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The Transition into the Romantic Era of Music: a Brief Overview of Works by Schubert and Beethoven

The transition into the romantic era has been a topic of debate by musicologists for the past century. Problems have arisen when trying to define when the era actually begins, when it ends, and what changes took place. Like other transitional periods of music, its beginning and end do not occur on a finite date in history. Countless authors and musicologists have made it a point to explain that there is and there should be an overlap of time periods.¹ The Romantic era's development was, like all other periods of music, gradual and was by no means a sharp break from the era prior: the classical era. Many classical elements of music can be found throughout the romantic music. The musical ideas presented during the classical era provide a type of foundation for the romantic era that followed. It should be kept in mind, however, that the romantic era of music did develop musical ideas that were original and new to it. How, then, can a transition from classical to romantic music be defined if the two periods overlap? The task of clearly defining the transition, as expressed earlier, is by no means an easy one. A perfect definition of the transition may never be decided upon; however, a general idea of it is very possible.

In order to define the transition between classical and romantic music, a comparison between the musical works during the period to those prior is necessary. This will allow us to view the changes that took place during the transition and the things that remained the same thus allowing for the transition to be better defined. The two most prominent composers during the turn of the century, the time period in which we have come to recognize as a "transitional period" in music, were Ludwig von Beethoven and Franz Schubert. It would only seem appropriate to study their compositions very closely and compare them to the works from the era prior. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, arguably the greatest composer of the classical era, truly defines the peak of this period with his musical compositions.²

¹ Newman, William. The Sonata in the Classical Era. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, INC, 1983. pp. 5

² Newman, pp.477

Before beginning the brief analysis and comparison of the compositions, the aspects of music that we have come to recognize as romantic, although very broad, must first be understood. In understanding these all-encompassing aspects of romanticism, one will be able to relate the small, individual aspects found in the compositions to the entire era. These romantic aspects are in many ways similar to those found in romantic literature and artwork. For example: much of the music written during and in the transition to the romantic era was inspired by nature. One of the greatest things that romantic music is known for, however, is its usage of experimentation.³ Throughout the romantic era and especially in the transition to this era, composers began to break away from some, not all, of the conventions established during the classical era to present different variations on old musical ideas and also to employ completely new ones. The transitional period into the romantic era and the era itself express a “freedom” from certain limitations that were prevalent during the classical era. The romantic era is in many ways “limitless” in comparison to the classical era therefore making it very difficult to define.⁴

Beethoven, Schubert, and the romantic composers that followed them are all credited for having experimented with such things as “new harmonies and tone colors.”⁵ Beethoven is known in particular for the structural changes that he made in his compositions. The structural and harmonic changes made during the transition are the key to defining the period better and will be discussed in further depth later in the paper. Structural and harmonic experimentation helped composers to better express another important aspect of romantic music: emotion or personal feeling.⁶ Using different chords, expanding musical ideas, and breaking away from traditional cadences are only some of the ways in which composers were able to better articulate the feelings or emotions that they were trying to project to their audience and helped move the music composed into the next era of composition.

We now ask the question that every musicologist is faced with when studying this transitional period: “Where to begin?” The most conventional approach taken to better understand the transition from classical to romantic music almost always includes a study of Beethoven’s compositions in comparison to those of Mozart or other classical

³ Stolba, Marie. The Development of Western Music, third edition. Boston, M.A.: McGraw-Hill, 1998. pp. 430

⁴ Gordon, Stewart. A History of Keyboard Literature. New York, N.Y.: Schirmer Books, 1996. pp. 196

⁵ Stolba, Development, pp. 430

⁶ Einstein. Music in the Romantic Era. New Your, N.Y.: W. W. Norton & Company, 1947.

composers.⁷ However, this paper will not limit itself studying Beethoven, alone. In an effort to gain a better understanding of the transitional period, the compositions of Schubert will also be studied.

