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Gradus ad Arte: Preliminary Steps to Artistry in Schumann's *Album für die Jugend* and Felix Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte*.

A supporting document submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Musical Arts in Music

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April 2021

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Jugend* and Felix Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte*.

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JUNE 2022

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ABSTRACT

Gradus ad Arte: Preliminary Steps to Artistry in Schumann's *Album für die Jugend* and Felix Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte*.

by

Buyun Li

Robert Schumann's pedagogical contribution *Album for the Young Op. 68*, was recognized as a leading pedagogical resource in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. From the time of J. S Bach, composers have been aware of the need for didactic compositions directed towards a beginning-level pianist. An oft-neglected work of Robert Schumann, his *Sixty-eight Rules for Young Musicians*, was written to be published in conjunction with his work; *Album für die Jugend, Op. 68*. Contemporary teachers and students are rarely aware of these rules and of the related compositional manifestations in such pedagogical works as the *Album für die Jugend* of Schumann and also in Mendelssohn's similar contribution; *Lieder ohne Worte*.

The purpose of this paper is to clarify Schumann's pedagogical contributions by first comparing Schumann's pedagogical views with those of previous historical pedagogues prior to Schumann. These would include François Couperin (1668 -1733), Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714-1788), Frédéric François Chopin (1810-1849), and Johann Gottlob Friedrich Wieck (1785-1873). Secondly, I shall demonstrate how the *Sixty-eight Rules for Young Musicians* are exemplified by the works in *Album for the*

Young. Thirdly, I have investigated the correspondence between Robert Schumann and Felix Mendelssohn. Finally, I will point out examples of a similar nature from the parallel work; Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte*. This is a logical progression to examine a portion of the works from each and explores how they deal with technique, voice-leading, balance of the hands, projection of melodic content, phrasing, counterpoint in its most simplistic forms, and the fundamental principles of Romantic nuance and rubato.

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Chapter 1 Comparing Schumann's Pedagogical Views With Those of Previous Pedagogues

With regard to From Robert Schumann's attitude towards technique, he stated that music came from the head and the heart, not necessarily only from the well-trained fingers. He wrote in his *Musikalische Haus und Lebensregeln* in 1849:

So what does it mean to be musical? You are not musical if, eyes glued nervously to the notes, you play a piece painfully through to the end; you are not musical if you get stuck and cannot go on because someone happens to turn two pages at once for you. But you are, if with a new piece you almost sense what is coming, if with a familiar one, you know it completely. In a word, if you have music not just in your fingers, but in your head and your heart. ¹

He also addresses the same idea in *Sixty-Eight Rules for Young Musicians (Advice to Young Musicians)* that "Never strive in execution for the so called bravura. Try to produce in a composition the impression which the composer had in view. More should not be sought. What is beyond is caricature."²

Friedrich Wieck, Robert Schumann's piano teacher, claimed that the quality of tone was the foremost technical issue. Schumann had learned extensive practice techniques regarding tone production and quality from Wieck. Chiefly, Wieck emphasized the significance of a 'correct position of the sitting and the hand' as a prerequisite for good tone production in his didactic treatise *Piano and Song*. In a manner similar to Wieck's, historical keyboard pedagogues prior to Schumann; François Couperin, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, and Frédéric François Chopin, all stressed the

¹ Claudia MacDonald, "Schumann's Piano Practice: Technical Mastery and Artistic Ideal," *The Journal of Musicology* 19, No. 4 (2002): 527.

² Robert Schumann, *Advice to Young Musicians* (London: Augener LTD, 1876), 3.

importance of the posture and hand position to enable the freedom of execution and beauty of tone quality.

C. P. E. Bach pointed out the importance of posture for performers in his *Versuch über die Wahre art das Clavier zu Spielen (Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments)*. First, performers must sit at the center of the keyboard, so that they can play the higher register and lower register with equal ease. Second, the forearms need to be suspended above the keyboard. Likewise, Couperin claimed in his *L'art de toucher le clavecin* that one must sit at the correct height. One's elbow, wrist, and fingers need to be in one level. One should sit in the middle of the keyboard, and turn the body to the right slightly. The distance between the keyboard and one's body should not be too far or too close, and it should be about nine thumb lengths measured from one's waist to the keyboard.³ Chopin expressed similar views on the sitting position:

Position yourself so as to be able to reach both ends of the keyboard without leaning to either side. The right foot on the sustaining pedal without operating the dampers.

The elbow level with the white keys, the hand turned neither to the left nor the right.⁴

For hand shape, C.P.E Bach stated that the fingers should be arched, and the muscles need to be relaxed since stiffness can harm the movements of playing. In addition, the thumb must always remain as close as possible to the hand. Particularly, the thumb is the key to all fingers and serves to keep other fingers supple. C. P. E Bach also mentioned that the shape of the hand is associated with the fingering choice. For example, in terms of the shape of the hand, the three inner fingers are longer than the outer two (the little finger and the thumb), so the black keys naturally belong to the three longer fingers and the black keys are seldom taken by the little finger nor the thumb. In particular,

³ François Couperin, *L'art de Toucher Le Clavecin*, ed. and trans. Margery Halford (United States: Alfred Pub Co, 2008), 30.

⁴ Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: pianist and teacher as seen by his pupils* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 48.

Couperin addressed the significance of suppleness of fingers and of muscles. He claimed that beautiful playing depends on the suppleness of the fingers as opposed to force and stiffness. Similarly, Chopin's perspectives on hand shape are summarized:

Find the right position for the hand by placing your fingers on the keys, E, F#, G#, A#, B: the long fingers will occupy the high (black) keys, and the short fingers the low (white) keys. Place the fingers occupying the high (black) keys all on one level and do the same for those occupying the white keys, to make the leverage relatively equal; this will curve the hand, giving it the necessary suppleness that it could not have with the fingers straight. A supple hand; the wrist, the forearm, the arm, everything will follow the hand in the right order.⁵

⁵ Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: pianist and teacher as seen by his pupils* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 48.

