

# Discussion on the Singing Style of Schumann Art Songs\*

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**Abstract**—Schumann (1810—1856), one of the most prominent figures in the history of German music in the first half of the 19th century, was one of the representatives of the mature period of romantic music. His art songs attach great importance to the relationship between music and poetry, which makes the romantic poetry the best interpretation. Schumann's art songs are an extremely rigorous form of vocal art. By learning to sing Schumann's artistic songs, not only vocal singers get the singing methods and techniques, but more importantly, they can enhance the singer's musical accomplishment.

**Keywords**—Schumann; art songs; singing style

## I. INTRODUCTION

Robert A. Schumann (1810 - 1856) was another great romantic composer after the great romantic composer of Germany and the "king of artistic songs" Schubert. His artistic songs are inspired by romanticism. Schumann had produced more than 500 songs in his whole life, most of which were made in the form of divertimentos. His selection of lyrics is extremely elegant. Most of them choose poetry as lyrics from the works of great poets such as Heine, Schiller, Goethe, and Rueckert, being inspired by music. And Schumann created a new era of romantic art songs together with Schubert and Brahms.

Schumann had the talent to create artistic songs. He also had a very high literary accomplishment. He had profound understanding of the poems of poets such as Goethe, Schiller and Heine, and was very meticulous in the creation of songs. The songs he created are the ultimate fine works of art. He often used his personal masterpiece to create his own works. His works have strong personality characteristics. He was not good at creating imposing music works. Mostly he wrote stories of ordinary people's feelings and love. He often used his own musical story as a theme to express music art with no exaggerated beauty. Schumann's music is very individual. He often described his own thoughts and feelings in his own way of expression. He never cared about other people's opinions. This is one of the important reasons why his music can be loved by people. When Schumann described the music of his inner world, he often gave the viewer a feeling of aloof from the heights. And the master of the music story

is the viewer himself, which creates a kind of feeling. Strong contrast, and makes the viewers to freely release their inner feelings, thus being loved by the public. Schumann's art songs play an important role in the development of music and art during the Romantic Period.

## II. THE SINGING STYLE OF SCHUMANN ART SONGS

Schumann had struggled for his lofty artistic ideals throughout his life. He had created works that portray real life and rich in ideological connotations. His artistic songs are mostly lyrical, sometimes because the feelings he wrote are deep and intense, resulting in prodigious theatricality.

But the lofty heroic music like Beethoven is hard to find in Schumann's massive works and what is obvious is Schumann's delicateness and tenderness. Most of Schumann's artistic song lyrics use the lyrical poetry of 19th century romantic poets to express the characteristics of such poetry, that is, quiet, delicate, romantic style and emotion. Starting from the artistic conception, taking the artistic conception as the entry point, the sound should be very pure when singing songs, and make more use of soft, semi-sound and high-sound zone weakening techniques and skills. For example, the song "Walnut Tree" is selected from Morson's poem, and the prelude of music brings people into a quiet dream. Therefore, when singing this work, the listener should be able to think of the beautiful picture of "the beautiful girl in the quiet night, accompanied by the rustling of the leaves, falls into her dream with her fantasy of love and life." Therefore, the singer should sing softly and half-sound, and it requires for a clean, soft voice to express the quietness of the night, the softness of the wind, the beauty of the girl, and the elegance of the leaves and rustling.

The loud and noisy voice can't be used, and the emotional tone can't be bold and enthusiastic. This will completely distort the original musical style of the work.