Beethoven and Mozart are both known for their prolific musical output. A dedicated musicologist could spend his or her entire lifetime studying, analyzing and debating the symphonies, operas, quartets, concerti, and other types of music produced by these great composers in order to better understand the musical transition we are examining. And, yes, for us to become familiar with the transition into the Romantic era of music, all of these different categories of music should be studied and taken into account. However, it would be equally as useful, possibly more, to limit our study to only one form of music that was produced by all three of the composers: the piano sonata.⁸

The study and analysis of the piano sonatas offers several advantages over other musical forms. First and most importantly, in examining the solo piano sonata, the analysis is limited to music for only one instrument. This eliminates the difficulties of trying to examine much larger musical scores such as symphonies or operas which contain many different voices or instruments. The analysis of single grand staff of piano music, containing a single bass and treble clefs, as opposed to a symphony score, which can contain as many as twenty-one different musical parts, not including percussion, and all four different clefs--treble, bass, alto, tenor--has its obvious advantages! It is a straightforward presentation of a musical composition.

Piano sonatas also eliminate many of the tumbrel issues that musicologists face when listening to a piece of music with many different instruments or voices. An analysis that relies heavily on listening to recordings or performances of only one instrument will definitely give the person examining a much clearer medium in which to study the music through. It should be kept in mind, however, this paper does not rely on listening to recordings; it is important to understand other reasons why the piano sonata is studied so heavily.

⁷ The Development of Western Music limits its study of the transition to only Beethoven in comparison to works prior and latter.

⁸ The sonata, both classical and romantic, is a musical form that is difficult to define. This problem is addressed by Newman in The Sonata in the Classical Era. Newman provides us with Schulz's definition given in an article published in 1775: "[a] piece [consisting] of two, three or four successive movements of different character, which has one or more melody parts with only one player to a part," and is "used to express emotion without words." This definition is reflected in many contemporary dictionaries such as The Hutchinson Concise Dictionary of Music.

Lastly, the piano sonatas give us a greater understanding of many of the symphonies also produced by these composers. The piano sonata was used in many ways as a type of experimentation for symphonies. Beethoven and Mozart especially used the sonata as a way to “test” their musical ideas before employing them into their symphonies. This idea could not have been expressed better than in Elterlein’s work, Beethoven’s Pianoforte Sonatas, when he explains that the sonata form is “a form which is also the foundation of the symphony [and] string quartet.” This is why music teachers usually encourage their students while playing a piano sonata to imagine it as a symphony. Jones, before his analysis and interpretation of Beethoven’s “Moonlight Sonata” explains that, “Sonatas increasingly acquired symphonic characteristics. They were in the ‘Grand’ style, with imposing ideas, rich textures, brilliant figuration, and broad structure.”⁹ It can be concluded from this that in studying the piano sonatas of these composers, that the symphonies, to a certain extent, are also being studied.

Beethoven’s thirty-two piano sonatas are probably one of the most valuable tools used in understand the transition from Classical to Romantic music. Written from about 1795 until 1822, this collection of works shows the clear evolution of the sonata and illustrates the general changes in style from era to era. The sonatas also help us understand better the other works of Beethoven for they provide a “bridge,” during times of little or no production, between many of Beethoven’s larger works such as his second and third symphonies.¹⁰ Beethoven’s experimentation, as mentioned earlier, with such musical elements as “structure, key relationship, emotional content, and sonority”¹¹ can also be viewed chronologically through the sonatas. The experimentation witnessed in Beethoven’s sonatas helps to show us part of the transition into the romantic era.

Beethoven’s sonatas have been divided into different categories that are primarily concerned with chronology. The traditional method for division places his sonatas into three general categories or periods: the early, middle, and late sonatas.¹² The different periods of Beethoven’s sonata compositions are by no means decisive but offer a general overview of the different periods of Beethoven’s experimentation. The analysis will examine important and interesting sonatas from each of these three

⁹ Jones, Timothy. Beethoven: The ‘Moonlight’ and Other Piano Sonatas, Op. 27 and Op. 31. New York, N.Y: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 8.

¹⁰ Elterlein. Beethoven’s Pianoforte Sonatas. Norbury Crescent, S.W.: The New Temple Press, 1945,pp.30.