Chapter 2 Robert Schumann's Sixty-eight Rules for Young Musicians and Album for the Young

Album for the Young achieves a fine balance and connections between the development of piano technique and the cultivation of musicianship, listening skills, and the capacity to construct character imagery.

Robert Schumann first intended to insert his pedagogical maxims in between the pieces included in his *Album for the Young*. These maxims were first published as *Musikalische Haus und Lebensregeln* (alternately translated as Musical Rules for Life and the Home and as Advice to Young Musicians as well as 68 Rules for Young Beginners) in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* journal that Schumann edited (1850). Then, in 1851, they were appended to the second edition of his *Album* (Hoffmann, 1979). In 1860, the maxims were translated from German into French by Franz Liszt.⁶

1) Cultivation of the Ear in Schumann and Chopin

One of Schumann's first concerns addressed in his *Sixty-eight Rules for Young Musicians* is the cultivation of the musical ear. He claims in rule no. 1:

“The cultivation of the ear is the most important. Labour early to recognize notes and key. Endeavour to find what notes the bell, the window-pane, and the cuckoo express.”⁷ Schumann expressed the same idea in rule No. 44:

“But how does one become a good musician? Dear student, the chief thing, a good ear and quick comprehension, comes, as in all things, from above.”⁸

Similarly, in Rules No. 49, Schumann points out:

⁶ Lia Laor, *Paradigm War: Lessons Learned from 19th Century Piano Pedagogy* (UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 124.

⁷ Robert Schumann, *Advice to Young Musicians* (London: Augener LTD, 1876), 1.

⁸ Robert Schumann, *Advice to Young Musicians* (London: Augener LTD, 1876), 5.

“Give early heed to the tone and character of different instruments: try to impress the peculiar sounds on your ear.”⁹

This is one of the most important elements in the early stage of piano students’ training because it is then that they establish their listening habits as tools to practice. Those who teach young musicians need to cultivate their musical ears as early as possible to develop their abilities to distinguish different tone colors and prevent insensitive tone production.

2) The Concept of “Bel canto”

According to the Grove Music Dictionary, the term ‘bel canto’ refers to the Italian vocal style of the 18th and early 19th centuries, the qualities of which include perfect legato production throughout the range.¹⁰ In Chopin’s view, pianists need to imitate great Italian singers in when playing. He also loved to search for a means to portray in piano playing what we understand by *Portamento* in singing.¹¹ Wieck, Schumann’s piano teacher, acknowledged the same perspectives in *Piano and Song*:

“...the cultivation of the singing tone of the human voice should ever be our guide...”¹²

Indeed, the principles of Wieck’s teaching methodologies were based on the Italian approach to vocal tone production. He defined the correct method of vocal tone production in *Piano and Song*:

...through artistically correct and reposeful study, not singing heavily, and never forcing the voice, often singing lightly, improve your vocal attack by using

⁹ Robert Schumann, *Advice to Young Musicians* (London: Augener LTD, 1876), 6.

¹⁰ Owen Jander, “Bel Canto,” Grove Music Online, Oxford University Press, 2001, June 6th 2022, 2001, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.02551>.

¹¹ Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: pianist and teacher as seen by his pupils* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 69.

¹² Friedrich Wieck, *Piano and Song (Didactic and Polemical)*, ed. Henry Pleasants, (New York: Pendragon Press, 1988), 173.

less and never audible respiration, and by a correct and relaxed sustaining of a concentrated vocal sound. You should, moreover, nurture and strengthen the middle register by artfully introducing into it the good head tones and by assiduous solmization. You should seek to equalize the registers by a correct and varied application of those same head tones, thus bringing the over-extended registers again within their natural boundaries and straightening out some other matters.¹³

Wieck transferred the principles of beautiful tone production in singing to piano playing. The three principles of Wieck's teaching, he claimed, were "the most sensitive listening, the finest taste, and a profound sensibility" as opposed to "absolutely no hearing, perverted taste, and no feeling of any kind."¹⁴

Therefore, it is worth mentioning that Wieck addressed the importance of singing the middle register, which is the parallel viewpoint from Schumann's *Rules no. 43*:

"Sing assiduously in choruses, especially taking the middle parts. This forms the good musician."¹⁵

In particular, Schumann frequently addressed the importance of the middle voices in a number of pieces from *Album for the Young*. As shown in figure 1, measures 1 to 2, from *Kleine Romanze*, the work requires the voicing of the melody in soprano and tenor over accompanying syncopated double-note accompaniment in the alto and bass. Among these two melodic lines, the tenor voice gets the priority and should be brought out more compared to the soprano, in order to achieve that characteristic "Schumannesque" sonority in the rich tenor area of the piano.

¹³ Friedrich Wieck, *Piano and Song (Didactic and Polemical)*, ed. Henry Pleasants, (New York: Pendragon Press, 1988), 67.

¹⁴ Friedrich Wieck, *Piano and Song (Didactic and Polemical)*, ed. Henry Pleasants, (New York: Pendragon Press, 1988), 67.

¹⁵ Robert Schumann, *Advice to Young Musicians* (London: Augener LTD, 1876), 5.



