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Study Leave Report, 1993-1994

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The primary focus of my activity during my leave has been the initiation of a large SSHRC-funded project on metrical consonance and dissonance (an outgrowth of my 1987 article entitled “Some Extensions of the Concepts of Metrical Consonance and Dissonance” in the *Journal of Music Theory*). The project emphasizes the music of Robert Schumann, which is particularly rich in the devices in question. I therefore read, during the first three months of my leave, many articles and books about Schumann’s music and searched the composer’s critical writings for references to rhythmic structure. I also listened to a great many of his works – the complete piano music, the symphonies, most of the chamber music and the large vocal/choral works; while doing so, I made lists of and notes about passages that are particularly relevant to my project.

Since part of my field of inquiry is the genesis of metrical consonance and dissonance in Schumann’s works, it is necessary for me to study his autograph manuscripts. I initiated this phase of the project during the months of October to March, which I spent in Europe. I visited numerous libraries and archives which possess Schumann autographs: the University Library in Bonn (because the library has so many Schumann materials, Bonn was my “home base”); the Schumannforschungsstelle and the Heinrich Heine Institut in nearby Düsseldorf (the former archive possesses a nearly complete library of writings about Schumann, while the latter holds many important musical manuscripts); the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek in Berlin (both the “West” and “East” branches); the Robert-Schumann-Haus in Zwickau (an archive in the house in which Schumann was born); the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris; the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna; and the British Library in London. Each location yielded many interesting insights; I came away from each with stacks of notes, photocopies and/or microfilms. In some locations, I “left my mark” by identifying sketches that were unidentified or incorrectly identified. At the Schumannforschungsstelle in Düsseldorf and the Robert-Schumann-Haus in Zwickau, I was able to meet some of the foremost German Schumann experts. Another very valuable contact was the director of the Robert-Schumann-Haus in Bonn (the house in which the composer died, now a museum and an extensive public music library).

Aside from studying manuscripts, I began, while in Germany, to write up some of my research results, and in January gave a guest lecture entitled “Schumanns ‘verrückte’ Rhythmen” both at the Technische Universität in Zwickau and at the Hochschule der Künste in Berlin. I also continued my Schumann-related reading while in Germany; particularly at Bonn and Düsseldorf, I was able to locate sources that are inaccessible in Canada (German dissertations, etc.). The director of the Schumann-Haus in Bonn shared with me a particularly fascinating document: a partial transcript of the medical records of Schumann’s last illness. These records have only just come to light, and the published partial transcript is intended only for members of the Berliner Akademie der Künste (which now owns the transcript). I feel very fortunate to have been able to read this material. It was deeply moving to learn the details of Schumann’s mental deterioration in the very building in which it ran its course.

A number of additional activities during my Europe trip must be mentioned. In January, I delivered a guest lecture at the Freie Universität in Berlin (a translation of the paper read during the symposium “Schubert and the Wanderer” at the University of Victoria). The German journal *Musiktheorie* accepted a paper that includes a brief introduction to the rhythmic theories that I am exploring in the Schumann project, and applies these theories to the music of Beethoven and Debussy; I prepared this paper for publication. I spent many hours (with the generous help of my wife) on the editing of a book of essays that has grown out of the 1989 conference “Alternatives to Monotonicity” at the University of Victoria, which will be published by the University of Nebraska Press this year (William Kinderman is co-editor). My tasks included the expanding and checking of the bibliography, the retyping and revising of the essay of a contributor who had “no time to attend to it,” as well as the final revision of my own contribution to the book. Work on the bibliography continued after my return home, where I also had to revise and retype the essay of a second contributor who was “too busy.”

Another field of endeavour in Europe was the study of music by women composers. Shortly before leaving for Europe, I was invited to give a paper at a conference (at the University of Colorado at Boulder) on songs composed by women in the 19th century. While it was by no means clear that this conference would actually take place, I made an effort in Germany to become familiar with some songs by women, focussing on those of Josephine Lang (a protégée of Felix Mendelssohn). My work on women composers and Lang in particular took me to the International Library of Women Composers in Unna (a small town two hours by train from Bonn; the library has large holdings in music by European women), to the Württembergische Landesbibliothek in Stuttgart (where Lang’s musical manuscripts are housed), to the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich (which has editions of many of Lang’s works), and to the Stadtarchiv of Cologne (which has a collection of letters written by Josephine Lang). I gathered much more material than I would need for a conference paper. Whether or not the Colorado conference takes place, I shall likely publish some of the material at some

point, and shall be using the music with which I became acquainted both in my teaching and performing. (In the fall, I shall participate in a recital of vocal and chamber music by women, to include songs by Clara Schumann and Josephine Lang, and a piano trio by the outstanding composer Louise Farrenc.) Furthermore, my newly gained knowledge of music by women and of sources of such music has enabled me to assist colleagues such as Ann Elliott-Goldschmid of the Lafayette String Quartet, and Alexandra Browning-Moore, who are always on the lookout for interesting music by women.

In the last three months of leave, my primary activity has been to study the gathered Schumann material in depth, and to continue the dissemination of my results. I have given papers concerning my Schumann research at the meeting of the American Musicological Society (Pacific Northwest Chapter) at the University of Victoria, and at the meeting of the Canadian University Music Society at the “Learners” in Calgary. I am presently preparing another paper to be given in the fall at the national meeting of the Society for Music Theory in Tallahassee. These three papers share the title “Schumann’s Metrical Revisions: A Source Study of Selected Instrumental Works,” and overlap to some extent, but are nevertheless different papers. I have gathered much about which I shall be able to write in the coming years; in fact, I believe the material will grow into a book, for which I have prepared a tentative outline.

I have also done some performing in the past three months, including a lecture-recital on the songs of Robert and Clara Schumann given (with my wife) to a seniors’ club in Victoria (to be repeated in January in expanded form, and in German, at a “Deutscher Abend” sponsored by the Department of Germanic Studies); a chamber music recital in Vancouver (Debussy’s Sonata for Violin and Piano and Beethoven’s Trio in C minor, Op. 1 No. 3); and a professional recording (with my wife) of twenty-three lullabies (German, French, English and Russian – many of them collected in the libraries of Europe). The latter recording is to be a gift for our one-year-old nephew, but since it turned out quite well, we are toying with the idea of marketing it.

I look forward to sharing the material gathered during my leave with my students – obviously with graduate students, but also with undergraduates (for example, sketchbook pages that show Schumann struggling to learn exactly those basic musical concepts which I teach in Music 101!)

I thank the University for granting me a study leave.