¹¹ Gordon, Keyboard Lit., pp.144

¹² Elterlein. Beethoven’s Pianoforte Sonatas, pp.36

periods. In doing so, Beethoven's contributions to the transition between musical eras will be better understood. It should be kept in mind, however, that these analyses will only scan the surface of a very complex world of the Beethoven sonata and will be by no means an in depth study. It is only important to understand, for the purpose of this paper, the larger changes that were made.

The primary focus while analyzing Beethoven's piano sonatas will be structural. Musical structure pertains to the format, order, and way in which the musical ideas or themes are presented to the listener through a composition. Gordon recognizes before he begins his review of the thirty-two piano sonatas that Beethoven's sonatas are known best for their structural experimentation. Gordon remarks that, "Beethoven continued to rethink and reshape the sonata structure in both its internal and overall components from his earliest works right through his final ones. The sonata was for him a living, changing, growing entity."¹³ It is also understood that in his earlier works (early period), Beethoven tended to follow conventional methods of sonata form established by classical composers with little experimentation. He slowly moved into his more experimental phase (middle period) and then on to the final stages of experimentation (end period), the period in which it was most prevalent.

Beethoven's first three piano sonatas were all dedicated to Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), one of the greatest and most prolific composers of the piano sonata in the classical era and also one of Beethoven's greatest influences.¹⁴ In these three sonatas, composed between 1795 and 1796, the classical structure of the sonata form is clear and prevalent. The beginning movement of Beethoven's second sonata, Op. 2, no.2, and other beginnings of his piano sonatas, he opens in a way that clearly reflects the structure of the sonata-allegro form. Op. 2, no. 2 begins by introducing the main theme of the movement, the basic melody or musical figure. After the main theme has been established, Beethoven then moves into an "episode" which contains non-thematic material and helps transition into the next part of the section in the first movement: the secondary theme which introduces new thematic ideas while recapitulating some of the previous ones found in the main theme. Beethoven then ends the first section of movement one with the closing theme.¹⁵

¹³ Gordon, Keyboard Lit., pp.147

¹⁴ Stolba, Development

¹⁵ Beethoven. Beethoven Sonatas for the Piano, book I. Milwaukee, W.I.: G. Schirmer, INC., 1903, pp.20.

This one example of musical structure can be found replicated throughout the many sonatas produced in the classical era, particularly Mozart's. Very similarly to Beethoven's Op. 2, no. 2, Mozart's sonata K. 309, composed in 1777, opens with the theme, moves into an episode, and concludes with secondary and closing themes. Even more specifically, the episodes of both sonatas share similar characteristics in the upper-voices as seen in the ascending scales.¹⁶ In relevance to this particular section, it should also be mentioned that the opening sections of Op. 2, no. 2 and K. 309 repeat themselves once and then move into the next section of the first movement.

With regards to broader structural importance, the two sonatas begin in the allegro form: a "lively or quick passage, movement or composition." Generally, the two sonatas, Op.2, no. 2 and K. 309, both have the same overall type of movement structure despite the fact that Beethoven's Op. 2, no. 2 has four movements instead K. 309's three. The sonatas both open with the movement in allegro, move into a slower adagio or largo movement and then conclude with a rondo or grazioso movement: one that is "often festive in character [and a] popular finale movement to a sonata."¹⁷ The order in which Beethoven presents his sonata movements will be one of the most important of his structural experimentations that he will take part in, which will be viewed later.

Of course, in creating these larger movements, much smaller musical elements were employed. One particular musical element that deserves our attention is the Alberti bass: an accompaniment to a melody containing a broken chord in which the notes are played: lowest, highest, middle, highest. "Invented" by Domenico Alberti around the early eighteenth century, the Alberti bass can be heard in almost all of Haydn, Mozart, Clementi, and the majority of Beethoven's earlier and even some of his later sonatas. An excellent example of this can also be viewed in Beethoven's Op. 2, no.2, movement four in the first, secondary theme. This type of *basso continuo* can be found throughout K. 309 and almost all of Mozart's other sonatas with the exception of only a very few. One well known usage of this type of bass line can be heard in Mozart's most famous and popular sonata, K. 545 (1788), in the opening of the first movement.¹⁸ This helps further

¹⁶ Mozart, W.A. Mozart Nineteen Sonatas for the Piano, book I. Milwaukee, W.I.: G. Schirmer, INC., 1918.