Figure. 1. Robert Schumann, No. 19 Kleine Romanze, Album für die Jugend, mm. 1-2. ¹⁶

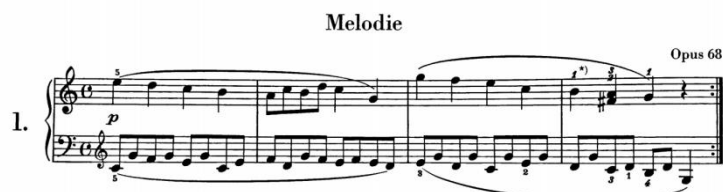
Schumann also advocated for students to listen to operas. In rule no. 50, he mentions:

“Never neglect to hear good operas.”¹⁷

And in rule no. 47:

“listen most attentively to all popular songs; they are a mine of the most charming melodies, and afford an insight into the character of different nations.”¹⁸

Here we could certainly mention the point that Schumann, as with many of his Romantic cohorts, was among the first of the modern ethnomusicologists. It is obvious that Schumann immediately emphasized the cantabile style at the beginning of his teaching materials, *Album for the Young*. If one compares No. 1, *Melodie*, No. 3 *Trällerliedchen*, and No. 5 *Stückchen*, the textures are similar and consist of a lyrical melody over the broken-chord, alberti-like accompaniment. The concept of ‘bel canto’ should be implemented with relaxed weight tone production and legato in the melody. This gives students an opportunity to access the *cantabile* style and develop legato playing in their early stage of piano study.



¹⁶ Robert Schumann, *Kinderszenen Opus 15 and Album für die Jugend Opus 68*, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 2007): 36.

¹⁷ Robert Schumann, *Advice to Young Musicians* (London: Augener LTD, 1876), 6.

¹⁸ Robert Schumann, *Advice to Young Musicians* (London: Augener LTD, 1876), 6.

Figure. 2. Robert Schumann, No. 1 Melodie, Album für die Jugend, mm. 1-4. ¹⁹



Figure. 3. Robert Schumann, No. 3 Trällerliedchen, Album für die Jugend, mm. 1-5. ²⁰



Figure. 4. Robert Schumann, No. 5 Stückchen, Album für die Jugend, mm. 1-5. ²¹

3) Aesthetic Philosophy

Schumann also articulated the aesthetic philosophy in his *Sixty-eight Rules for Young Musicians* that virtuosity should be at the service of higher artistic values. For instance, he mentions in Rule no. 33:

“As you grow older, have more to do with scores than virtuosi,”²² and Rule no. 27:

“Be not led astray by the approbation which great virtuosi, so-called, often secure.

Esteem the approbation of the artist more than that of the multitude.”²³

This indicates that the cultivation of expressiveness of music was given precedence over the development of mechanical technique practicing and empty

¹⁹ Robert Schumann, *Kinderszenen Opus 15 and Album für die Jugend Opus 68*, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 2007): 16.

²⁰ Robert Schumann, *Kinderszenen Opus 15 and Album für die Jugend Opus 68*, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 2007): 18.

²¹ Robert Schumann, *Kinderszenen Opus 15 and Album für die Jugend Opus 68*, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 2007): 19.

²² Robert Schumann, *Advice to Young Musicians* (London: Augener LTD, 1876), 4.

²³ Robert Schumann, *Advice to Young Musicians* (London: Augener LTD, 1876), 3.

virtuosity. It is not difficult to also read between the lines here and determine just why the rift between the Schumanns and Franz Liszt became so pronounced with the passage of time.

4) Poetic Inspiration

In Rule no. 36:

“For recreation from your musical studies, read the poets frequently.”²⁴

Along with his significant role in journalism, Schumann’s literary interests were inspired by the writer Jean Paul Richter. No fact is more often repeated in the literature on Robert Schumann than his profound admiration for Jean Paul Richter. Hermann Kretzschmar placed Jean Paul at the center of Schumann’s aesthetics.”²⁵ The literary approach of Richter profoundly influenced Schumann’s musical compositions, including *Carnaval*, Op. 9 and *Papillons*, Op. 2. Similarly, Schumann’s enthusiasm for poetry and literature was exemplified in *Album for the Young*. A number of the works depicted scenes from folklore characters and family life, which stimulated students’ imagination as they interpreted a piece. Clara Schumann said that her husband “translated everything he saw, read, and experienced into music,” and Schumann himself wrote that these pieces in particular “were taken directly from my family life.”²⁶ For example, “Knecht Ruprecht” is a character from a German legend who punished children with misbehavior often at Christmas time. Another example, *Jägerliedchen* (Hunting song), began with the sounds of horns (mm. 1-2), as shown in figure 5. With the contrasting dynamics in mm. 9-16

²⁴ Robert Schumann, *Advice to Young Musicians* (London: Augener LTD, 1876), 4.

²⁵ Leon Botstein, *History, Rhetoric, and the Self: Robert Schumann and Music Making in German-Speaking Europe, 1800-1860*, ed. R. Larry Todd (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 7.

²⁶ Lora Deahl, “Robert Schumann's Album for the Young and the Coming of Age of Nineteenth-Century Piano Pedagogy,” *College Music Symposium* 41, (2001): 30.

(figure 6), the music is suggestive of startled deer which are running into the brush and hiding from hunters.



Figure 5. Robert Schumann, No. 7 Jägerliedchen, Album für die Jugend, mm. 1-5.²⁷



Figure 6. Robert Schumann, No. 7 Jägerliedchen, Album für die Jugend, mm. 1-5.²⁸

5) Schumann's Recommendations Regarding Harmony

Robert Schumann also recommended a music curriculum for the young pianist in his *Rules*. He advised that students should study music theory, counterpoint, forms, and music history from an early age. He claimed in Rule no. 6:

“Be not deterred by the words Theory, Thorough-bass, Counterpoint, etc; approach them as a friend, and their response will be most cordial.”²⁹

In Rule no. 39:

²⁷ Robert Schumann, *Kinderszenen Opus 15 and Album für die Jugend Opus 68*, ed. Ernst Herttrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 2007): 21.

