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The Reception of Schumann in France

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In his article about Schumann and France, Serge Gut describes the history of reception of the composer like a regular appropriation of his works in three periods: If his music was known only to those within a small network during the first period (1837 to around 1860), it becomes widely known between 1860 and around 1890. After this transitional phase, a third period occurs, from 1890 until today. During this last phase, Gut notices a stabilization of the Schumann-Reception. This periodization gives the impression of a continuous, quasi-linear appropriation of Schumann's works in France. However, the development of the musical field is not linear, but variable and complex, like any reception context. Beyond this complexity, we can distinguish on the one hand phases of intensive transnational mediation, on the other hand phases of latent development.

This paper focuses on the phase of intensive mediation in the 1830s, a period characterized by an intensive cooperation between musical journals in Leipzig and Paris. At the end of my paper, I will examine the process of appropriation of German music in France until the 1860s.

1. The cooperation between Leipzig and Paris, 1830-40

1.1. Chopin's Variations op. 2

Winfried Kirsch underlines how Schumann discovers the variations op. 2 of Chopin: as a pianist, as a critic and as advocate of romanticism. Schumann's article entitled *Ein Werk II,* published on 7th December 1831 in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, is his first contribution as a critic as such. With his ‚mysterious and poetical stile', Schumann develops that what Katherine Ellis calls *creative criticism*, a criticism in which "the emotional ebb and flow of music's utterances was re-created in narrative prose". Whereas the critics of the *Revue musicale* and the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, which will be founded three years later, tend to use 'creative criticism', the Schumannian prose seems to have no impact on Chopin, who arrives some months earlier in Paris. Chopin wrote no article about Schumann's critical assessment. In this time, there is no reciprocity in the relationship between Schumann and Chopin. Therefore, this article does not lead to a Franco-German mediation.

1.2. Richault and the first French Editions of Schumann's oeuvre

Simon Richault made a name in France as editor and propagator of German instrumental music. He is the first one who edited Schumann in his country. In my research, I have been studying the first published French editions of Schumann between 1834 and 1870. I showed that the works published in France in the 1830s belongs to the much appreciated genres at this time in Paris: variations, piano etudes or pieces which can be easily played.

Since the end of 18th Century, connections have been established between editors of the French and German speaking countries. Simon Richault for example stayed regularly in contact with André, Haslinger, Schuberth, Schott, and Hofmeister. The first works published by Richault were edited in Germany by his commercial partners Hofmeister (opp. 3, 5 and 10) and Haslinger (op. 13). Probably, Schumann did not take directly contact with Richault: the French editions are not mentioned in his correspondence with Hofmeister. Certainly, the publication of the French editions by Richault is due to the international network of this editor, who engaged himself to develop supranational author rights in music. The example of Richault shows only an indirect contact between Schumann and France. However, this contact will be very important for the diffusion of his music.

1.3. Schumann's Improm(p)tu(s) *op. 5*

According to the international regulation of author rights of the Schumann's era, different editions of a same work (*Parallelausgaben* in German) may be published at the same time in different countries. This is the case for the *Impromptus sur une romance de Clara Wieck* op. 5, self-published by Schumann in August 1833 under Hofmeister's label.

The title page of the French edition plays on the fame of Clara Wieck as piano virtuoso and travelling artist. The *Impromptus* were published by Richault in Paris apparently between August 1833 and April 1834:

- the German edition appeared on August 1833;
- the name of the work is listed in an editor catalog of Richault dated around 1834, so we can suppose that the printing of the French edition occurs after the publication of the German one;
- the Richault edition appeared before the publication of an article about this work in the journal *Le Pianiste* on April 1834.

This article of *Le Pianiste* concerns the French edition, because:

- the title of the Richault edition contains the missing plural marker *s;*
- the author of the article regretted the huge dimensions of an impromptu composed of twelve pieces. Despite the false orthography due to Schumann himself in the German edition (‚Impromtus' without *p*), the plural marker *s* appears there.