¹⁷ Definition given by The Hutchinson Concise Dictionary of Music, pp.555

¹⁸ Mozart, W.A. Mozart Nineteen Sonatas for the Piano, book I. Milwaukee, W.I.: G. Schirmer, INC., 1918, pp. 32.

suggest that Beethoven's earlier sonatas were influenced by Mozart and Haydn and can probably be placed in the classical era as opposed to the romantic.

The example of the Beethoven's Alberti bass (Op. 2, no. 2, movement 4) found in the previous paragraph brings up another issue. As has been mentioned, the format in which the musical idea is presented is typical to that of the classical era; however the harmonic sequence and the movement towards cadence¹⁹ of this example are not. This example is one of the few in which we are able to see Beethoven's experimentation with tonal harmonies in his first, middle, and even late sonatas. In this section (the first, secondary theme) we see a harmonic sequence in which the 7th of the cord, in this case the bass note, moves downwards to create a more "distant harmony." This type of intensely dissonant, "colorful" chord progression, in an extremely fast movement, would not have been found in the classical era and is undoubtedly a romantic element. The purpose of showing this is to point out that Beethoven's experimentation was not limited to structural format, as most arguments have been made, and also that experimentation was taking place in these early sonatas. However, it should be kept in mind that his early sonatas were not known for their use of romantic elements as well as his middle and late sonatas were.

We now move into Beethoven's most important period of sonata writing in which his experimentation had fully begun to take its effect: the middle period, compositions from about Op. 26 until about 90.²⁰ It is in this period that Beethoven made his greatest contributions to the development of the romantic sonatas and also the transition, as a whole, from classical to romantic. The pleasure of examining this period is that it contains many of Beethoven's better known pieces including the "Moonlight Sonata" (Op. 27, no.2), the "Waldstein Sonata" (Op. 53), and the "Appassionata Sonata" (Op. 57). Beethoven's changes pertained mainly to the order in which the movements were presented but also smaller structural sections including development. As a result of the structural changes made, Beethoven was able to better project the type of emotion that he had intended to while composing.

Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" (Op.27, no. 2), often compared to Hamlet's soliloquy on suicide,²¹ offers both musical enjoyment and valuable evidence of the changes that were being made during middle period of his composing. The first real

¹⁹ harmony or resolution

²⁰ Elterlein. Beethoven's Pianoforte Sonatas, pp.36

²¹ Elterlein. Beethoven's Pianoforte Sonatas, pp.78

major change that is experimented with in this sonata, as mentioned earlier, is the order in which the movements are presented. Op. 27, no. 2 opens with the *adagio sostenuto*²² movement as opposed to a faster, allegro movement. This was not typical to that of the classical sonatas and Beethoven's earlier works. Prior to the "Moonlight Sonata," all thirteen of Beethoven's sonatas opened in a fast or lively tempo, usually allegro or andante, with the exception of only one: Op. 13, "Grande Sonata Pathétique."²³

Within the opening *adagio* movement of Op. 27, no. 2, we begin to notice something else taking place. The repetitious triplet figure viewed in the bass of the opening, as explained by Gordon, may suggest Beethoven's usage of improvisation or experimentation. Gordon goes on to explain that the overall effect that is ultimately produced by these slow, repetitious triplets is an emotional one: "One mood is thus sustained and unbroken throughout the movement, thereby establishing a serene but intense emotionalism."²⁴ Op. 27, no. 2 provides evidence suggesting the possible beginnings of Beethoven's attempt to clearly project a specific emotion or a "definite state of mind" in his sonata. The structure of "Moonlight Sonata" and the majority of the sonatas composed afterwards became subjected to the emotional content that was being projected. It goes without saying that it would be impossible to try and explain exactly why and how this emotional effect takes place upon us. The last two movements of Op. 27, no. 2 offer less evidence of experimentation and therefore will not be examined in this paper.

