## SCENEN AUS GOETHES FAUST: A PERFORMER'S ANALYSIS

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Robert Schumann's dramatic music remains, for the most part, undiscovered and therefore performed infrequently. *Genoveva*, *Das Paradies und die Peri, Manfred*, and *Scenen aus Goethes Faust* are comprised of some of Schumann's most beautiful music from his last stylistic period.

Schumann envisioned a national German opera that had a complete union of text and music and a plot based upon the supernatural and mythical German legends. His lofty aspiration was to raise the dramatic music of his time to the high standards of the literary culture.

Composing dramatic music for Goethe's *Faust* was a challenging endeavor for Schumann.

Scenen aus Goethes Faust was a project that he struggled with from 1844-1853 because of both the text and the grand scale of the piece.

One purpose of an analysis of the structure and content of Schumann's *Scenen aus*Goethes Faust and Goethe's poetry is to facilitate the solo vocal performer's interpretation.

Utilizing selected scenes from *Scenen aus Goethes Faust*; "Scene im Garten" from Part I,

"Sonnenaufgang," and "Mitternacht" from Part II and "Hier ist die Aussicht frei" from Part III,
this research paper will define important recurring musical motives, assess Schumann's usage of
contrasting vocal genres and their relationship to the unfolding drama, explore important vocal
performance issues for the baritone and soprano soloists and investigate the manner in which
Schumann uses the orchestra to depict and communicate the meaning of Goethe's text.

Schumann's method of setting Goethe's text will also be examined, as the ability to comprehend
the poetic text was of primary importance.

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## CHAPTER 1

## **INTRODUCTION**

Robert Schumann's dramatic music remains, for the most part, undiscovered and therefore performed infrequently. *Genoveva*, *Das Paradies und die Peri, Manfred*, and *Scenen aus Goethes Faust* are comprised of some of Schumann's most beautiful music from his last stylistic period. Schumann aspired to write dramatic music for the stage and explored the idea of setting Shakespeare's plays *Hamlet* and *The Tempest* or one of E.T.A. Hoffman's stories *Doge und Dogaressa* to music.

Schumann envisioned a national German opera featuring a complete union of text and music and a plot based upon the supernatural and mythical German legends. His lofty aspiration was to raise the dramatic music of his time to the high standards of the literary culture. Because Schumann's father was a publisher and a bookseller, Schumann's great love of literature and his extensive literary background originated in his childhood. He wanted to associate himself as a composer with the greatest literary figures including Heine, Goethe, and Schiller. Having set their texts in his lieder, Schumann was already familiar with verses of these renowned poets. "It is the duty of every cultivated man to know the literature of his country." In Schumann's quest to compose a national German opera, he originally thought of composing an opera using Goethe's *Faust*, but because of the scope of the subject matter he eventually set it in the manner of a secular oratorio. In October of 1844 Schumann wrote to Eduard Krüger and asked his opinion about setting *Faust* as an oratorio. "What do you think of the idea of treating *Faust* as an oratorio? Isn't it bold and beautiful?" In a correspondence to Carl Kossmaly in September, 1842 Schumann asked "Do you know my daily prayer as an artist? It is German opera."

Composing dramatic music for Goethe's *Faust* was a particularly challenging endeavor for Schumann as he was primarily known as a composer of piano music and German lieder. *Faust* was a project that he struggled with from 1844-1853 as the story of *Faust* calls for theatrical music depicting psychological emotions of various characters in dramatic situations requiring a multitude of soloists, orchestra and choir. As further evidence of his struggles with the *Faust* music, Schumann admitted in a correspondence to Franz Brendel that he was intimidated by the idea of whether or not to set Goethe's text to music. "What is the point of writing music to poetry that's so perfect?" In a letter to Mendelssohn, on September 24, 1845 he wrote "The scene from *Faust* lies in my desk drawer; I am really anxious to take another look at it. What gave me the courage to tackle the subject in the first place was the moving, sublime poetry of the conclusion. I don't know whether I'll ever publish it." The text for *Scenen aus Goethes Faust*, with the exception of a few modifications (omission of several lines of text and occasional repetition) comes directly from Goethe's play. Other composers, including Gounod, adapted the text for their musical settings by hiring a librettist to set the story of Faust.

Schumann's music for *Scenen aus Goethes Faust* has been criticized for its lack of a narrative and dramatic continuity as Schumann only set five percent of Goethe's text. Ernest Newman, in his chapter "Faust in Music" from *Musical Studies*, discussed the difficulty and the challenges of setting such an expansive subject to music. Newman states:

It can not be said that they have added very much to our comprehension of the drama;... One of the main difficulties in the way of the musician — even supposing him to have the brain capacity to rise to the psychology of the thing — is the enormous range and wealth of the material of the drama itself.<sup>7</sup>

Schumann's setting of Goethe's *Faust* is unique in that he set only certain scenes to music leaving out vital parts of the Faust legend assuming that his nineteenth century audience was already familiar with Goethe's famous setting of the story of Faust. Knowledge of the missing

scenes is a prerequisite to understanding and appreciating Schumann's composition. In his desire to write a literary opera, Schumann's goal was to compose music that should illuminate the meaning of the text thereby edifying the audience.

One purpose of an analysis of the structure and content of Schumann's *Scenen aus Goethes Faust* and Goethe's poetry is to facilitate the solo vocal performer's interpretation.

Utilizing selected scenes from *Scenen aus Goethes Faust*; "Scene im Garten" from Part I, "Sonnenaufgang," and "Mitternacht" from Part II and "Hier ist die Aussicht frei" from Part III, this research paper will define important recurring musical motives, assess Schumann's usage of contrasting vocal genres and their relationship to the unfolding drama, explore important vocal performance issues for the baritone and soprano soloists and investigate the manner in which Schumann uses the orchestra to depict and communicate the meaning of Goethe's text.

Schumann declared to Franz Brendel that the medium of music could heighten the emotional impact of the text and felt that his musical setting should not undermine Goethe's text. Schumann's method of setting Goethe's text will also be examined, as the ability to comprehend the poetic text was of primary importance.

Scenen aus Goethes Faust is set as an oratorio and is divided into three large parts of seven scenes (Part III "Faust's Verklärung" is further divided into seven numbers) for soloists, chorus and orchestra. Triple premiere performances of Schumann's setting of Part III took place on August 29, 1849 in Weimar (Liszt conducting), Dresden (Schumann conducting), and in Leipzig in honor of the hundredth anniversary of Goethe's birth. "Scene im Garten," "Gretchen vor dem Bild der Mater Dolorosa" and "Scene in Dom," from Part I, were composed in the summer of 1849. The first performance of all seven scenes and the overture took place in Cologne on January 13, 1862 following Schumann's death.