This grammatical mistake created an obstacle to a good reception of the *Impromptus* in France. Indeed, the critic of *Le Pianiste* compared the dimensions of the work with the legendary stature of the inhabitants of Patagonia:

> *Lorsqu'au commencement du seizième siècle Magellan découvrit la terre des Patagons, les bruits les plus ridicules circulèrent sur la taille gigantesque de ses habitants; cependant après les temps d'exagération, vinrent ceux de la réalité, et il est avéré maintenant que dans ce pays les petites femmes ont cinq pieds et demi, ce qui est fort*

> *raisonnable; c'est probablement pour les demoiselles patagonaises que Schumann a composé cet impromptu, gigantesque en tous points; ah! M. Schumann, à en juger sur vos impromptus, de quelle taille sont donc les fruits de vos loisirs?*

Beyond the question of the plural marker, the critic had anyway difficulties with this free-polyphonic work, which is difficult to play and, above all, will not help the pianist to be brilliant.

1.4. Schlesinger and the Revue et Gazette musicale

Hofmeister allowed the sale of *Parallelausgaben* in France. These editions were usual for a composer in the Schumannian era to reach an international reputation. On April 1834, at the same time as the *Impromptus* were heavily criticized in France, Schumann founded with Schunke, Wieck, Knorr, and Stegmayer the *Neue (Leipziger) Zeitschrift für Musik*. Schumann's musical-literary double talent emerges with the foundation of this journal, which contributed to the intensification of Franco-German mediation between Paris and Leipzig in the 1830s. In April 1834, Schumann wrote to the publisher Schlesinger in Berlin with a request to send him music. Heinrich Schlesinger had regular contact with Maurice Schlesinger in Paris, the local publisher and chief editor of the *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris.* Probably, Heinrich Schlesinger directs the attention of Schumann to Liszt's transcription of Berlioz' *Symphonie fantastique*. This transcription was published in 1834 in Paris by his brother. We can read in the letter from March 7th from Heinrich Schlesinger to Schumann:

> *Wegen Berlioz Sinfonie arr. p. Liszt habe heute nach Paris geschrieben und werde seiner Zeit die erhaltene Antwort mitzutheilen d. Vergnügen haben.*

The critical review of the *Symphonie fantastique*, based on Liszt's transcription, was published in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* between 3rd July and 14th August 1835. Nevertheless, it is not the first criticism about Berlioz in this journal. Already in February 1835, Heinrich Panofka wrote his essay *Aus Paris. Ueber Berlioz und seine Compositionen*, which includes a biographical sketch of the composer and a discussion of the *Symphonie fantastique*.

Panofka's positive opinion contrasted so much with Fétis' negative critic, which appeared on February 1st of the same year in the *Revue musicale*, that Schumann decided to issue a translation of Fétis' review in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* on 19th June 1835, shortly before the publication of his own article:

> *Die über dasselbe Werk geschriebenen Briefe von Heinrich Panofka schienen uns mit dem geringschätzenden Ton der Fétisschen Recension in so interessantem Widerspruche zu stehen, daß wir flugs nach Paris um die Symphonie selbst schrieben. Seit einigen Wochen befindet sie sich in unsern Händen. […] Unser Urtheil folgt so bald wie möglich nach*.

As we have seen, Schumann had not ordered the score himself, but through the help of Schlesinger in Berlin.

After the issue of Schumann's review, Berlioz wanted to thank his German colleague with an open letter, in which he dealt almost exclusively with his own works, and mentions only the compositions of his correspondent by courtesy. As he had difficulties to appreciate Schumann's oeuvre, he asked Liszt in a letter from 22th May 1837, if he would not be inclined to discuss the *Impromptus* op. 5, the *Sonata* op. 11, and the *Concert without orchestra* op. 14. Liszt's review of these works was published on 12th November 1837 in the *Revue et Gazette musicale*. Among the contemporary works, Liszt identified much individuality, innovation, and knowledge in the work of Schumann and Chopin. The *Impromptus* were brought even on equal relation with Beethoven's *Eroica*- and *Diabelli-Variations*, and Bach's *Goldberg Variationen*.

