accomplished. Susanna does not give the whole story, telling parts of what is documentable, but at the same time leaving out parts of the story that would shorten the pedestal Clara occupies for Susanna and Nancy Reich. As a priestess:

Clara's heartfelt playing brought new respect for pianists. As a young woman she was one of the few pianists to perform music from memory. Later, she honored the written notes of the score at a time when other musicians were trying to impress with flashy trills and extra notes that the composer never wrote.³⁹

As previously examined in Chapter One, many of these requirements were carried out at the public's insistence, e.g. playing from memory and making certain repertoire choices.⁴⁰ Reich's attack on embellishing the score, part of her definition of a virtuoso, were also performed by Clara. Susanna even ignores her mother's caveat, "Yet even the "priestess" was known to play too fast, double an octave, or add an occasional embellishment. Unlike Liszt, however, she was never guilty of adding

³⁹ Reich, 102.

⁴⁰ William Weber, *Music and the Middle Class: The Social Structure of Concert Life in London, Paris and Vienna* (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1975), 41.

effects to gain attention.”⁴¹ Susanna subscribes to particular stereotypes and canonizes Clara at Liszt’s expense without examining all the surrounding evidence.

In spite of its personal biases, overall the book is a much-needed attempt that allows younger readers to hear of a woman’s contribution to music. The biography covers many of the important events that shaped Clara’s life, given its limitations of space and audience. Stylistically, it is smartly written with beautiful supplemental paintings and drawings of Clara that would attract not only a children’s audience but amateur musicians as well.

IV: Historical Fiction

The final historical fiction for examination, novelist J. D. Landis’s book *Longing* from the year 2000,⁴² provides the most fascinating, controversial and daringly fictional look at Robert and Clara’s relationship. Landis’s imagery and description are very psychoanalytic, which give an entirely different impression compared to White’s dry account and Schamoni’s still relatively conservative interpretation. With recent music scholarship applying literary theory to musicians and musical documents, it would appear that Landis is up-to-date with musicological developments. The sexual overtones highlighted by the psychoanalytic

⁴¹ Reich, 280.

⁴² J. D. Landis, *Longing* (New York: Harcourt Inc., 2000).

approach are insightful and much more exhilarating for a contemporary readership than White's prudish romance.

Landis turns past writings, both scholarly and fictional, on their heads by questioning Felix Schumann's parentage in the prologue.⁴³ This immediately sets the tone for the remainder of the novel: one of contention with surface judgements. The book is told as Robert, while in the Endenich asylum, remembers his life experiences. Clara does not appear until Chapter Three, where Landis surrounds her character with a mystical aura. This adds to her mystery, for while she could not speak at the age of five in this story, she knew music. Landis's account of Robert's and Clara's blossoming romance is much more believable than that in *Spring Symphony*; it recognizes that their age difference played an important factor in their relationship. Despite Landis's mystical portrayal, Clara is unaware of her "destiny" with Robert at their first encounter. Landis shares this astutely perceptive Clara with White's almost psychic portrayal of the young prodigy.⁴⁴ As New Age spiritualism is now a more accepted part of mainstream culture, Landis's development of the mystical Clara does not appear out of place. In relationship to myths in scholarship, Clara's mysticism relates directly to her title of priestess. That psychic power and mysticism occur in more than one novel makes them a dramatic focus point for readers and of interest to scholars.

⁴³ Felix Schumann was Robert and Clara's youngest child. His parentage is questioned here as Felix was conceived shortly after Brahms first visited the Schumanns.

⁴⁴ This unexplored area of Clara's mysticism is supported in scholarly writings by Frau Johanna Schumann's prediction, "You must marry my Robert someday," and awaits further study.

As in the film, the book makes women's role in society an issue. Yet instead of women speaking about women, it is Wieck who expostulates on society's expectations. Characteristic of his actions regarding Clara, Wieck says, "a woman need not succumb to the diminished expectations with which society pretends to alleviate her lot."⁴⁵ While not speaking directly of Clara or female musicians in general, the fictional Wieck follows the behaviour of the historical Wieck. This thread continues in the novel, but it is never stated directly. In relation to the expected role of women in society, Landis moves from the general to the specific. Wieck overturns the gender norm of a woman's lot, but Landis as narrator speaks directly to the issue of women musicians. Landis also raises issues of displacement and value in the relationship of an interpreter. At the same time, mention of the bodily effort involved in piano playing and the adoption of a performative body creep into the commentary: "It was the piano that received her body and through her body the transubstantiated body of the composer."⁴⁶ As a woman, Clara interpreted rather than created musical texts. Even though Clara composed, published, and performed her own compositions, she was an oddity in this respect. Having the piano receive her body, and by association the disembodied composer's body, brings a quasi-religious atmosphere, much like the ritual of Communion—receiving the Host's body and blood—that again alludes to the priestess myth attached to

⁴⁵ Landis, 49.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

Clara's person. It also adds a sexual dimension to the novel—bodies receiving bodies—while Clara, according to the chapter's date, is ten years old, which may appear drastic and dramatic to some.