### CHAPTER 2

### **SCENE 1: IM GARTEN**

The opening scene in Part I, from *Scenen aus Goethes Faust* depicts a courtship between Dr. Faust and Gretchen (the diminutive of Margarete). Schumann sets the text as a dialogue between Faust and Gretchen in which they declare their eternal love for each other. This scene is important to the drama as Gretchen's relationship with Faust is the catalyst leading to the eventual downward spiral of Gretchen into madness in the powerfully dramatic Scene 3. An important compositional feature in *Scenen aus Goethes Faust* is Schumann's treatment of the orchestra. The role of the orchestra in Scene 1 is more than mere accompaniment; it enhances the atmosphere of the scene and often depicts the emotional and psychological states of the characters. The waltzing accompaniment in 12/8 time (felt in 4) in the orchestra and the sweeping melodic phrases in the strings creates a romantic dream-like atmosphere. The waltzing accompaniment in the orchestra sounds as if one could mistake it for a romantic scene in an operetta of Johann Strauss or Franz Léhar.

Another significant characteristic in *Scenen aus Goethes Faust* is Schumann's idiomatic writing for the voice. The operas of Bellini, Donizetti and Meyerbeer were popular with the 19<sup>th</sup> century public as they were often vehicles for star singers and featured theatrical spectacles that pandered to the audiences' taste. Schumann disliked the Italian operatic opulence that permeated *bel canto* operas. Prime examples of this style of dramatic music are heard in Bellini's opera *Norma* (1831) in the aria "Casta Diva" and in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835) in Lucia's "Mad Scene". Schumann avoids setting melodies in the typical *bel canto* style of Italian opera heard in many vocal lines of solo arias featuring ornamentation and extended cadenzas.

Instead, he uses a declamatory melodic style that combines elements of accompanied recitative, *secco* recitative and recitative arioso vocal style.

The popular notion of melody, Schumann argues, has been conditioned for the public's love of Italian opera. But what passes for melody among the Italians is in fact little more than "running passages, scraps of sung melodies, singly selected notes (easily sung, perhaps pleasing) for isolated words. A true melodic style will unite profundity and facility, significance and grace. There is more melody in the first two chords of the Eroica ...than in ten melodies of Bellini. 8

In the popular *bel canto* style of opera the focus was often on the pyrotechnics of the vocal soloist, often reducing the orchestra to the role of mere accompaniment. "But there are melodies of a different sort [from those praised by dilettantes], and if you turn to Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven, you will see them in a thousand different guises; hopefully you will soon tire of the impoverished monotony of the latest Italian opera melodies." Schumann was proud of his heritage and wanted to continue the tradition of Weber and Mozart composing German nationalistic operas. Schumann stated in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* "[that he wanted to] compose truly original, simple, deep German operas."

Schumann's flexible style in setting Goethe's text blends passages of lyrical melodies with sections of recitative that follow as closely as possible to the rhythm of ordinary speech. The declamatory style of text delivery also allows the action of the drama to move forward without interruption. An example of this declamatory text setting is Faust's first vocal line "Du kanntest mich, O kleiner Engel wieder?" Schumann accentuates strong syllables in this passage by placing them on stronger beats and by using notes of longer durations. His melodic setting emphasizes the first syllable in the word "kanntest" as well as the first syllable in the word "Engel" corresponding to the stress of spoken German pronunciation. In order to facilitate the delivery of multiple syllables of text in rapid succession, he uses one pitch and flexible rhythmic patterns for lines of text such as "mich, O kleiner Engel" as in measures 6 and 7 (see Figure 1).

This type of setting allows the natural accent of the words to coexist and contrast with the metrical stress of the music of the orchestra.

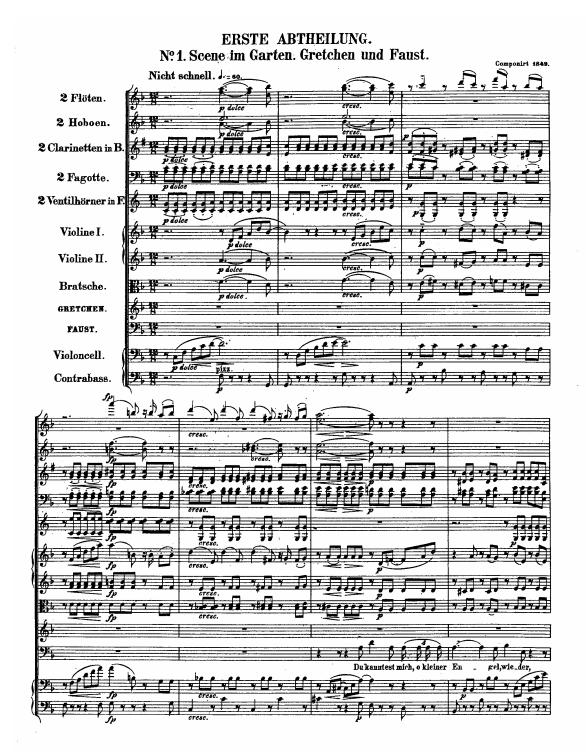


Figure 1: Robert Schumann, "Scene im Garten" from Scenen aus Goethes Faust, mm 1-7.

This style of declamatory singing presents several challenges for the vocal soloist as he or she is required to sing four against three and two against three while singing a beautiful legato line and not allowing the articulation of the consonants to interrupt the continuous flow of sound.

Compare this style of text setting with that of Mephistopheles (see Figure 2). This is an example of Schumann using accompanied recitative allowing further emphasis on the delivery of the text.

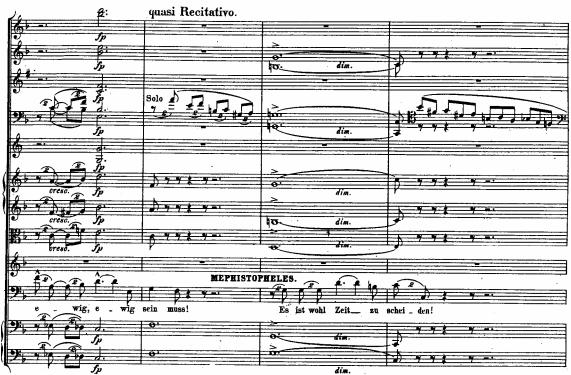


Figure 2: "Scene im Garten," mm 56-59.