1.5. Schumann's Carnaval *for the Frenchmen*

Even before this review was published, the French first edition of the *Carnaval* op. 9 appears as supplement to the *Revue et Gazette musicale* on July 30th, 1837, shortly before the German first edition, published in August 1837 by Breitkopf & Härtel. On 11th June 1836, Schumann offered in person the *Carnaval* to Maurice Schlesinger as a supplement to the *Revue et Gazette musicale*. The publisher's negotiations involve in particular to make cuts in the work and to suppress the letter and name-anagrams and all that what could contribute to a fantastic atmosphere. This is visible when we consider the letter of Schlesinger to Schumann from 3rd February 1837:

> *En résumé empfehle ich Ihnen, daher wenn Sie wünschen, daß* [das] *Werk was überaus geistreich u[n]d fantastisch ist, hier effect machen soll, es bedeutend abzukürzen, u[n]d wenn es der Zusammenhang zuläßt, woran ich aber zweifle, oben-gesagte Dinge herauszunehmen, oder was ich Ihnen noch mehr empfehle, mir als Beylage… etwas anderes was mehr genre der Franzosen ist zu schicken, u*[n]*d diese*[s] *sehr geniale Werk lieber in Deutschland heraus zu geben… sollten Sie aber dieselben nicht für richtig halten so bin ich ganz bereit das Werk, wie es ist, stechen zu lassen und der Musikalischen Zeitung beyzulegen.*

Schlesinger offered him the opportunity to write a fantasy about the Huguenots, which did not correspond necessarily to his taste… Nevertheless, Schumann decided to modify the *Carnaval* especially for the French edition of the work. On 22th May 1837, he wrote to Härtel:

> *Der Carnaval erscheint gleichzeitig, aber in etwas anderer Gestalt und mehr für die Franzosen verändert, bei Schlesinger in Paris.*

How Schlesinger recommended it to him, Schumann suppressed almost all numbered titles and took away some pieces because of their unconventional syntax or because they did not correspond to the regular overall plan of the French first edition, based on an arrangement of the pieces in pairs. The text variations, which occur between the French and the German first editions, do not change the structure of the single pieces. It is doubtful if Schumann took note of these variations during the proof reading. The presumably rapid proof reading and the relative adaptation to the French audience (he wrote really no fantasy about the *Huguenots*!) speak rather for a circumstantial work. Schumann still attempted to conceive a specific overall

plan for the French first edition. The result of this dialog with Schlesinger in Paris is another version of the *Carnaval*, which could not have emerged without contact with France. The example of the *Carnaval* testifies not least from a dynamic and creative exchange between the networks of the *Revue et Gazette musicale* in Paris and the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* in Leipzig. This time, Schumann, through the help of the Schlesinger brothers, succeeded in working with the most important actors of the Franco-German musical field without coming to France. As it shows this connectivity set, here we reach to an In-Group representation.

A sign of the intensive cooperation between Leipzig and Paris is the appointment of Schumann on December 15th, 1839 as editor of the *Revue et Gazette musicale*; a further sign of recognition of Schumann as critic is the fact that *La France musicale* – which is really the competitor of the *Revue et Gazette musicale* – includes him as their editor between 1840 and 1843. The first Schumann-Biography published in French by Georges Kastner in 1840 in the *Revue et Gazette musicale* is placed also under the sign of this intensive cooperation.

2. The following facets of the Schumann-Reception in France, after 1840

2.1. Phase of latent development, 1840-60

Schumann and his colleagues in France will not remain in this creative and fruitful exchange. In the 1840s and 1850s, Schumann's positioning within the Franco-German field of music is weakened by:

- his new repertoire, which was no longer in the field of piano music;
- the giving up that Liszt, who was hired specifically for Schumann, left Paris;
- the abandonment of his editorial work for the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (1844) and the *Revue et Gazette musicale* (1846);
- his hospitalization at Endenich, which led to the prejudice, that his late work was influenced by this health problems.