After the "Moonlight Sonata," Op. 53 and 57, and Beethoven's usage of experimentation has become all but uncommon, Beethoven's late period of sonata compositions begins to take place. Beethoven has now broken so far away from the traditional, classical sonata form that his works are now widely considered by many to be romantic. It is no longer as simple to examine one of Beethoven's sonatas which once so easy to compare to the other sonatas of the same time period. It is also interesting to note that some of these late compositions including Op. 109 are considered by some modern musicologists to not be sonatas at all.²⁵ In this final section of Beethoven's sonata analysis, only a brief overview is offered.

Most of Beethoven's final piano sonatas all contain very detailed directions regarding tempo and expression that were written in German rather than the traditional

²² 'at ease' and 'sustained'

²³ Beethoven, Sonatas, book II, pp.341

²⁴ Gordon, Keyboard Literature, pp. 164

²⁵ Newman, Sonata in Classical Era

Italian.²⁶ In doing so, Beethoven, as a composer, is communicating to the performer the way in which the music should feel in a very clear and understandable way rather than including the standard, often vague *allegro* or *allegretto*. As mentioned in the introduction, the attempt to express emotion or “lyricism” better is definitely an aspect of romantic music.

Many of the sonatas composed in the late period contain a type of “lyricism” that separates them from the earlier and middle sonatas and placing them into the romantic era of music. Similar to the problem we encountered when explaining the “Moonlight Sonata,” it is very difficult to explain how this type of lyricism is produced in Beethoven’s later piano sonatas. The opening movement of Op. 101 (1816) is an excellent example of Beethoven’s usage of musical lyricism.²⁷ Gordon compares op. 101 to Beethoven’s earlier “Moonlight Sonata” by explaining that both sonatas have an “uninterrupted melodic intensity that is sustained from beginning to end.” However, the musical structure of the first movement and those that follow it are very different from those found in his early and middle sonatas. Such structural differences include but are not limited to: a short development in the introduction of the second and last movements, abrupt changes in tonality and, most importantly, the usage of a style similar to the fugue of the baroque era.²⁸ These final changes made to the sonata lead many people to consider them to be romantic.

It can be understood from the evidence given in the previous section, concerning the musical changes that Beethoven made in his sonatas alone, that he was indeed a catalyst in the development of romantic music in Europe. This point can be found in countless essays, articles, and books on Beethoven and the role that he played in helping the transition. Many sources pay little or no attention to other pre-romantic composers. For example: [The Development of Western Music](#), a text book in which the chronologically progression of western music is examined, dedicates the entire section on the transition from classical music to romantic music to Beethoven only. But, should Beethoven alone receive credit for sparking the transition into the romantic era of music? Should the studies of the transitional period be limited to only Beethoven’s works? Is the time in which Beethoven composed the only time period that can be considered the “transitional period?”

²⁶ Gordon, [Keyboard Literature](#), pp. 180

²⁷ Gordon, [Keyboard Literature](#), pp. 182

²⁸ Gordon, [Keyboard Literature](#), pp. 182

My answer to all of these questions is easy to anticipate: no. Beethoven's significant contributions to the transitional period from classical to romantic music should not overshadow the contributions of other composers, Schubert in particular, working in the same time period and slightly after most what most would consider 'transitional.' It can also be argued that the transitional period extends slightly beyond the time in which Beethoven was composing. Yes, Beethoven is absolutely necessary in understanding the development of romantic music but, studying his compositions, alone, is not sufficient in fully understanding the musical progression from classical to romantic.