Schumann generally avoids using repetitive melodies in the vocal lines and refrains from setting text in a traditional strophic manner. It was Schumann's philosophy to establish a balance between the music and the text, enabling the audience to concentrate on the delivery of the text as well as listening to the beauty of the melodic line.

Schumann's setting of *Faust* differs from other composers' interpretations of *Faust* (Gounod and Berlioz) in that he remains faithful to Goethe's text and takes very few liberties with Goethe's poetry. He takes an excerpt from the latter portion of Goethe's "Scene im Garten"

beginning with line 3163 "Du kanntest mich, O kleiner Engel, wieder, gleich als ich in den Garten kam?" (Did you, O little Angel, recognize me when I came into the garden?) and continues through line 3192 "Wonne zu fühlen, die ewig sein muss!" (To feel rapture, that must be eternal!) without any major changes to Goethe's original text except that he has Faust sing "süss Liebchen" (sweet darling) twice. He cuts to the scene "Ein Gartenhauschen" (a garden bower) where Mephistopheles interrupts Faust and Gretchen with the line "Es ist wohl Zeit zu scheiden" (It is now time to go).

An example of Schumann's compositional technique is the use of recurring musical motives in the orchestra providing the musical continuity in a basically through-composed piece. An example of a scene in which Schumann uses recurring motives is Scene 1, "Scene im Garten." Schumann utilizes a short arpeggiated motive outlining the tonic on beats 1 and 2 in the cello line which is answered by a motive in the first violins on beats 3 and 4 (see Figure 3).

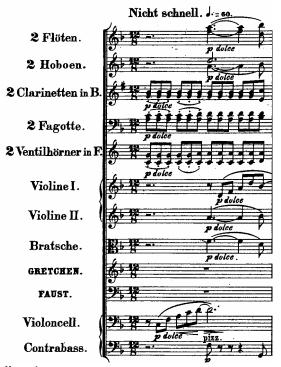


Figure 3: "Scene im Garten," m 1.

This motive is significant in that it provides the melody that is often missing in the declaimed vocal line. It is also a repeating motive heard throughout this scene and provides the sense of continuity that contrasts with the through-composed vocal lines. This motive depicts the flirtation between Faust and Gretchen. It is an excellent example of how the role of the orchestra functions as more than mere accompaniment. The character Faust is represented in the music by the motive that is played by the cellos and the character Gretchen is represented by a similar motive that is played by the first violins. The recurring sequential pattern builds the musical tension between the two instruments as the sexual tension would build between Faust and Gretchen when they notice each other in the garden. The recurring sequential ascending motives are underscored by repeating triplets in the accompaniment, heard in the clarinets, bassoons and French horns, depicting the underlying tension and excitement that Gretchen is feeling as her relationship with Faust begins to blossom (see Figure 4).

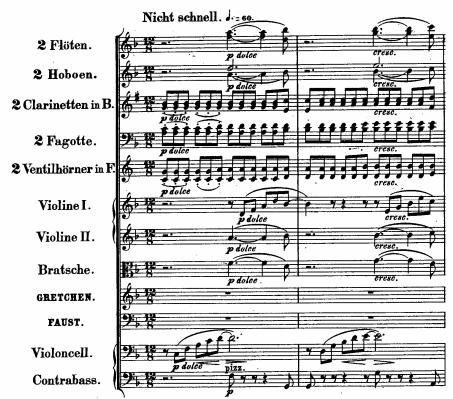


Figure 4:"Scene im Garten," mm 1-2.

This motive repeats throughout the scene as in seen in Figure 5.



Figure 5: "Scene im Garten," mm 28-31.

There is a climatic moment when, for the first time, the melodic motive is heard simultaneously in both the cellos and the violins. In this measure, the melodic motive soars to its highest point and represents the moment in which Gretchen and Faust recognize their mutual attraction to each other.

Schumann composed Faust's first vocal line to emphasize the strong beats of the measure thereby giving it a characteristically more purposeful attitude (see figure 1). Schumann emphasizes beat 3 in Faust's vocal line by setting his first word "Du" (you) on an anacrusis that leaps up a fourth to the tonic of D minor on beat 3, the strong beat of the measure, thereby accenting the stressed syllable of the word "kanntest". He also emphasizes the word "Engel" (angel) by giving it an agogic accent on the downbeat of the next measure. At the end of his first

line the harmony resolves deceptively to a D minor vi, not the expected tonic chord on the downbeat, setting the pattern of Faust's deception throughout the entire scene.

Feelings of hesitancy and nervousness are portrayed in Gretchen's vocal part as her line is written in duple against the underlying triple meter of the orchestra on beats 3 and 4.

Schumann intentionally sets Gretchen's first word "Saht" (you saw) on a much weaker beat than that of Faust. Her line is interrupted with an eighth note rest occurring on beat 1 before her next entrance on the weak part of beat 2 (see Figure 6).



Figure 6: "Scene im Garten," mm 8-11.

Gretchen's line is "Saht Ihr es nicht? Ich schug die Augen nieder" (Saw you it not? I lowered my eyes? "Ihr" is capitalized in Goethe's text but not in the musical score.) "Saht Ihr" is the formal usage of the pronoun "Ihr" and is significant because in her mind her social station is beneath that of Faust. Conversely, Faust addresses her with the informal "du" which is used for close acquaintances and loved ones.

Another example of Schumann's brilliant text setting juxtaposed with the rhythm of the

orchestra is heard as Faust's sings "und du verzeihst die Freichheit, die ich nahm" (do you forgive the liberty that I took) in duple against the triple rhythms of the orchestra creating a nonchalant, cajoling delivery of the text while asking her forgiveness for the liberties he had already taken as she left church. The duple against triple emphasizes the duplicitous nature of Faust (see Figure 7).



Figure 7: "Scene im Garten," mm 8-15.