I want to present quite rapidly the following facets of the Schumann-Reception in France

2.2. Phase of intensive mediation 1860-1914

Precursors: Bonaventure-Laurens and Müller

In the years 1848-53 took place the correspondence between Schumann and Jean-Joseph-Bonaventure Laurens. 1853 Laurens repeatedly portrayed Schumann during his stay in Germany. Kazuko Osawa showed that the German emigrant Viktor Müller began to paint in Paris works of art on Schumann's themes. These works will later impact on Fantin-Latour and Ferdinand Knopff.

1860-69 : Schumann's work was discussed in France

> *En France, on commence à connaître, à discuter Schumann, et à se passionner pour ou contre lui…* (Laurens 1860)

Robert Schumann appartient à l'histoire de l'art contemporain : à ce titre, il a mérité au moins l'honneur de la discussion (Elwart 1864)

1869: Foundation of the Société Schumann

This quartet society was devoted almost exclusively to the music of Schumann. In a letter dated on October 20, 1869, its first president Delahaye, who was also director of the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin, asked Clara Wieck's permission to provide the society with the name of her husband:

Paris, 20 octobre 1869
à Madame Clara Schumann
à Londres

Madame,

Je fonde, à Paris, une société de quatuors sur des bases nouvelles qui la distingueront de celles existant déjà. Le but que je me propose, but exclusivement artistique, est l'exécution dans les plus parfaites conditions possibles des œuvres de Robert Schumann et, accessoirement de quelques compositeurs allemands encore peu connus en France. Je donnerai cet hiver six séances à partir du 15 janvier prochain, et à raison de deux séances par mois. Elles auront lieu, le soir, dans la salle Erard devant un public très choisi et en présence des notabilités de la presse parisienne en général fort sympathique à cette manifestation.

Les exécutants seront :

pour le 1er violon…….	*Mr White*	
pour le violoncelle……	*Mr Lasserre*	
pour le piano……	*Mr Delahaye*	
pour le 2e violon……	*Mr Madier*	*de l'opéra*
pour l'alto……	*Mr Waefelghem*	

Tous cinq virtuoses de premier mérite et musiciens très solides, tous cinq pleins de jeunesse, d'ardeur et de foi dans le génie du Maître.

Mais, comme à toute phalange il faut un drapeau, je tiens essentiellement à ce que la jeune société artistique prenne le nom de

Société Schumann

cela lui donne immédiatement sa signification et sa raison d'être.

En conséquence, et dans un sentiment d'admiration pour le maître comme aussi de profond respect pour celle qui fut la compagne de sa vie et demeure la plus vaillante et la plus illustre protagoniste de son œuvre, je viens vous prier, Madame, de vouloir bien m'écrire que vous consentez à me laisser disposer, dans le but ci-dessus indiqué, de nom que vous portez si dignement et dont je vous promets de faire bon et noble usage.

Dans l'espoir d'une prompte et favorable réponse, je vous prie d'agréer, Madame, l'assurance de mes sentiments de haute considération

Delahaye
Administrateur général du Th. de la porte St Martin, à Paris
membre de la Société des Auteurs
& compositeurs dramatiques
À Paris, 61 faubg Montmartre

Clara's positive answer was quoted in the announcement of the founding of this society in the journal *Le Guide musical* at the end of 1869:

> *SOCIETE SCHUMANN – Sous ce titre, il vient de se former à Paris une nouvelle société de musique de chambre.*
> *C'est le jeune pianiste-compositeur Delahaye qui a eu l'initiative de cette idée, pour la rélisation de laquelle il s'est associé MM. White, Lasserre, Madier-Montjau et Van Waefelghem. Mme Clara Schumann, par une lettre très-digne, qu'on va lire, a autorisé la jeune société à prendre pour drapeau le nom glorieux du célèbre artiste qui fut son mari*
>
> *Düsseldorf, 30 octobre 1869.*
> *A Monsieur. L. Delahaye*
> *Monsieur,*
> *Je suis flattée et touchée de la communication que vous avez bien voulu me faire. Le nom de mon mari appartient, comme ses oeuvres, au grand domaine artistique. Je ne vois donc aucun inconvénient si vous en usez pour désigner une société musicale.*
> *Cependant, je dois vous avouer que, même quand il s'agit d'augmenter le nombre de personnes qui peuvent s'intéresser aux compositions de mon époux, je n'aime ni une apparence d'exclusivité vis-à-vis des autres compositeurs, ni celle d'une propagande trop zélée.*
> *En vous remerciant, Monsieur, de vos bonnes et sincères intentions, je vous prie d'agréer l'expression de mes sentiments distingués.*
> *Clara Schumann*