The artistic conception, pronunciation, rhythm and tempo of poetry itself have a strong sense of music. Therefore, it is necessary to express the artistic conception in Schumann's art songs perfectly. It is necessary to repeatedly think about the inner rhythm of poetry and music. For example, "Dedication" is the first song in "Myrtle", and the lyrics are a love poem by the famous German romantic poet Rueckert. The poem uses a large number of metaphors to compare the

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beloved to "life", "earth", "sky", "the immortality of the heavens", and even like "grave." He sang and said: "I will always bury my grief at the grave." People should not feel sad while singing this sentence, because the grave here has no meaning of sadness. He likens his lover to a grave to show that she is his "destiny" forever. This is a hymn about love, and it is a happy expression of deep love. The expression of the whole song should be filled with happiness and enjoyment. Schumann used this work to present his sweetheart, Clara, to express his deep love for Clara. In such a delicate depiction of Schumann, the artistic conception of poetry and the emotions of poetry are all vividly displayed, thus expanding the expression techniques of artistic songs, and playing a connecting role in the development of German art songs.

### III. THE CREATIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHUMANN'S ART SONGS

Schumann was a German romantic composer in the first half of the 19th century. Both he and Schubert used romantic music to create art songs. However, Schumann has a profound literary literacy. His music is more elaborate and profound than Schubert's music. His music works are not easily exposed emotionally, which are consistent with his introverted personality. Schumann's vocal works are mostly created by the sentiment of poetry. The romantic poetic imagination and the musician's sensitivity and exquisiteness are perfectly combined in Schumann. Schumann was a romantic poet in the music scene.

#### A. *Using the Semantics of Poetry and the Essence of Music to Explore the Deeper Romanticism Poetry of the Poetry*

Since childhood, Schumann had revealed his unique talents in literature, poetry, music, etc. He had poetic temperament and spirituality. The works of great poets such as Heine, Goethe, and Schiller had had the greatest influence on him. Most of the lyrics he wrote in the art songs were chosen from the poems of these romantic poets. The lyrics of art songs are very elegant in their selection, with a special focus on the artistry of poetry. In the creation of artistic songs, Schumann was good at capturing the inspiration of music from poetry. Using musical characteristics and colorful expression techniques, he excavated the deeper poetry of poetry and portrayed the artistic conception and the charm of poetry. Such as the vocal divertimento "Dichterliebe" adapted according to Heine's long poem, it tells the story of a poet's longing for love and sadness after the loss of love. Schumann made full use of the characteristics and expressions of music to explore the deep meaning of poetry and the more delicate poetry and paintings of the works, making the vocal music divertimento more appealing. The vocal divertimento "Dichterliebe" consists of sixteen songs. Schumann used simple music language and creative techniques to explain and portray the poet's delicate emotional changes and poetic artistic image. The first song of the divertimento is "Im wunderschönen Monat Mai, which tells "In the wonderful and splendid May, the flowers bloom together, in my heart, my love blooms..." the poet has sprouted unlimited desire for love. This song is not

complicated in its creation, and the tunes are not gorgeous, but it expresses the sincerity of the heart. At the end of the song, using the creative approach to end that the ending sound intentionally paused on the unstable sound, so that the tune is in a feeling of not ending, it gives people a feeling of endless aftertaste, and vividly portrays the poet's longing for love, the desire for love life. Music art is the art of the mind and soul. It is the art that best expresses people's feelings and emotions among many art forms. The music is the best way to reflect the "love" and "meaning" contained in the poem. The wonderful poems are composed of musical notes and they are melodic melody. Schumann perfectly combined music and poetry, used "music" to interpret "poetry", and used "poetry" to express the emotion of "music", which was one of the characteristics of his artistic song creation.

#### B. *The Main Themes and Other Themes of Schumann's Art Songs*

Among all the Schumann art songs, the proportion of songs in love is the largest, and many of them have quite high artistic features, such as the song collection "Myrtle", which was a wedding gift Schumann prepared for the bride Clara. The divertimento consists of twenty-six songs, and each song is extremely impressive. Among them, "Dedication" is the first song in the collection "Myrtle", and it is also a popular and widely circulated one. The lyrics are a love poem by the romantic poet Rueckert. The poem uses many metaphors to compare the bride to "soul", "sky", "life", "joy", etc. This is a kind of the sincere expression of love and the true feelings of happiness. The whole song is always full of happiness and enjoyment. Schumann dedicated this creation to his beloved to express his true love for the bride. In Schumann's art songs, there are also some lyrical songs that describe the natural scenery. For example, "Moonlight Night" is a typical romantic style lyric song. The lyrics are selected from the German romantic poet Eichendorff's poetry. At the beginning of the song, the piano brings out the quiet night view of the moonlit night.