Schumann does not set the emotional highlight of Scene 1 as a whimsical game of folly but recognizes the seriousness of the situation and composes this section of music from Gretchen's point of view. He portrays Gretchen's growing amorous feelings through a series of ascending sweeping vocal phrases increasing in dynamics and intensity. "Er liebt mich, liebt mich nicht", the popular children's game of "he loves me, he loves me not" involves pulling off the petals of daisies. The rapture expressed in Gretchen's vocal line as she plucks the final petal does not foreshadow her eventual downfall and of those dear to her. Not only will she lose her life, but she will lose her child, mother and her brother through a series of events related to her blind infatuation with Faust. This section, with its sweeping phrases in the vocal part in contrast to the rest of Scene 1, is an example of an accompanied recitative. The recurring triplet pattern in the orchestra has ceased; instead, Schumann uses sustained chords to harmonize the highly poignant text and allows the singer to occupy the central focus. This change in orchestration signifies a change in Gretchen's mood. Schumann increases the tension in this scene by portraying Gretchen's emotions musically through a series of ascending sequential appoggiaturas in Gretchen's melodic line which are dissonant with the underlying harmonies in the orchestra. As she nears the end of the petals on the flower, the excitement builds even further by a shortening of the rests between the entrances of Gretchen's emotional outbursts in the vocal line. This also gives her a sense of breathlessness or gasping one associates with amorous excitement. Gretchen's feelings of euphoria are expressed musically at the climax of this section where the soprano sings the highest pitch for her character to this point (see Figure 8). The word "love" is set on the highest pitch, G, which is dissonant against the F major harmony of the orchestra and resolves downward by step when she sings the word "mich" (me). This resolution overlaps with the start of the next phrase, Faust's vocal line. It is the first time in the scene in which the



Figure 8: "Scene im Garten," mm 32-39.

singer's line is not declamatory in nature. This melodic setting is significant because it is an emotional outburst at the high point of the scene thus far, as Faust has finally won over Gretchen's affections.

Schumann emphasizes the importance of Faust's victorious response to Gretchen's acquiescence in Faust's text "Ja, mein Kind! Lass dieses Blumenwort dir Götterausspruch sein!" (Yes, my child! Let this flower's word be God's word to you!) by setting Faust's vocal part in the upper register of the baritone voice. Schumann's score indicates that the phrase should be sung "mit Innigkeit" (with tenderness) directing the singer to imbue this phrase with a warm and passionate tone color to convince Gretchen that his emotional outburst is sincere (see Figure 9).



Figure 9: "Scene im Garten," mm 40-47.

This phrase comes to a climax on Faust's highest note of the duet sung up to this point, as Faust sings "Er liebt dich!" (He loves you!).

After Faust pours his heart out to Gretchen there is a sudden dramatic change in the orchestration signaling the first entrance of Mephistopheles. The music is no longer beautifully romantic, but instead becomes rather sparse, in a quasi-recitative section. The winding, sinuous

motive that interrupts Faust is the motive that introduces Mephistopheles and is repeated after he sings his line. The serpentine descending motive pointing toward Hell is significant as it is used in other movements in *Scenen aus Goethes Faust*. The first time this motive is played in Scene 1, its true sinister nature is depicted through two descending tritones, significant in that it is sometimes referred to as the devil's interval (see Figure 10).

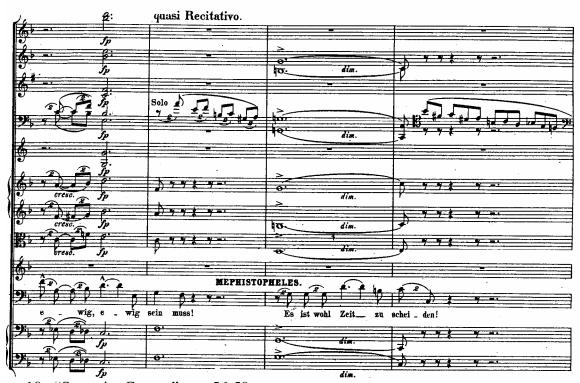


Figure 10: "Scene im Garten," mm 56-59.

A varied form of this motive recurs in Scene 3, "Scene im Dom" immediately before the entrance of the Böser Geist (Evil Spirit/Negation, who is really Mephistopheles). In this scene the motive is used to portray the torment and anguish that Gretchen feels as she enters the church, filled with remorse and guilt. This motive permeates the overture and returns in Scene 5 "Mitternacht."

The music heard in the orchestra in the final section of the duet is reminiscent of the music heard at the beginning of the duet as Faust and Gretchen say their farewells to each other.

The arpeggiated motive in the cello part in the final section is derived from the opening motive. The first time the motive was played in the cello line the pitches were C, F, A, C, outlining an F chord, with the final note moving to D causing the harmonic change. The last two times that this motive is played in the cellos, the musical tension inherent in its first appearance is resolved as the motive finally outlines only the tonic chord in the key of F major on beats 1 and 2. The resolution in the music depicts Gretchen's decision to succumb to Faust's advances (see Figure 11).



Figure 11: "Scene im Garten," mm 68-71.

#### **CHAPTER 3**

## ARIEL.SONNENAUFGANG.FAUST.CHOR.

The erudite Schumann ignored setting the overtly theatrical scenes in Goethe's tragedy and instead chose to compose the scenes that were much more symbolic in nature in Part II of Goethe's *Faust* in his effort to raise dramatic music to the level of literature (i.e., literary opera). Ernest Newman states regarding Schumann:

Schumann's scheme is thus in the highest degree philosophical. It austerely disregards the conventional elements that enter into the usual operatic *Faust* ...The work is uneven in its musical inspiration; but on the whole we can say that Schumann's is the real *German* Faust, the Faust of Goethe....<sup>11</sup>

Goethe demonstrates his veneration for great literature of the past as he frequently makes reference to themes and symbols taken directly from classic Greek and Roman mythology, the Bible, Dante and Shakespeare. Faust, a seeker of truth, ultimately causes his own downfall as a result of his continual striving toward an unobtainable perfection in life. His insatiable striving, his search for the meaning of life and spiritual growth are a reflection of humankind's struggle to transform the world into a Utopian society. <sup>12</sup>

In the opening scene Faust, weary from his traumatic experience with Gretchen, "has sought the solace of nature" surrounded by a charming landscape and he is calmed by the singing of Ariel, accompanied by Aeolian harps and a chorus of fairies. Ariel and his fairies, borrowed from Shakespeare's "The Tempest" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream" "symbolize those natural forces which enable...saintly man and sinner too to know rebirth like the plants in the spring" Faust's restoration is not only a result of his encounter with Ariel, but also from the act of being dipped by spirits into the mythological stream Lethe. The river Lethe, also known as the stream of oblivion in Hades and which was used by Dante in *Purgatorio*, cleanses Faust of some

of the terrible memories of the Gretchen tragedy. Symbols taken from the Bible are the charming landscape representing paradise and the image of bathing representing rebirth or baptism.