The discussion of the first concert of the Société Schumann in the *Revue et Gazette musicale* in the beginning of 1870 shows the intensification of the Schumann reception. We can read there, that the people no longer left the concert hall by the sound of his music and even recognize him a "specific dose of genius". This society survived the war briefly, but broke up very quickly thereafter. Even immediately after the war, we can follow the survival of this association, for example in a statement of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, illustrating the astonishment of the German critics when they discover that the profits of the Société Schumann were used against Germany. Shortly before the Franco-Prussian war, everything prepares the way for the breakthrough of Schumann's oeuvre. A Schumann-cult appears only really at the end of the century at the time of *Wagnérisme*. In 19th Century France, several discussions of Schumann's works agree with the three-phase pattern of Fétis:

> *Il faut distinguer trois époques dans les productions de Schumann : la première s'étend de 1832 à 1840. Son instruction dans l'art d'écrire la musique n'était alors qu'ébauchée ; mais il avait des idées et du sentiment. Tout cela était contenu dans de pettes proportions ; quand il voulait entrer dans ses premières sonates, il échouait, parce que la forme logique lui manquait ;* […]. *La seconde époque s'étend de 1840 à la fin de 1850. Alors Schumann vient de refaire son éducation de compositeur : il a étudié le contrepoint, et a lu les partitions des maîtres modernes pour s'instruire dans l'art d'instrumenter ;* […] *Ces études tardives ne peuvent avoir les bons résultats qu'on en espère, car elles imposent des conditions à l'esprit habitué aux allures libres et à la*

> *fantaisie illimitée*. […] *La troisième époque est celle où des attaques réitérées d'affections nerveuses portèrent le trouble dans les facultés de Schumann et acquirent une intensité progressive jusqu'à sa mort.*

We can observe a positive evaluation of the small forms from the 1830s, a negative evaluation of the large forms from the 1840s, and an even more negative assessment of the late work that is made in connection with the health problems of Schumann.

From 1865 some authors depart from this pattern:

- They target a rehabilitation of the complete work (Germa, Bannelier…);
- They are convinced of the unity of individual works and therefore want to allow no transformations of the text (Bannelier, Jullien…) .

At the end of the 19th Century, people shape the Schumann-image of the Symbolists. The composer is understood to be the epitome of emotional and poetic music (in Belgium too: Ferdinand Khnopff, *En écoutant du Schumann*, 1883).

2.3. Further phases in the 20th Century

Peter Jost gives an overview of the reception of Schumann as composer in French music of the 20th Century. It appears that the years between the First World War and 1960 represent a phase of latent development. The neo-classicism of the interwar period and the vanguard movement after 1945 withdrew from the music of the 19th Century, especially from Schumann's works, which were still regarded as the epitome of emotional music. After 1960, the composers of contemporary music find the modernity of Schumannian music especially in the piano works. Terms like 'bizarre', 'fantastic' or 'irrational' will now be positively appraised, formal innovations recognized.

Conclusion

The Schumann-Reception in France shows no linear process, but an alternation of phases of intensive mediation and phases of latent development:

- A phase of intensive mediation between the *Revue et Gazette musicale* in Paris and the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* in Paris during the 1830s;
- A phase of latent development during the 1840s and 50s;
- A phase of intensive mediation from the 1860s to the beginning of the First World War. This period was propitious for the appropriation of German music in France, despite of the events of 1870-1871. This 'hostile mediation' results from the will to adapt German music in order to make French music more serious;
- A phase of latency between the First World War and around 1960;
- A phase of intensive mediation from around 1960 until today.