The first questions that this argument raises are, "Who can also be credited with having helped move western music forward into the romantic era and when did this take place?" The time period in which we are most concerned with in this situation will not be the period before Beethoven was composing but the period during and immediately after. The Sonata Since Beethoven, in a chart depicting the production spans of romantic composers²⁹, provides us with an idea as to when the most important composers of the now "romantic era" were producing their works. In the short time period before the greatest composers that we now recognize as romantic began writing—Liszt, Chopin, Schumann, Mendelssohn, and Wagner—and during the same time in which Beethoven was composing, we see afore mentioned Austrian composer, Franz Schubert.³⁰ Of course, as is to be expected, there is a slight overlap between Schubert and these romantic composers. However, it is clear that Schubert was composing before all of them. This leads us to consider the possible influences that Schubert may have had on these composers and, quite possibly, Beethoven himself. In order for us to begin to understand the possible influences that Schubert had on the composers of the romantic era and the involvement that he had in creating the transition, it is important to very briefly examine some of Schubert's compositions. Unlike the previous section in which Beethoven's sonatas were analyzed more specifically, however, a much broader, less specific overview of the changes that Schubert created is offered.

Before we begin the overview of Schubert's works, it is important to understand one of the major differences in his method of composing as it is compared to that of

²⁹ Newman, William. The Sonata Since Beethoven. Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1969, pp.67.

³⁰ It is often overlooked that Beethoven and Schubert, for about twelve years, were composing at the same time.

Mozart and Beethoven. Rockstro's remarks that Schubert's "method of working... differed entirely from Mozart's and Beethoven's. He never prepared a perfect mental copy, like the former....[He] wrote almost always on the spur of the moment, committing themselves on paper, as fast as his pen could trace them."³¹ Taking this into consideration, it is perhaps easier to understand why the works Schubert are considered to be different from those of Beethoven and the former composers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century composers. It also helps further suggest that many of the changes brought forward by Schubert were, for the most part, very original thus making his contributions more meaningful.

From the beginning of Schubert's compositions until the very end, we can view a type of "evolution" or progression similar to that of Beethoven's as viewed in the prior analysis. The difference lies within what the two composers experimented and contributed during the "evolution." One of the major contributions made by Schubert during the transition into the romantic era which is not found so much in Beethoven's compositions pertains mainly to harmonics. Gordon comments on the contributions of Schubert by saying that "Schubert's musical style contains a mixture of the traditional and the forward looking."³² When Gordon mentions the "traditional" he refers to the traditional musical structure established in the classical era; "looking forward" refers to Schubert's new harmonic experimentations.

The other aspect of Schubert's musical compositions that has proven to be a critical part in the development of romantic music and very unique to his style is his creation of "lyrical" or "songlike" melodies in his piano and other non-voice compositions. Schubert went beyond Beethoven in creating very lyrical themes or melodies. "Songs without words" they are often referred to as. Similar to Beethoven's case, it is difficult to analyze and explain exactly why these piano pieces and other works have such attractive, "sweet" melodies. W. H. Hadow (1859-1937), a critic of early and late romantic music, writes: "In clarity of style [Schubert] was inferior to Mozart; in power of musical construction he was far inferior to Beethoven, but in poetic impulse and suggestion he is unsurpassed."³³

³¹ Essay by Rockstro featured in: Brown, Maurice. Essays on Schubert. New York, N.Y.: Macmillan, 1966, pp.7.

³² Gordon, Keyboard Lit., pp.214

³³ Article by Hadow featured in: Abraham, Gerald. The Music of Schubert. New York, N.Y.: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1947, pp.112.

Schubert's later piano sonatas present his lyrical melodies and unique harmonic experimentation and progression better than his early ones.³⁴ His seventeenth piano sonata (D. 845, composed 1825) contains these "strange harmonies" and his "romantic" melodies. D. 845 received great attention in the beginning of 1826 with positive reviews by Schumann and Fink, a music critic from Frankfurt. Fink comments on sonata no. 17 in an article written in 1826 by saying, "...it moves so freely and originally within its confines, and sometimes so boldly and curiously...It is easy to see that these [original melodic and harmonic] inventions are often somewhat odd and that their exposition is even more curious...."³⁵ The other reviews provided by Fink regarding this and other sonatas by Schubert also proved to be very positive.

