

Exploring Performers' Doppelgängers: Reprogramming Schumann and Contemporary Piano Cycles

Programme:

<i>Elf Humoresken</i> No.10	Lied im Traume - 'Song in the dream'
<i>Kreisleriana</i> No.8	Schnell und Spielend
<i>Elf Humoresken</i> No.9	Glocken - 'Bell'
<i>Kreisleriana</i> No.2	Sehr innig und nicht zu rasch
<i>Elf Humoresken</i> No.3	Anfangs Lebhaft - 'Lively at first'

This performance is an excerpt of my reprogramme 'Dreaming Kreisleriana', consisting of Schumann *Kreisleriana* Op.16 and Jörg Widmann's *Elf Humoresken*. By reprogramming the Schumann and contemporary cycle as a complete entirety, I explore the research question of discovering performers' twofold role, both as a deliverer and a creator. Developing the notion of integrating piano cycles, I rearrange the cycles to formulate a new narrative logic and demonstrate the importance of a performer's role as a creator.

'Dreaming Kreisleriana' starts with falling into a dream, which contains almost every sensation we could experience in real life. The violent high A in *Lied im Traume* delivers a clear message at the beginning – it is not going to be a peaceful dream. The naughty left hand in *Kreisleriana* No.8 responds the aggressive gesture, impressing us with a strong sense of lostness, as if we are thrown into the unfamiliar dream, having nothing but bewilderment and uncertainty. The following *Glocken* retains the violent gesture with the repeated high G in the right hand, whereas the strikes of the bell gradually dwindle, picturing a scene of our important ones going away and calling in distance, which brings us to the most ardent confession of love, *Kreisleriana* No.2. The vehement surges at the beginning of *Anfangs Lebhaft* tell exactly how we feel after a confession – agitated and restless, yet leaving us no answers to the love confession.

The contemporary cycle – Widmann's *Elf Humoreken*, indicating traces of Schumann's compositional techniques, including digressions, overlapping voices, quick alterations and abstract whims – possesses the basics of a tool to give a retrospective view of the Schumann, heightening through its angularity and sharpness, and finally to fuse the discrepancies by discovering the associations of certain perspectives. The era distance between the two cycles finds a new aspect for the audience to recognize the conventional repertoire, refreshing the listening experience with the performer's exclusive 'imaginative listening'.



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XinRu Chen is a Chinese pianist and scholar, currently researching Schumann and contemporary piano cycles on the PhD programme at the Royal Academy of Music. She presented her project on the Royal Academy of Music PhD Open day in November and gave a successful research event in October 2011, consisting of half an hour presentation and one hour reprogramming 'Dreaming Kreisleriana'. XinRu participated the 2021 PhD co-seminar organized by the Royal Academy of Music and the Sibelius Academy, in which her research has received general acclaim. During the pandemic in 2020, she led a series of experimental concerts related to her project at the Academy Summer Piano Festival, live-streaming on the Academy website.

As a performer, XinRu has appeared in many prestigious halls in UK, Spain, Italy and China, including St. Martin in-the-Fields, Southwark Cathedral, Regent's Hall, and Duke's Hall. She opened the Beethoven Piano Sonata Series in 2017 in the Academy Summer Piano Festival, participating the Petworth Festival in 2018. Her repertoire covers a wide range of romantic and contemporary music, recognized by the Janet Duff Greet Prize in the Christian Carpenter Competition in the Academy.

Recording link

Research Event with a full reprogramme performance of 'Dreaming Kreisleriana', starting from 32'05'':

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0SnzKgThKkY>

More reprogramme recordings:

Carnaval Eddy — <https://youtu.be/ED7Tri03oNQ>

Fantasy Review — <https://youtu.be/ct3XQDLsFKA>