Goethe again pays tribute to Dante by setting the text in Faust's monologue in the form of a *terza rima*, a metrical form first used in Dante's *Divina Comedia* (the *terza rima* may be interpreted as representing the Holy Trinity). <sup>15</sup> The *terza rima* form is a 3-lined stanza using a rhyming pattern of a-b-a, b-c-b, c-d-c. An example from Scene 4 is:

Des Lebens Pulse schalgen frisch lebendig, -a Ätherische Dämmerung milde zu begrüssen; -b Du, Erde, warst auch diese Nacht beständig -a Und atmest neu erquickt zu meinen Füssen, -b Beginnest schon mit Lust mich zu umgeben, -c Du regst und rührst ein kräftiges Beschliessen, -b

Life's pulses strike fresh and lively,
To greet the mild dawn;
You, earth, were constant through the night,
And breathed, refreshed at my feet.
Begin already with the desire to surround me,
You move and stir, a strong decision strive toward the highest existence,
(trans. Karl Paoletti)

Iambic pentameter, a rhythmic pattern made up of five pairs of unstressed/stressed feet is often associated with *terza rima* form. Poets do not always adhere strictly to the unstressed/stressed rhythm of the iambic pentameter. A common departure is to use a weak ending by the addition of an unstressed syllable as Goethe does in *Faust*.

"Des Le/bens Pul/se schla/gen frisch/ lebendig;" (weak ending)

The accents in Schumann's setting of "Des Lebens Pulse schlagen" adhere closely to the accentuation found in Goethe's poetic meter. Poems, or sections of poems written in a *terza rima* form end with either a single line or a couplet repeating the rhyme of the middle line of the final tercet (i.e., c-d-c, d or c-d-c, dd). This is significant information for the interpreter of Faust to discern as a consequence of Goethe making connections to Dante, not only through a similar

rhyming scheme but also by sharing a central thematic idea. Dante, like Faust, is on a life-changing journey from darkness to light. <sup>16</sup>

Schumann divides Faust's monologue into four distinct sections according to Daverio.

Each section seeks to convey the changing thoughts and emotions that Faust is experiencing at that moment. Schumann in turn links each of these parts with a specific vocal genre: Faust awakening to nature with a *Lied* introduced by *cantabile* for solo cello, his retreat from the Sublime with a *Rezitativischer Gesang*. His resignation to defeat with a propulsive *arioso*, and his reawakening to reflective consciousness with a heroic *aria*. <sup>17</sup>

In the first section of this monologue, "Des Lebens Pulse schlagen frisch lebendig" (life's pulse beats fresh and lively) the revived Faust declares his continuing desire to reach toward a higher existence.<sup>18</sup> Schumann demonstrates his sensitivity to communicating the essence of Goethe's text by crafting a beautiful cantabile melody with sweeping phrases that express the overwhelming joy that Faust is feeling after his rebirth in Nature (see Figure 12).



Figure 12: "Sonnenaufgang," mm 281-287.

Schumann often uses appoggiaturas in the vocal line as an expressive device and to assist the singer with text inflection emphasizing important words within the phrase. In the phrases "du Erde warst auch diese Nacht beständig" (you earth, what were through the night, constant) and "und atmest neu erquickt zu meinen Füssen" (and you breathed newly refreshed at my feet) he

highlights the words "beständig" and "Füssen" with an appoggiatura. The singer should take advantage of Schumann's melodious text setting and instill this expressive melodic line with warmth and elegance, artfully using varying dynamics and legato line to shape the phrases.

An example of Schumann using the orchestra and the vocal line to illustrate images in Goethe's text is when Faust observes the awe inspiring sight of the sun rising over the Alpine mountain slopes. Schumann sets Faust's declamatory line "Hinauf geschaut!" (Look up) in the manner of an echo. The rhythm of the vocal line on "Hinauf" is repeated in exact rhythm one octave lower mimicking the sound of an echo as if one was calling out loudly on top of a mountain. The syncopated ascending line, which is found in the cellos, double basses and the bassoons, portrays the majesty and dramatic power of the morning sunrise. Trumpet, French horn and trombone fanfares leap upward a perfect fifth representing the call of an Alpine horn as well as symbolizing Faust's striving (see Figure 13). The leap upward of a perfect fourth then to a perfect fifth in the vocal line as Faust sings "Der Berge Gipfelriesen" (the gigantic mountain peaks) also depicts the glorious sight of the mountains.

The musical tension in the orchestration continues to build toward a climax as Faust declaims "sie tritt hervor" (it [the sun] steps forth). The D major harmony does not resolve to the expected tonic chord of G major, rather, the harmonic progression becomes "unhinged," unexpectedly turning toward a B major seventh chord, the dominant of E minor, avoiding its resolution to the tonic, portraying Faust's inability to gaze directly at the sun. <sup>19</sup> The unsettled harmonic progression wanders through several key areas depicting Faust's futile efforts to strive beyond normal human existence. Faust's discouragement in his inability to commune with the sun (the absolute) is portrayed musically through a series of diminished seventh chords as the diminuendo in the orchestra depicts his retreat from the sun. <sup>20</sup> Schumann further highlights the



Figure 13: "Sonnenaufgang," mm 295-300.

monumental moment in Faust's development by writing a tritone in the vocal line on the word "geblendet" (blinded) and uses an appoggiatura once again to emphasize the word "durchdrungen" (piercing pain) (see Figure 14).

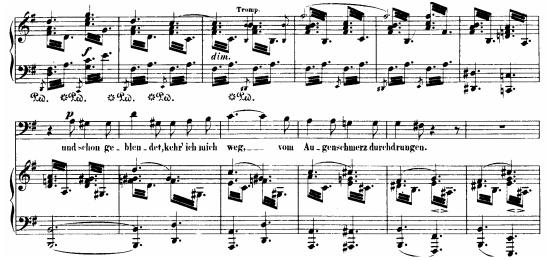


Figure 14: "Sonnenaufgang," mm 329–340.

In the third stanza beginning with the text "So ist es also" (thus it is so) Faust reflects upon his failed attempt to look at the sun. Goethe uses the image of the sun and its light to represent the ordered universe, eternal truth, and the divine.<sup>21</sup> In this pivotal scene Faust begins to gain insight into life's meaning and humankind's role in the infinite design.

The lyrical melodic style of "Des Lebens Pulse schlagen" (life's lively pulses beat once again) contrasts sharply with the freer declamatory melodic structure of "So ist es also" (thus it is so). This dramatically intense style of text declamation replaces the often saccharine and conventional melodies (four bar phrases and periodic structure) of the traditional Italian operatic style.

