



*more than the score...*

# ROBERT SCHUMANN

'Reverie' from  
*Scenes from Childhood*  
for piano solo

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Presented by Daniel Grimwood

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## Contents

Daniel Grimwood talks about  
Schumann's 'Reverie' . . . . . 2

'Reverie' . . . . . 4

About the composer . . . . . 6

About the music . . . . . 6

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# Daniel Grimwood

*talks about*

## Schumann's 'Reverie'

Schumann's piano music represents the pinnacle of German Romanticism. In this work, *Kinderszenen* (*Scenes from Childhood*), he was writing music thinking about his own children, and parenthood, I suspect. And although these pieces come under the guise of music written for children to play, this is very much music for grown-ups.

Schumann's musical personality is embodied by two characters he created: Eusebius and Florestan – one dreamy and the other vigorous. These two characters appeared as a result of Schumann's journalistic endeavours: when he was talking about works by other composers he would imagine conversations between these two characters who represented different versions of himself. They later started to appear in his piano works, and it can be said that they appear in all his music.

*Kinderszenen* is a collection of miniatures that can be performed as a cycle, though many of them work beautifully as free-standing pieces. The structure of the *Kinderszenen* is really rather wonderful and quite interesting because the title is already suggestive – 'Scenes from Childhood' is not the same as saying music that's written for children. Children can play most of it, it's true, but it's more to do with the nature of childhood and its relationship to adulthood. In the first piece, 'Of foreign lands', and how it relates to the final piece, 'The Poet Speaks' – who narrates it? Is it narrated by the child, or is it narrated by the poet? Do they interact with each other? In 'Träumerei' ('Dreaming'), who is doing the dreaming? The child is definitely falling asleep: it seems to me that the poet presents the cycle in the first piece by imagining the child; the child falls asleep and dreams of the poet. And so it goes full circle, playing on the idea that all children yearn to be adults, and all adults yearn to recapture what they lost when their childhood ended.

In 'Träumerei', the person who dreams may or may not be asleep: we don't know whether this is music of sleep or of daydreaming. And the arch of the melody itself seems to suggest you can imagine somebody rolling their eyes and looking at imagined figures.

### **Metre and metronome marks**

Schumann deliberately blurs the metre by having displaced accents: a melody that starts without any accompanying notes on an anacrusis, a harmony chord that comes in on a second beat, and you have to get some way into the piece before you actually understand, as the listener, where the main beats are. It's only really on the final

cadence where you understand that that's the first beat.

*Clara said:  
'Please ignore  
my husband's  
metronome  
markings: they're  
rubbish'*

There's a controversy about Schumann's metronome marks in this music, and about his metronome marks in general. His wife Clara said, 'Please ignore my husband's metronome markings: they're rubbish,' or something to that effect. So clearly in her own edition of his

music she changed many of the metronome markings and made them more realistic. Or did she?

We know that the Schumanns owned a Conrad Graf fortepiano: these instruments were still in use when the Érards had started building much more sonorous pianos. The faster tempi certainly worked better on the older pianos, so maybe his rather extreme crotchet = 100 metronome marking in this work makes sense when

# 'Reverie'

from *Scenes from Childhood*

Robert Schumann (1810–1856)

$\text{♩} = 100$

*p*

4

7

ritard.

10

The musical score is presented in a standard piano format with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The tempo is indicated as quarter note = 100. The piece starts with a piano (p) dynamic. The first system covers measures 1-3, the second system measures 4-6, the third system measures 7-9, and the fourth system measures 10. A 'ritard.' marking is placed above measure 7. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.