²⁸ Robert Schumann, *Kinderszenen Opus 15 and Album für die Jugend Opus 68*, ed. Ernst Herttrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 2007): 21.

²⁹ Robert Schumann, *Advice to Young Musicians* (London: Augener LTD, 1876), 1.

“The study of the history of music, seconded by hearing the actual performance of the masterpieces of different epochs, will prove the most rapid and effectual cure for conceit and vanity.”³⁰

In Rule no. 65:

“Only when the form is entirely clear to you, will the spirit become clear.”³¹

In particular, Schumann skillfully implemented abundant harmonies in pieces, which allows young musicians to experience the unique function of different harmonies. For instance, in *Nordisches Lied* (as figure 7), Schumann harmonized the original theme G-A-D-E, referring to the Danish composer Neils Gade (teacher of Edvard Grieg), in four different ways: mm. 1-4, 5-8, 9-12, and 13-16). This gives students an opportunity to explore the various sounding harmonies in the same melodic setting and interpret different meanings of the same melody.

Nordisches Lied
(Gruß an G.)
Im Volkston

41.

Figure. 7. Robert Schumann, No. 41 Nordisches Lied, Album für die Jugend. ³²

³⁰ Robert Schumann, *Advice to Young Musicians* (London: Augener LTD, 1876), 5.

³¹ Robert Schumann, *Advice to Young Musicians* (London: Augener LTD, 1876), 8.

³² Robert Schumann, *Kinderszenen Opus 15 and Album für die Jugend Opus 68*, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 2007): 71.

6) Distinct Tone Qualities, Color, Timbre

Schumann advocated for young musicians to differentiate the various sound characteristics of different instruments and human voices in his rules. In Rule no. 49:

“Give early heed to the tone and character of different instruments: try to impress the peculiar sounds on your ear.”³³

This is reflected in a number of pieces in *Album for the Young*, which allows students to practice this skill in the early stages of learning. For instance, in *Wilder Reiter* (figure 8), the original theme is introduced in different registers, as in mm. 1-8 and mm. 9-16. Particularly, the theme in the lower register imitates the sound of French horn, trombone, or bassoon, thereby enabling students to experience the way in which the same melody could achieve a distinct timbre in various registers.



Figure 8. Robert Schumann, No. 8 Wilder Reiter, Album für die Jugend. ³⁴

³³ Robert Schumann, *Advice to Young Musicians* (London: Augener LTD, 1876), 6.

³⁴ Robert Schumann, *Kinderszenen Opus 15 and Album für die Jugend Opus 68*, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 2007): 22.

Chapter 3 The Correspondence between Robert Schumann and Felix Mendelssohn

The friendship between Robert Schumann, Clara Schumann, and Felix Mendelssohn was manifested in their correspondence regarding the arrangement of performances in several concerts. “Felix Mendelssohn premiered a number of works by both Robert Schumann and Clara Wieck at the Gewandhaus and conducted twenty-one concerts at which Clara Wieck Schumann was the featured pianist.”³⁵

Mendelssohn, a pianist and composer, was born into a wealthy and well-educated family. He was extroverted and well-traveled, differing from Schumann’s introverted and shy personality. A comparison of their compositional processes suggests that Schumann composed a piece relatively quickly, while Mendelssohn’s compositions were refined and polished in a different hue. One might venture to also contrast their respective marital situations; Mendelssohn had a rather smooth marriage, contrasting with Schumann’s marriage to Clara; strongly opposed by her father.

However, despite differences in educational backgrounds and personalities, these two composers had much in common. First, Mendelssohn and Schumann were fascinated with literature. Mendelssohn was interested in Ossianic literature, while Schumann was greatly influenced by Shakespeare and Jean Paul. The literary approach profoundly influenced their musical compositions. Secondly, both composers were intensely interested in counterpoint and paid homage to Bach. For instance, Schumann wrote organ works, *Fugen über B-A-C-H*, Op. 60, and the *Ritornelle in canonischen Weisen*, Op. 65. Similarly, Mendelssohn finalized *St. Paul*, the *Reformation* Symphony. Also, both composers exerted contrapuntal devices and techniques in many other pieces, including *Album for the Young* and *Lieder ohne Worte*. Thirdly, Schumann greatly adapted *bel*

³⁵ Nancy B. Reich, *The Correspondence between Clara Wieck Schumann and Felix and Paul Mendelssohn*, ed. R. Larry Todd (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 205.

canto (beautiful singing) in his compositions, and Mendelssohn also successfully transferred vocal idioms to the keyboard. *Lieder Ohne Worte* is a good example.

Moreover, both composers had an appreciation for one another's music and it is evident that Mendelssohn had a strong influence on Schumann's later compositions. There is a striking affinity between Mendelssohn's chamber style and Schumann's Quartets, Op. 41, with their pronounced Mendelssohnian scherzi, lyrical slow movements, and contrapuntal preoccupation.³⁶

In particular, both composers wrote character piece collections: Schumann's *Album für die Jugend* and Felix Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte*. Mendelssohn's *Lieder Ohne Worte* are appropriate for late-intermediate to early-advanced students and contain technical and musical challenges that prepare students for more difficult advanced repertoire.

These two collections are the ideal didactic works with which young musicians can explore both musical and technical elements. They embody innumerable fine qualities of Romantic style and present appealing characters in every single piece. Here, the two collections are compared from a number of perspectives, along with their respective pedagogical value.

³⁶ Jon W. Finson and R. Larry Todd, *Mendelssohn and Schumann, Essays on Their Music and Its Context* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1984), 5.