Once again, the vocal line reflects the natural verbal accentuations of the text and depicts its emotional content. This type of unending melody avoids regular phrase patterns, cadential gestures and is accompanied with a motivically constructed orchestration providing the musical unity. Tempo and repeating rhythmic motives are important structural elements in this section of Schumann's music. The rhythmic energy is derived from an increase in tempo marked *Lebhaft* (lively), a change in meter to common time, and a rhythmic motive in the violins. The

declamatory vocal part is also infused with rhythmic energy derived from the dotted rhythms and repeating eighth notes (see Figure 15).



Figure 15: "Sonnenaufgang," mm 335–339.

As Faust sings "So bleibe den die Sonne mir im Rücken!" (So then let the sun stay behind my back!) Schumann crafts a new heroic sounding melody again imbuing the vocal line with dotted rhythms to express Faust's triumphant resolve to strive. The upward leap of a perfect fifth from tonic to dominant in the vocal line, the march-like rhythm in the orchestration, and the heroic melodic motive portray Faust's will to triumph over adversity.

Tempo, key changes, and rhythmic energy in the orchestration and vocal part depict

Faust's agitation and his impetuous attitude at not being able to commune with the sun directly.

After Faust is temporarily blinded by the overpowering brightness of the sun he turns away from the sun and notices the rainbow shimmering in the waterfall. In Scene 4 there are two important images that Schumann illustrates in the orchestration. The first image depicted was the

sun – a metaphor for the divine and the second image in the orchestration is Faust's vision of the rainbow.

Schumann slows the rhythmic drive for ten measures and uses colorful chromatic harmony in sustained whole notes to illustrate the multi-hued image of the rainbow.<sup>23</sup> In this wonderful moment the focus shifts to the solo singer whose line floats above the orchestra as the rainbow floats in the air and he declaims Goethe's most profound verse of poetry "am farbgen Abglanz haben wir das Leben" (in colorful reflection, we have life). The ephemeral rainbow symbolizes the transitory nature of life and has the element of the divine shining through it.<sup>24</sup> Faust realizes that life is a combination of heaven and earth (see Figure 16).



Figure 16: "Sonnenaufgang," mm 405-417.

Men may strive with apparent success for the realization of their highest hopes but find the momentary vision of perfection so overwhelmingly bright – 'from those eternal depths breaks forth/ Excess of flame, we stand confounded...and so Faust at last acknowledges that man is necessarily and rightly earth-bound, constrained to look 'to the earth'... <sup>25</sup>

### **CHAPTER 4**

### **MITTERNACHT**

In the events leading up to "Mitternacht" (midnight), Faust is old, prosperous and living in an opulent seaside palace. Faust, still unsatisfied, has turned formerly barren land at the edge of the sea into blooming gardens and fields. Only Baucis' and Philemon's idyllic cottage and a church stand in the way of Faust's completion of his project. Frustrated that the old couple has refused his offers to buy the property he orders Mephistopheles and his henchmen to "get them out of the way." The old couple resisted Mephistopheles' request for them to relocate so he killed them and burnt their property. Standing alone on his balcony in distress over the deaths of Baucis and Philemon, Faust believes that he sees four apparitions rising out of the smoke of the recently burnt cottage.

In this scene the powers of the apparition Sorge (Care) are exerted and work in opposition to Faust's and humankind's creative nature. <sup>26</sup> Faust regrets his turn from Nature to the dark arts and witchcraft and informs Sorge that he has abandoned the practice of magic. <sup>27</sup>

"Mitternacht" is made up of four contrasting musical sections; a quartet featuring the voices of the four gray women, Faust's monologue, the dialogue between Faust and Sorge (Care) and Faust's soliloquy. Schumann introduces the four women through a recurring motive featuring an eighth note triplet figure in the strings. This motive appears again in the orchestra to depict Sorge's entrance into Faust's palace. As in Scene 1, the musical unity is achieved by the recurring motive in an otherwise through-composed piece, an example of Schumann's compositional technique. This motive is the basis for Sorge's solo "Wen ich einmal mir besitze" (when I once again possess) (see Figure 17).

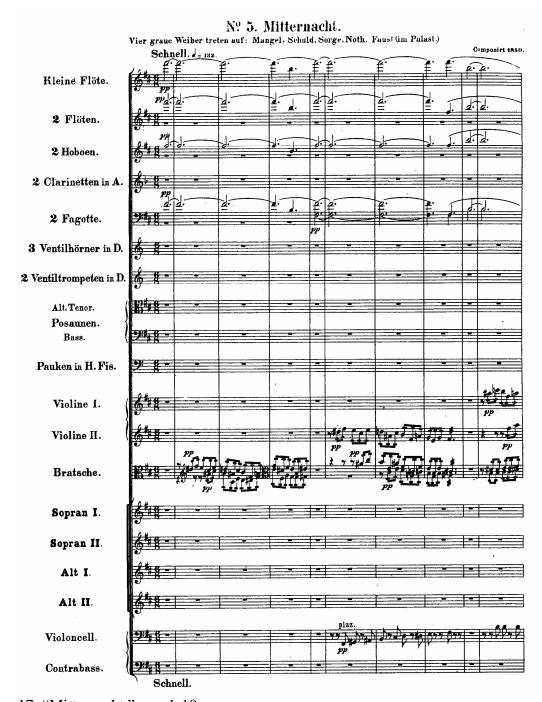


Figure 17: "Mitternacht," mm 1-10.

Another significant repeating motive contrasting to the triplet figuration consists of high sustained notes in the upper registers of the woodwinds creating an eerie sound (see figure 17). The intended effect of these extremely high notes upon the listener is a "ringing in the ears," a

common means of indicating the supernatural in 19<sup>th</sup> century German Romantic opera.<sup>29</sup>

The melodic motive first heard before Mephistopheles' entrance in Scene 1 (also heard before Bösers Geist's entrance in scene III) is played twice before Faust's first soliloquy and portends the agonizing outcome from the haunting visitation of Sorge. The recurring "suffering" motive is an example of Schumann using motives associated with evil spirits (Sorge), Mephistopheles and human misery in several scenes providing the work with an overall sense of musical unity. 30

The shifting harmonies in the orchestra underscore changes in the characters' emotional states, portray dramatic events and delineate formal sections. Sorge's antagonizing of Faust is depicted by Schumann's setting of a childlike incantation in Sorge's vocal line in B flat minor "Würde mich kein Ohr vernehmen, müsst' es doch im Herzen dröhnen" (Though no ear perceives me, yet the heart feels a roaring) (see Figure 18).