Even bolder than Schamoni, Landis portrays Clara sexually as aware and coquettish at a young age. Her playfulness and innuendo are either ignored or go unnoticed by her parents. Clara's sexual adventurism is found throughout the book in comments such as one she made to Johanna Schumann, "It wasn't a riot, Frau Schumann. Besides, I am used to it by now. They mistake me for an object of desire."⁴⁷ If Wieck was deluded about women as objects of sexual interest on the stage, Clara well understands the voyeurism enacted upon female stage performers. But she takes this possibly disturbing lust as a consequence of being in the public's view. Another astute observation on Clara's part involves the same kind of attitudes on the part of the audience:

She had been gossiped about all her life and was aware when she performed in public that forms of gossip often took up the space of music in the minds of the people, who speculated to themselves about her clothes and her skin and her hair and those part of her body and mind visible to the eye and mind and the nature of her passion.⁴⁸

This emphasizes the amount of control and power the audience possessed and exerted over all performers.

Spring Symphony and *Longing* both portray Robert and Clara experiencing the same sexual encounter in Dresden. Much speculation can be made about this actual event, since the only two people who

⁴⁷ Ibid., 125.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 439.

witnessed the meeting, Robert and Clara, left no incriminating evidence. However, this leaves the possibility open for fictitious rumours to insinuate probable, but not provable, events. Biographer Nancy Reich never discusses or confirms the undocumented tryst, but its likelihood is strong because of Robert's past relationships which are well documented. Landis challenges the myth of Clara as an innocent maiden.

Tackling the difficult issue of virtuosity, Landis follows the notions held by previous biographers, directors, and authors that the ephemerality of salon music had little staying power in comparison to the more substantial "Art Music," which was Clara's preference. In speaking of salon music, Landis dismisses the repertoire as "virtuoso pieces, meant precisely for the kind of show she was expected to provide, but, once mastered, they were reduced to a kind of animated simplicity. They were hell to practice, because without an audience to hear them, they had no meaning."⁴⁹ This quotation touches on many issues raised here: virtuosity, reception, and audience. It situates the role of any musician, regardless of gender, within society—that of providing a service for the audience, which for Classical music consisted of the aristocracy and middle class,⁵⁰ whose sway over concert life was phenomenal. Landis further delves into issues of virtuosity as he describes Clara's differing presentations in France and Germany:

And she played it from memory, as she had told him she had played an entire recital in Paris, which was one thing, however novel, to do

⁴⁹ Ibid., 86.

⁵⁰ Weber, 53.

in France and quite another in Germany, where adherence to the text was expected not only in how a piece was played but also in how one sat while playing it.⁵¹

In comparing the two musical centres, Landis emphasizes the difference in sets of musical values for each society. The discussion of adherence to the text is reminiscent of Chapter One's discussion of *werktreu* and Clara's allegiance to conservatism. Especially intriguing is Landis's mention of the body and how its expression differs in France and Germany. As Franz Liszt was associated more with the French school of piano playing, this could explain the markedly different styles of Clara and Liszt.

Finally, Landis compares Jenny Lind to Clara Schumann in a clever way, much like Nancy Reich does with Liszt. Landis has Robert misunderstand the speaker, Hans Christian Andersen: "Robert thought Andersen was referring to Clara until he mentioned her voice, Lind's voice, which was renowned for its expression of chaste maidenhood."⁵² The similarities are remarkable considering the language Landis uses to describe Clara earlier in the narrative. Clara's perception of virtuosity is upheld by the discussion of Lind. Upon hearing Lind, Clara falls in love "not only with the most beautiful coloratura she had ever heard, but with a woman of almost peculiar restraint in an art where exaggeration of gesture, voice, and attitude was customarily rewarded."⁵³ The restraint Clara finds in Lind's performances mirrors that in Clara's reviews.

⁵¹ Landis, 122.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 313.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 315.

Longing is a well-written novel, pleasing to both the scholar and the curious reader. Landis balances fiction and fact so well that his author's note rings true and may well define biography: "The epigrams are archival. The characters are historical. The dates of events and correspondence are, when verifiable, authentic. The rest is fiction masquerading as fact, and the reverse." Landis's liberties with historical facts are not so implausible as to make the book's plot inconceivable. This quality is exactly what makes the book so intriguing.

The works examined support ideas and impressions put forward in the first two chapters of the thesis. The surviving stereotypes create a complex picture of Clara's character. What is to be dismissed or examined more closely? As examples of secondary criticism, novels and films reinterpret what researchers have already uncovered. Challenging accepted myths shows scholarship's and literature's constant evolution and co-dependence on each other. The lives of Robert and Clara will continue to generate interest for many people because their story is one that has been documented repeatedly throughout history: music, love and promise followed by tragedy.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As more literature about Clara Schumann is published and translated, an increasingly complex picture of her life emerges. While this thesis does not concretely define nineteenth-century female virtuosity, it does examine certain differences between male and female virtuosos through such avenues as education, concert reviews, and twentieth-century portrayals of the artists. Clara's masculinization supports the legitimization of her career and the necessity for women to behave like male virtuosos. The relationship of gender to profession, as seen by the supporting examples of Jenny Lind and Franz Liszt, reveal the importance one factor had on the other. The Clara Schumann represented in isolation in various media allows her to be examined on her own merits and myths, which is a rare opportunity, considering her oft-inextricable links to the canonic musical personalities of the nineteenth-century, specifically Robert Schumann and Johannes Brahms.

Although Clara's conception of virtuosity shares some similarities with Franz Liszt, her gender caused more obstacles from society such as extra scrutiny and criticism. As a result, Clara's alternative actions minimized her differences for critics and observers. This study is a starting point for looking at the implications of gender on virtuosity.

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