Chapter 4 Comparison between Schumann's *Album für die Jugend* and Felix Mendelssohn *Lieder ohne Worte*

Character pieces concern themselves with the evocation of specific moods or often with extra musical inspirations or associations. This kind of genre is a staple of Romantic music. Both Schumann's *Album für die Jugend* and Felix Mendelssohn *Lieder Ohne Worte* are typical examples of character pieces. Various moods and musical ideas present students with early musical challenges and techniques which prepare them for more difficult repertoire. One can examine these works from the following perspectives: titles, form, genres, tempo markings, and texture.

1) Titles and Tempo Markings

Schumann explored titles to provide imaginative interpretations for each piece. Titles in *Album for the Young* include: *The Stranger; The Horseman; Rustic Song; Figured Chorale; Mignon; The Wild Rider; Hunting Song; Sailors' Song; The Poor Orphan; Knecht Ruprecht; Little Fugue; Echoes from the Theater; Folk Song; Harvest Song; Theme; First Sorrow; The Reaper's Song; Soldiers' March; Wintertime II; Italian Mariners' Song; A Little Canon; Sicilienne; Melody; Song of War; Roundelay; Humming Song; The Happy Farmer; New Year's Eve; Wintertime I; A Little Piece; Sheherazade; Chorale; Gathering of the Grapes -- Happy Time!; Northern Song; Remembrance; Little Romance; Little Etude; May, Sweet May and Spring Song*. Each title depicts scenes from family life or scenes from folklore or literature, providing the specific mood and imagination in these character pieces.

However, Mendelssohn refused to provide any kind of specificity or meaning for *Lieder Ohne Worte*. He insisted that the music should not have extramusical meaning or

inspiration in the Germanic sense of character music. Rather, the listener should be left free to devise his or her own inner meaning or image for the music.³⁷ He expressed that opinion clearly to his wife’s cousin, Marc-Amdre Souchay, in 1842:

People usually complain that music is so ambiguous; that what they should think of when they hear it is so unclear, whereas everyone understands words. But for me it is just the opposite, and not just with entire discourses, but also with individual words- these, too, seem to me so ambiguous, so unclear, so misleading in comparison to good music, which fills one’s heart with a thousand things better than words. What the music I love expresses to me are thoughts not too unclear for words, but rather too clear.³⁸

Mendelssohn gave programmatic titles to only five works from the the collections: the three *Venetianisches Gondellied* (Op. 19, No. 6; Op. 30, No. 6 and Op. 62, No. 5), the “Duetto” (Op. 38, No. 6), and the *Volkslied* (“Folk song”) (Op. 53, No. 5). One essential element that provides performers with clues about the characters and moods in *Lieder Ohne Worte* is the tempo marking. The following table may be helpful as an overview of the various tempo markings in this collection.

Table 1. Tempo Markings in *Lieder ohne Worte*

Op. 19 No. 1	Andante con moto	Op. 30 No. 1	Andante espressivo
Op. 19 No. 2	Andante espressivo	Op. 30 No. 2	Allegro di molto
Op. 19 No. 3	Molto allegro e vivace	Op. 30 No. 3	Adagio non troppo
Op. 19 No. 4	Moderato	Op. 30 No. 4	Agitato e con fuoco
Op. 19 No. 5	Piano agitato	Op. 30 No. 5	Andante grazioso

³⁷ Angela Mace Christian, *The Nocturne, The Lied Ohne Worte, and the Development of the Character Piece in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Jonathan Kregor (Italy: Brepols, 2018), 323

³⁸ John Michael Cooper, “Of Red Roofs and Hunting Horns: Mendelssohn’s Song Aesthetic, with an Unpublished Cycle (1830),” *Journal of Musicological Research* 21, no. 4 (2003): 291.

Op. 19 No. 6	Andante sostenuto	Op. 30 No. 6	Allegretto tranquillo
Op. 38 No. 1	Con moto	Op. 53 No. 1	Andante con moto
Op. 38 No. 2	Allegro non troppo	Op. 53 No. 2	Allegro non troppo
Op. 38 No. 3	Presto e molto vivace	Op. 53 No. 3	Presto agitato
Op. 38 No. 4	Andante	Op. 53 No. 4	Adagio
Op. 38 No. 5	Agitato	Op. 53 No. 5	Allegro con fuoco
Op. 38 No. 6	Andante con moto	Op. 53 No. 6	Molto allegro vivace
Op. 62 No. 1	Andante espressivo	Op. 67 No. 1	Andante
Op. 62 No. 2	Allegro con fuoco	Op. 67 No. 2	Allegro leggiero
Op. 62 No. 3	Andante maestoso	Op. 67 No. 3	Andante tranquillo
Op. 62 No. 4	Allegro con anima	Op. 67 No. 4	Presto
Op. 62 No. 5	Andante con moto	Op. 67 No. 5	Moderato
Op. 62 No. 6	Allegretto grazioso	Op. 67 No. 6	Allegro non troppo
Op. 85 No. 1	Andante espressivo	Op. 102 No. 1	Andante un poco agitato
Op. 85 No. 2	Allegro agitato	Op. 102 No. 2	Adagio
Op. 85 No. 3	Presto	Op. 102 No. 3	Presto
Op. 85 No. 4	Andante sostenuto	Op. 102 No. 4	Andante un poco agitato
Op. 85 No. 5	Allegretto	Op. 102 No. 5	Allegro vivace
Op. 85 No. 6	Allegretto con moto	Op. 102 No. 6	Andante

Tempo markings not only indicate the speed at which a piece should be played; but also suggest the general mood for a piece if there is limited information the composer provided. According to the above table, for example, *Andante espressivo*, *maestoso*, *tranquillo*, and *sostenuto*, are contrasting to *Agitato*, *con fuoco*, *con moto*, and *con anima*.

