



# Experiencing Schumann: A Listener's Companion

*Donald Sanders*

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During his lifetime and for at least a century after his death, Robert Schumann and his music were commonly misunderstood. His long struggle with mental illness was well known, and as a result some of the most original and innovative features of his work were often dismissed as bizarre and irrational. In recent years, however, the rhythmic complexities and unorthodox harmonic practices that lovers of his piano music and lieder have found so appealing are now being received with more objective treatment in critical and scholarly circles. His influence on the music of Brahms and other later composers now seems obvious. The refinement of Schumann's literary taste is evident not only in his songs, but also in the marvelous fantasy world of his piano pieces.

*Experiencing Schumann: A Listener's Companion* combines a concise biography of Robert Schumann with an analysis of works from the most important genres in which he worked. The music is discussed in the frame of Schumann's eventful and ultimately tragic life, and the important influence of his brilliant and adoring—but strong-willed—wife, Clara Wieck Schumann, is also examined. A selected listening discography lists outstanding recorded performances of the featured compositions.

Delving into Schumann's most famous pieces in engaging and accessible style, Donald Sanders provides insightful analysis for dedicated lovers of Schumann as well as newcomers to his musical innovations.

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