Figure 18: "Mitternacht," mm 192–198.

The harmonic shift to D flat major depicts Faust's rebellious response "Ich bin nur durch die Welt gerrant" (I have raced through the world) to Sorge's question in B flat minor "Hast du die Sorge nie gekannt?" (Have you never known Care?). The harmonic shifts, arpeggiated sixteenth notes in the violins and dotted rhythms in Faust's vocal line portray both a dramatic and emotional shift from Sorge's gloomy joyless predictions to Faust's misplaced display of bravado.

The feelings of anxiousness and worry brought on by Sorge's presence in her mocking melody (based on the motive in Figure 18) are portrayed musically in the accompanying running triplet figures in the strings as Faust's defiance reaches its breaking point when he refuses to acknowledge Sorge's power (see Figure 19).



Figure 19: "Mitternacht," mm 130-136.

An increase in tempo and a trumpet fanfare announce the entrance of Faust's next declamation "Unselige Gespenster" (unholy specter). Again Schumann accentuates the delivery of the soloist's text through the use of a dotted eighth note followed by a sixteenth note and a disjunct vocal line punctuated by the orchestra. As Sorge delivers the most important line of her speech "die Menschen sind in ganzen Leben blind" (humans are blind their entire life), the high octave sustained notes in the woodwinds that depicted the supernatural in measures at the beginning of "Mitternacht" return. The tremolo in the strings illustrates her blowing her curse upon Faust, causing his blindness. The sorrow that Faust experienced after being blinded by Sorge is depicted musically by returning to the key of B minor and a slower a tempo marking, Langsam feierlich (slow and solemn). Faust's determination to triumph over Sorge's destructive forces calls upon all of his inner strength and is depicted musically as Faust's lamentation takes on the characteristics of a heroic aria. The harmony shifts from B minor to B major, the tempo accelerates and accented dotted rhythmic patterns in the orchestration enliven this passage reflecting Faust's changing emotional states. "The glorious, brassy coda...is perhaps the highest, most triumphal moment in the entire Scenes. Anticipated in the coda in the overture, this coda epitomizes Schumann's mystical positiveness: the triumph of a noble goodness over worry and evil."<sup>31</sup> Faust believes that his greatest insight comes as a result of being blinded by Sorge. He is no longer distracted by the outside world, but instead is focused on the inner light that shines brightly within himself. 32 Ironically, Sorge's curse not only blinds Faust but causes him to misinterpret what he hears. Tragically, it is not his servants digging the ditches that he hears but a band of Lemurs under the direction of Mephistopheles, digging his grave.

Performing Faust's heroic aria at the end of "Mitternacht," after singing an extended monologue followed by a vocally demanding duet with Sorge, may prove difficult for the

baritone soloist. In this dramatically charged scene, Faust triumphantly proclaims his continued desire to strive (even after being blinded by Sorge). This aria presents several challenges for the singer's vocal technique. The heroic style of singing requires the soloist to sing with a fully resonant sound that projects over the pronounced brass in the orchestra as well as portraying the level of dramatic intensity inherent in the scene. In order to sing vigorously without sacrificing beauty of tone, the singer must carefully balance this type of energized singing with lyricism and an ease of production. The demanding tessitura of Faust's vocal line often centers around D sharp and E natural (with an optional high G sharp) requiring the singer to carefully negotiate the transition into the *passaggio* through balanced registration.

### CHAPTER 5

## DR. MARIANUS'S ARIA

As in Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, the character Tannhäuser is saved by the love of Elizabeth just as Faust is ultimately redeemed through the unselfish love of Gretchen. "Faust's salvation is hardly the logical outcome because Goethe like Dante admits to neither logic nor meaning: the ultimate mystery of transcendence – Schumann captures this mystery in musical terms." Dr. Marianus's (Faust's purified soul) aria demonstrates Schumann's gift for composing beautiful melodies with lyrical expression. The role of the orchestra in Dr. Marianus's aria is in complete contrast to the role of the orchestra in the previously discussed scenes. The role of the orchestra is to enhance the atmosphere of the text and to accompany the singer, thus allowing the gorgeous melodic line to become the focal point. The luxurious orchestration; strings, harp and solo oboe, depicts the ethereal landscape of the afterlife "bathed in ineffable peace." The aria begins with an accompanied recitative introducing a poignant melodic motive in the vocal line "schwebend nach oben" (soaring high above) in measures 7 and 8 that appears later in the oboe part in measures 18 and 19, and is repeated several times throughout the aria as a countermelody to the vocal soloist's melodic line (see Figures 20 and 21).

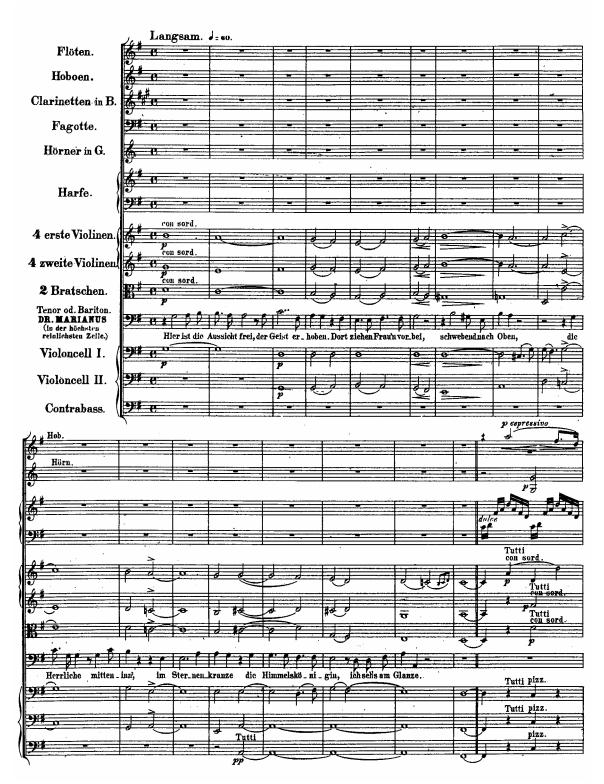


Figure 20: "Hier ist die aussicht frei," mm 1-18.



Figure 21: "Hier ist die aussicht frei," mm 19-23.