Understanding these tempo markings is a meaningful manner in which young students to can begin to understand the relationship between tempo and character.

Compared to *Lieder Ohne Worte*, Schumann used German language for his tempo markings; indicating a more specific and descriptive meaning for young musicians. Beethoven, much earlier, had complained about the inability of the “classic” Italian tempo markings to convey the true nature of tempo. For example, “Im klagenden Ton” in *Volksliedchen* means “in a plaintive tone,” “Frisch und munter” means “fresh and lively,” and “Leise und sehr egal zu spielen” means “to play lightly and very evenly.” This gives clear direction and suggests the overall character and approach to the work.

2) Genre and Form

Although both Mendelssohn and Schumann primarily used binary and ternary forms to keep the structure simple in these two collections, *Lieder Ohne Worte* contains examples of introductions and postludes in a song-like approach. For instance, in figure 9, the piece has a three-measure introduction containing arpeggiated chords and another three-measure postlude at the end of the piece. In most of the introductions and postludes of the collections, they maintain and forecast the unified texture with the rest of the work as a feature of accompaniments. In figure 10, the introduction of Op. 53 No. 6 displays the same accompaniment figuration as the main theme, which consists of the alternation between repeated chords and single notes. Another example, figure 11, shows arpeggiated chords divided by hands. This figuration generally permeates the whole piece.

However, the length of the introduction and postlude in *Lieder Ohne Worte* varied to a great extent. Some of them have six measures, as figure 12, and some of them have only a one-measure introduction as in figure 13.

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Adagio non troppo

Opus 30 Nr. 3

Figure. 9. Felix Mendelssohn, Op. 30 No. 3, Adagio non troppo, Lieder ohne Worte ³⁹

80

Molto Allegro vivace

Opus 53 Nr. 6

Figure. 10. Felix Mendelssohn, Op.53 No. 6, Molto Allegro vivace, Lieder ohne Worte, mm. 1-3⁴⁰

19

Andante con moto

Opus 53 Nr. 1

p sempre tenuto e legato

Figure. 11. Felix Mendelssohn, Op.53 No. 1, Andante con moto, Lieder ohne Worte, mm. 1-3⁴¹

³⁹ Felix Mendelssohn, Lieder ohne Worte, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 1981): 25.

⁴⁰ Felix Mendelssohn, Lieder ohne Worte, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 1981): 80.

⁴¹ Felix Mendelssohn, Lieder ohne Worte, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 1981): 60.



Figure. 12. Felix Mendelssohn, Op.53 No. 5, Allegro con fuoco, Lieder ohne Worte, mm. 1-9 ⁴²



Figure. 13. Felix Mendelssohn, Op.30 no. 1, Andante espressivo, Lieder ohne Worte, mm. 1-3 ⁴³

3) Texture

Schumann employed various complex textures in *Album for the Young*. This type of complex texture requires young musicians to manipulate melody and non-melodic elements in a single hand. This allows them to learn not only to play with appropriate voicing, but also to determine good fingerings. C.P.E Bach insisted upon the importance of good fingerings in his treatise: *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*. He states that: “the correct employment of the finger is inseparably related to the whole art of the performance...” Chopin also emphasized similar ideas as described in the book: *Chopin: pianist and teacher as seen by his pupils: ...*

⁴² Felix Mendelssohn, *Lieder ohne Worte*, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 1981): 76.

⁴³ Felix Mendelssohn, *Lieder ohne Worte*, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 1981): 20.

“good fingering was a matter of finding the most comfortable succession of fingers, best suited both to the form of the hand and to conveying the musical discourse.”

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Based on the texture, students need to determine the fingerings at the initial encounter with a new piece; with the application of finger substitution, legato fingerings, or even hand division. For example, in figure 14 from *Album for the Young*, in order to play legato for the melodic notes above the chordal figuration in the right hand, one needs to use both legato fingerings and finger substitution, as marked by fingering numbers in the example. This is also good training for voicing between melody and chordal figuration.

Figure. 14. Robert Schumann, No. 28 Erinnerung , Album für die Jugend, mm. 1-4. ⁴⁵

Compared to Schumann’s *Album for the Young*, Mendelssohn used a wider variety of textures and displayed an even more demanding type of texture in Romantic style. Similar to Schumann, the complex texture in repertoire provides students with opportunities to experience voicing, balance, finger substitution, division of hands, and projection of phrasing.

In general, there are four types of texture in Mendelssohn’s *Lieder Ohne Worte*: four-voice texture, three-voice texture, chorale-like texture, and barcarolle-like texture.

⁴⁴ Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: pianist and teacher as seen by his pupils* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 35.

⁴⁵ Robert Schumann, *Kinderszenen Opus 15 and Album für die Jugend Opus 68*, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 2007): 46.

A) Three-voice texture

The *Duetto*, from Mendelssohn's *Lieder Ohne Worte*, is a typical three-voice texture, as seen in figure 15. Normally the left hand provides the entire accompaniment, but a figure of accompaniment (arpeggiated sixteenth figuration) occurs in the right hand along with melodies. This requires skilled voicing and lyrical playing in the right hand. In particular, the melodic line frequently appears in the alto voice and a figure of accompaniment displays in the soprano, as figure 16. This "voicing the middle line" parallels Schumann's oft-employed voicing technique. There are many pieces in *Album for the Young* which contain this technique as well, as figure 17.



Figure. 15. Felix Mendelssohn, Op.38 No. 6, Andante con moto, Lieder ohne Worte, mm. 1-4 ⁴⁶



Figure. 16. Felix Mendelssohn, Op.38 No. 6, Andante con moto, Lieder ohne Worte, mm. 14-17 ⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Felix Mendelssohn, *Lieder ohne Worte*, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 1981): 55.