The song gradually unfolds in the broad and quiet melody and gradually pushes to the climax. It expresses the feeling that the master loves the homeland and misses the hometown, and the whole song ends in the fading harmony. Schumann also wrote some narratives, the most representative of which is "Two Grenadiers". This is a narrative song with a very ideological and artistic style. The lyrics are chosen from Heine's poems. The general idea is to express the thoughts and feelings of the Napoleonic era and the bourgeois democratic revolution after the restoration of European feudalism through the dialogue between two French soldiers after the defeat of Russia. The song uses popular creative techniques and cites the "La Marseillaise", which represents the spirit of the French revolution. The tunes are powerful and show the heroic spirit of the soldiers who are unyielding and heroic.

#### IV. THE SINGING INDIVIDUALITY OF SCHUMANN'S ART SONGS

##### A. *Using Artistic Conception as the Entry Point and Expressing Works in the Purest Tone*

The lyrics of Schumann's art songs are mostly selected from the poems of romantic poets. The elegant, meticulous, romantic style and emotional characteristics of the lyrics are perfectly interpreted. The performers should take the artistic conception as an entry point and have a deep understanding and a visual analysis of the meaning of the words. When the song is interpreted, the sound should be pure, penetrating and stable, and use more of soft sound, and especially the expression techniques and skills of the high-pitched area soft control to gradually fade-in or weaken.

##### B. *Repeatedly Considering the Rhythm of Poetry and the Rhythm of Music*

The language, tone, rhythm and so on of poetry contain the rhythm of music. Therefore, in order to interpret the artistic songs of Schumann and perfectly express the deep meaning and artistic conception of the song, the singer must carefully and repeatedly consider the inner rhythm of poetry rhythm and music, and understand the inner meaning of poetry.

##### C. *Starting from the Piano Accompaniment*

Schumann's art songs are as a whole from melody to piano accompaniment, both of which are equally important. Pianos and songs are sometimes equally divided, sometimes mixed, and even some of the piano accompaniment plays a leading role. The piano accompaniment written by Schumann has the effect of excavating the deep meaning of poetry, expressing the artistic conception of poetry, enriching the imagination of lyrics, highlighting the mood and atmosphere of songs. His piano accompaniment in the song "Women's Love and Life" fully embodies the innovative spirit of Schumann's romantic composers. In the delicate depiction of the piano, the poetry's poetic and artistic expressions are fully expressed, thus broadening the performance techniques of artistic song creation, which have played an important connecting role in the development of German art songs.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Detailed reorganizations and analyses have been made on the characteristics of the great romantic composer Schumann, the style of creation and the selection of lyrics and themes. At the same time, some of Schumann's representative art songs are analyzed and exemplified in the use of sounds and the artistic processing of music and piano accompaniment, so that singers or vocal educators can learn from them. When the singers sing Schumann's art songs, they can correctly grasp the style, characteristics and romantic elegance of the works, accurately display the quiet and delicate emotions and artistic conception of the artistic songs, use the sounds, control the volume, as well as seamlessly integrate the singing and piano accompaniment, and jointly express the

profound connotation and poetic expression of poetry to achieve the perfect artistic effect. In the 19th century, a time of romance and emotional venting, Schumann may not be the most outstanding and excellent musician. He was not as grandly as Liszt, nor as solemn and grandiose as Wagner's "musikdrama", but what Schumann had was the delicate, tender and dreamy. His works of music, especially art and songs, are the most crying and artistically attractive. He combined music and poetry perfectly and conquered the world with his unique artistic expression, so his works are still the invaluable musical heritage for Germany or the world.

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