What is challenging for the baritone soloist performing this aria is the extremely high tessitura in the final section. The score indicates that this aria can be performed by either a tenor or a baritone, however, a lyric tenor would have a much easier time singing the lines of text "sind Büsserinnen, ein zartes" (around her there are penitent women) with an ethereal tone quality in a softer dynamic. The same is true in the final two measures of the aria where Schumann asks the baritone to sing a high G with a pianissimo dynamic marking ("Gnade bedürfend!" Grant us mercy!). The skillful singer will execute this passage with a head voice dominant registration accompanied by the *appoggio* breath management technique (see figure 22).



Figure 22: "Hier ist die aussicht frei," mm 51-57.

### **CHAPTER 6**

### CONCLUSION

Important compositional features in Schumann's setting of Goethe's *Faust* include short rhythmic and melodic motives used to unify movements, illustrative orchestra accompaniment used to portray visual images in Goethe's text, harmonic shifts, modulations and tempo changes to define sections and to depict the changing emotional states of the characters. Scenes 4 and 5 have extended postludes, possibly a compositional technique derived from Schumann's lieder. The salient feature in *Scenen aus Goethes Faust* is Schumann's treatment of the solo vocal part. Faust's long phrases, frequently high tessitura, contrasts in vocal color, dynamics, articulation, dramatic mood and passages of both dramatic and lyrical singing are demanding for the most accomplished singer. Clear and precise declamation of the text and dramatic expression are the principal considerations for the performer.

Legato singing style is easier to produce in the lyrical passages, but the dramatic declamatory singing with its often disjunct vocal part requires a legato approach as well. The delivery of Schumann's setting of Goethe's text with its speech-like characteristics is difficult to articulate as many words are delivered rapidly and often contain consonant clusters. Singers should avoid allowing the articulation of consonants to create tension in the jaw and tongue thus interfering with the vocal apparatus. Because Schumann's *Scenen aus Goethes Faust* is set as an oratorio and not an opera with costumes, sets, staging, props and lighting, the responsibility for dramatic expression falls primarily to the singer. Text declamation, vocal color, facial expression, and dynamics are the tools at the singer's disposal used to facilitate the communication of Goethe's sublime poetry.

Schumann's music for *Scenen aus Goethes Faust* received mixed reviews from his critics and colleagues citing lack of dramatic continuity (as Schumann set only a very small portion of Goethe's epic text) and lack of melodic invention in the overture and in the declamatory vocal passages. Schumann intentionally chose to focus on Goethe's central theme of Faust's salvation accomplished through Gretchen's divine love and Faust's eternal striving rather than narrating the entire drama. In a review published in *Die Gegenwart*, Alfred Heinrich Ehrlich criticized Schumann for his Wagnerisms especially Schumann's usage of "sprechgesang" (speech song) in his setting of Goethe's *Faust*.

The beginning of Faust's next solo, "Des Lebens Pulse," also belongs to the most magnificent moments. On the other hand, the second part of this number, "So ist es also," is the perfect model of an unending melody after Wagnerian principles, according to which a concrete expression is to be musically fitted to each word. [And to be sure, one may decisively maintain, without adducing any special proof, that] were the public not prepared for such experiments by the Wagner operas and by their endless and "unending" melody, it would not be able to bring any sympathy to this song of Faust's. <sup>35</sup>

Eduard Krüger said "In writing hardly memorable melodies...Schumann takes the same path as Wagner; the predominantly psychological recitation, tone painting and orchestra texture impede melodic memorability.<sup>36</sup> After the premiere of a private performance of Part III (Faust's Transfiguration) in 1848, Schumann stated in a letter to Franz Brendel:

What pleased me the most was to hear from many that the music made the poem intelligible to them for the first time. For I often feared the reproach: why music to such perfect poetry? On the other hand I felt since I came to know the scene that here of all places music could enhance the effect.<sup>37</sup>

Clara Schumann said "I am convinced that this work will some day take its place among the greatest in existence. The second part is at least as great as the third..."<sup>38</sup>

## **ENDNOTES**

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Frank Cooper, *Robert Schumann: The Man and His Music*, ed. Alan Walker (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1972), 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Gerald Abraham, ed., *Schumann A Symposium* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 266.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Eric Jensen. F. Schumann. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 238.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Wolfgang Marx. Faust and Music: Schumann's Szenen aus Goethes Faust, Recording Notes, Sony Classics (New York, N.Y.: 1995), 9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. *Robert Schumann Words and Music: The Vocal Compositions*, trans. Rienhard G. Pauly (Amadeus Press, 1988), 203.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Eric Sams, "Schumann and Faust," *The Musical Times* 43 (1972): 546.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Ernest Newman, *Musical Studies* (New York: Haskell House Publishing, 1905, 1969), 71.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Newman, 332.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Daverio, 553.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Jensen, 239.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Newman, 99.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Stuart Atkins, *Goethe's Faust: A Literary Analysis*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958), 252.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Atkins, 100.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Atkins, 100.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Denton J. Snider, *Goethe's Faust, Second Part: A Commentary*, (St. Louis, Missouri: Sigma Publishing Company, 1886), 15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Denton J. Snider, 12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Daverio, 375.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Jane K. Brown, *Goethe's Faust: The German Tragedy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986), 138.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Daverio, 376.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Alston, 101.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Brown, 136.

- <sup>22</sup> Jensen, 251.
- <sup>23</sup> Alston, 107.
- <sup>24</sup> Snider, 9.
- <sup>25</sup> Atkins, 103.
- <sup>26</sup> Daverio, 376.
- <sup>27</sup> Atkins, 250.
- <sup>28</sup> Alston, 110.
- <sup>29</sup> Laura Turnbridge, *Euphorion Falls, Schumann, Manfred and Faust* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University, 2002), 139.
- <sup>30</sup> Donald Mintz, "Schumann as an Interpreter of Goethe's Faust," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 14, no. 2, (Summer 1961): 245.
- <sup>31</sup> Richard W. Harpster, "Scenes From Goethe's Faust," *The Choral Journal* 18, no. 6 (February 1978): 13.
- <sup>32</sup> Brown, 240.
- <sup>33</sup> Daverio, 379.
- <sup>34</sup> Brown, 138.
- <sup>35</sup> Mintz, 235.
- <sup>36</sup> Gisela Probst-Effah. *Robert Schumanns Oratorien* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1975), 188.
- <sup>37</sup> Joan Chissell, *Schumann*, (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 200.
- <sup>38</sup> Cooper, 331.

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