⁴⁷ Felix Mendelssohn, *Lieder ohne Worte*, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 1981): 56.



Figure. 17. Robert Schumann, No. 19 Kleine Romanze , Album für die Jugend, mm. 1-3. ⁴⁸

B) Four-voice texture

The work Op. 30 No. 1 from Mendelssohn’s *Lieder Ohne Worte* (ex. 18), containing four voices, could be a student’s first work to explore Romantic thicker texture. The manipulation of melody and accompaniment in a single hand is a valuable study for voicing. In addition, this piece helps students experience legato fingering, finger substitution, or even division/distribution of hands. First, in figure 18 (mm. 1-3), due to the two voices occurring in the right hand, one needs to use legato fingerings for the soprano voice in order to maintain the melodic line. In this case, using finger 4 to cross over finger 5 in the right hand on G4 and A-flat4 in m. 2 can help to maintain legato within the soprano line, instead of using adjacent fingers. This crossing-over fingering is also valued by C. P. E Bach in his *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*. He claimed, “our five fingers can strike only five successive tones, but we can extend their range as much as required. Crossing over is a technique limited to the remaining fingers. It occurs when a longer one vaults a shorter.” ⁴⁹ C. P. E Bach even used the third finger of the right hand crosses the fourth finger in the ascending C major scale, as figure 19, He used fingerings 3-4-3-4-3-4 for adjacent ascending tones in the scale. Furthermore, Mikuli pointed out Chopin’s unique use of fingering:… “Chopin

⁴⁸ Robert Schumann, *Kinderszenen Opus 15 and Album für die Jugend Opus 68*, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 2007): 36.

⁴⁹ Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, ed William J. Mitchell (New York: W. W. Norton Company, 1949), 46.

frequently crossed the longer fingers over one another without the help of the thumb, see the Etude Op. 10, No. 2 (as figure 20)...⁵⁰

Secondly, because the G3 on the second beat of m. 1 exceeds the range of the right hand, one could consider the possibility of taking the G3 with the left hand, as in figure 18. This gives students opportunities to execute hand distribution in light of maintaining legato for the soprano voice.

Thirdly, finger substitution is frequently employed in this piece. While using finger substitution, one needs to consider the preceding and following tones. For instance, as seen in figure 21, fingering 3-1 finger substitution on C4 in the right hand helps to connect the previous D2 with the fourth finger and make it slur to the second finger on F4. Indeed, finger substitution not only is helpful to maintain legato, but also develops students' technique for the contracting-expanding motion that requires flexibility and elasticity in the hand.



Figure. 18. Felix Mendelssohn, Op.30 No. 1, Andante espressivo, Lieder ohne Worte, mm. 1-3 ⁵¹



⁵⁰ Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: pianist and teacher as seen by his pupils* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 62.

⁵¹ Felix Mendelssohn, *Lieder ohne Worte*, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 1981): 20.

Figure. 19. C. P. E. Bach C major scale fingerings ⁵²



Figure. 20. Chopin, Etude Op. 10 No. 2, mm. 1-2 ⁵³



Figure. 21. Felix Mendelssohn, Op.30 No. 1, Andante espressivo, Lieder ohne Worte, mm. 4 ⁵⁴

C) Chorale-like Texture

Mendelssohn and Schumann both shared a passionate love of Bach. J. S. Bach is especially fundamental to Mendelssohn's musical as well as spiritual development.⁵⁵

There are a number of quasi-chorale pieces in *Lieder Ohne Worte*: op. 30, no. 3, op. 53 no. 5 and op. 62 no. 4. In a similar fashion, Schumann's *Album for the Young* contains No. 37 and No. 42 as chorale-like texture. These pieces provide an excellent study for students to concentrate on voicing chords and preparation for some advanced chorale-style repertoires, such as Brahms' *Intermezzo*, Op. 118 No. 2.

Chorale-style pieces consist of four voices: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass (SATB), and imitate vocal music for a choir. In fact, sensitive listening to each voice is one of the

⁵² Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, ed. William J. Mitchell (New York: W. W. Norton Company, 1949), 46.

⁵³ Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: pianist and teacher as seen by his pupils* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 62.

⁵⁴ Felix Mendelssohn, *Lieder ohne Worte*, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 1981): 20.

⁵⁵ Michael P. Steinberg, *Schumann's Homelessness*, ed. R. Larry Todd (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 57.

important skills required by these chorale pieces. For instance, in figure 22, mm. 29-31, four-eighth note figuration alternates in the bass, soprano, alto, and tenor. Hands-separate and voices-separate practice is useful for listening to the shape of each voice.



Figure 22. Felix Mendelssohn, Op.53 No. 5, Allegro con fuoco, Lieder ohne Worte, mm. 24-33 ⁵⁶

D) Barcarolle-like Texture

The *Venetianisches Gondellied* is representative of the genre of the ‘barcarolle.’ This form of composition reached its fulfillment with the classic work by Frederic Chopin. The barcarolle features a lilting left-hand accompaniment and a singing cantilena right-hand line. (figure 23)⁵⁷



Figure 23. Felix Mendelssohn, Op.30 No. 6, Allegretto tranquillo, Lieder ohne Worte, mm. 1-10 ⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Felix Mendelssohn, *Lieder ohne Worte*, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 1981): 77.

⁵⁷ Angela Mace Christian, *The Nocturne, The Lied Ohne Worte, and the Development of the Character Piece in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Jonathan Kregor (Italy: Brepols, 2018), 334.

⁵⁸ Felix Mendelssohn, *Lieder ohne Worte*, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 1981): 34.