Schubert's last three piano sonatas (D. 958, D. 959, D. 960), all written during 1828, contain the musical aspects that he is known best for. The first and second movements of D. 958 include excellent examples of Schubert's lyrical style. The two movements open with themes that Gordon considers to be both "delicate and songlike" and then progress into more powerful sections.³⁶ In D. 959, Gordon points out that in the second movement (mm. 111-113), a musical expression of Schubert's that is contains his lyricism and harmonic experimentation. Movement two, he explains, opens with a "plaintive, lovely melody" and then moves into an "improvisatory frenzy" of modulation and "dramatic contrast." Finally, D. 960 contains the romantic opening that the other two piano sonatas also offer and later concludes with harmonic progression that has, as Gordon remarks, "variety and richness."³⁷

The most positive feedback regarding Schubert's piano sonatas offered by one of his contemporaries comes from Robert Schumann. Schumann, one of the greatest composers of the early romantic era, was undoubtedly influenced a great deal by Schubert's experimentation.³⁸ Schumann writes that he was "enraptured by this new mind, whose wealth seemed to [him] boundless and incommensurable."³⁹ Captivated by

³⁴ It should be noted that some of Schubert's early and late sonatas were not completed.

³⁵ Newman, William. The Sonata Since Beethoven. Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1969.

³⁶ Gordon, Keyboard Lit., pp.228

³⁷ Gordon, Keyboard Lit., pp.231

³⁸ Please note that in this chapter regarding Schumann's piano influences, it is mentioned that Beethoven did not have a significant impact on the melodies of his compositions.

³⁹ Letter by Schumann featured in: Pleasants, Henry. The Musical World of Robert Schumann. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1965.

these new, “Schubertian” musical elements, Schumann attempted to recreate man of them in his own, personal compositions. Schubert’s musical influence did not stop with Schumann. Chopin, regarded by many as the most famous romantic pianist, employed many Schubertian elements into his own piano compositions. Wagner’s seven piano pieces (1831) are said to have “echoes of Schubert in them.”⁴⁰

Provided with this evidence suggesting that Schubert did create musical ideas and motives that were original (“Schubertian”) which had an impact on the composers of the romantic of era, what prevents him from being placed into the transitional period with Beethoven? Why do authors such as Harold C. Schonberg advocate that Schubert had very little influence on the composers that followed him?⁴¹ Yes, it is true that many of Schubert’s works, unlike Beethoven, were not recognized during the time of their composition, with the exception of a very few, and some were not full recognized until after his death. Therefore, to understand better the influence that Schubert had on romanticism, we should not limit ourselves to studying the early and immediate influences that Schubert had on composers for they are, for the most part, very limited. We must go beyond these, on to the later influences in order to fully understand Schubert’s influence on the romantic era.

It should be mentioned that Beethoven’s influence can be found in Schubert’s compositions; this fact can not be disputed. However, do we consider the possible influences Schubert might have had on the works of Beethoven as much as we should? Could the lyricism heard in Beethoven’s later piano sonatas have been influenced in one way or another by Schubert’s earlier works? Might Beethoven have been more inclined to experiment with the harmonics of his later works after examining the works of Schubert? We may never be able to answer these questions for sure but, in trying to answer them, we will further realize impact Schubert and Beethoven had on the transition from classical to romantic music.

Beethoven is almost always referred to as being the more robust, powerful composer of the two; Schubert, the more “feminine.” The two contrasting styles of music combine to create the transition into the romantic era. The two composers brought very different elements of musical change into their works: one structural, the other harmonic. To only look at one side of the situation, either Beethoven or Schubert, limits our

⁴⁰ Gregor-Dellin, Martin. Richard Wagner: His Life, His Work, His Century. New York, N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1983.

⁴¹ Schonberg, Harold C. The Lives of the Great Composers. New York, N.Y.: W. W. Norton, 1970.

understanding of the development of romantic music and western music as a whole. It is absolutely necessary to look at the works of these and other composers during the turn of the century in order to witness the changes that were taking place thus creating the romantic era of music.

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