4) Etude-like Pieces

Compared with Schumann's *Album for the Young*, Mendelssohn's *Song without Words* include more challenging pieces that require skillful execution and articulation in order to master these works. Although most of the pieces are linked to "song-like" quality and tend to emphasize the importance of projecting a clear melodic line above the accompaniment figures, many of these songs are quite technically demanding and close to "etude-like" repertoire. However, they still require careful voicing and balance between voices. I would like to examine three technical elements from the *Songs without Words* and compare these with examples from Chopin's *Etudes* which are comparative but more advanced in terms of difficulty. This demonstrates that the *Songs without Words* can be an important step with regard to establishing a logical sequence of repertoire for the young pianist. I will now explore some of the technical elements which occur in various works in the collection.

a) Off-beat accompaniment

Some pieces in Mendelssohn's *Song without Words* contain repetitive accompaniment figuration that feature virtuosic facility. These repetitive figures are off-beat chordal accompaniments that occur under the melodic line in the right hand, which requires perfect independence of the hand, as evident in figure 24. This is a useful study aid for Chopin's *E major Prelude*, Op. 28, No. 9. Both pieces require students to handle the accompaniment and melodic line in each hand, and to maintain the rhythmic precision at the same time.



Figure. 24. Felix Mendelssohn, Op.38 No. 2, Allegro non troppo, Lieder ohne Worte, mm. 1-6 ⁵⁹

b) Left-hand passagework

A number of pieces in Mendelssohn's *Song without Words* are obviously written for the left hand, such as Op. 30, No. 5; seen in figure 25. This is appropriate preparation for Chopin's well-known "*Revolutionary Etude*". This kind of left-hand exercise piece helps students develop the smooth-thumb motion, appropriate wrist rotation, as well as a free arm. Moreover, when one hand is handling the challenging passage, the singing line in the other hand cannot be neglected as the right hand in Op. 30 No. 5 from Mendelssohn's *Lieder Ohne Worte*.



Figure. 25. Felix Mendelssohn, Op.30 No. 5, Andante grazioso, Lieder ohne Worte, mm. 7-9 ⁶⁰

c) Grace-note figurations

"Spring Song" Op. 62 no. 6, from Mendelssohn's *Lieder Ohne Worte*, contains grace-note figurations in both right hand and left hand, as noticed in figure 26, which

⁵⁹ Felix Mendelssohn, *Lieder ohne Worte*, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 1981): 40.

⁶⁰ Felix Mendelssohn, *Lieder ohne Worte*, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 1981): 31.

require skillful execution. The grace notes can be related to comments by Liszt on the innovations brought about by Chopin:

...the small groups of added grace notes, falling like tiny drops of speckled dew over the melodic figure. To this kind of ornamentation, previously modeled solely upon the *fioritura* of the great old Italian school of singing, he gave an unexpectedness and a variety beyond the reach of the human voice, which had hitherto been slavishly copied by the piano in embellishments that eventually became stereotyped and monotonous...⁶¹

These *fioritura* grace-note figurations are perfect exercises for students to develop the lightness of arm weight and the fast speed of fingertips. Some of the principal notes after the group of grace notes are falling into the melodic line, but some of them are not. This requires students to sensitively hear the notes as in a *fioritura* setting; giving them opportunities to develop musical ears.

The image shows a musical score for Felix Mendelssohn's Opus 62 No. 6, 'Allegretto grazioso', 'Lieder ohne Worte', measures 1-8. The score is in G major and 2/4 time. It features a piano (p) dynamic and includes grace notes and fingerings (1-5) for both hands. The piece is marked 'Opus 62 Nr. 6' and 'Allegretto grazioso'. The score is numbered 30 on the left.

Figure. 26. Felix Mendelssohn, Op. 62 No. 6, Allegretto grazioso, Lieder ohne Worte, mm. 1-8⁶²

⁶¹ Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: pianist and teacher as seen by his pupils* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 35.

⁶² Felix Mendelssohn, *Lieder ohne Worte*, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 1981): 99.

Conclusion

Schumann's *Album für die Jugend* and Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte* are often overlooked as pieces only for piano students who are not quite ready for Beethoven, Chopin, or Liszt. They are often regarded as "easy teaching pieces". It is my suggestion that the above is only true when all of the essential and inherent musical elements involved are ignored in a very careless fashion by both teacher AND student! However, when studied with attention to detail, these two collections are the ideal didactic works with which young musicians can explore both musical and technical elements.

Schumann's *Album für die Jugend* is suitable for beginning to early-intermediate level students, while Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte* is appropriate for late-intermediate to early-advanced students and contains technical and musical challenges that prepare them for more difficult standard repertoire.

One who teaches young musicians could apply Robert Schumann's 68 Rules for Young Musicians in *Album für die Jugend*. These rules are manifested in these perspectives: cultivation of 'musical ear,' concept of 'bel canto,' poetic inspiration, recommendations regarding harmony, distinct tone qualities, color, timbre, and aesthetic philosophy. These perspectives greatly improve students' comprehensive musicianship as well. On the other hand, Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte* contains a great variety of tempo markings, thick textures, and technique elements. This gave students opportunities to experience voicing, balance, finger substitution, and hand distribution, and to improve their pianistic technique in the meanwhile.

Teachers could guide students to explore innumerable fine Romantic qualities in these two pedagogical works, including pedal use, perfecting legato articulation, harmonic implications, enabling and projecting different and distinct voices, adjusting the registers of the piano, and producing the singing tone on the piano. With regard to the

projection of and identification of distinct voices, we might remember the wonderful quote from Heinrich Neuhaus, who describes the inability to distinguish and project voices as “musical ventriloquism”. These are the preliminary steps to artistry in Romantic repertoire, which could prepare students for the more intense study of more advanced repertoire in the future.

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