



SCHUMANN

Symphony No. 2, Op. 61

Robert Schumann, sometimes known as Robert Alexander Schumann, (8 June 1810 – 29 July 1856) was a German composer, aesthete and influential music critic. He is regarded as one of the greatest and most representative composers of the Romantic era. Schumann left the study of law to return to music, intending to pursue a career as a virtuoso pianist. He had been assured by his teacher Friedrich Wieck that he could become the finest pianist in Europe, but a hand injury ended this dream. Schumann then focused his musical energies on composing. Schumann's published compositions were written exclusively for the piano until 1840; he later composed works for piano and orchestra; many *Lieder* (art songs for voice and piano), four symphonies, an opera, and other orchestral, choral, and chamber works. His writings about music appeared mostly in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (New Journal for Music), a Leipzig-based publication which he jointly founded. In 1840, against her father's wishes, Schumann married pianist Clara Wieck, daughter of his former teacher, the day before she legally came of age at 21. Had they waited one day, they would have no longer needed her father's consent, which had been the subject of a long and acrimonious legal battle, which found in favor of Clara and Robert. Clara also composed music and had a considerable concert career, the earnings from which formed a substantial part of her father's fortune. For the last two years of his life, after an attempted suicide, Schumann was confined to a mental institution, at his own request. Schumann had considerable influence in the nineteenth century and beyond, despite his adoption of more conservative modes of composition after his marriage. He left an array of acclaimed music in virtually all the forms then known. Partly through his protégé Brahms, Schumann's ideals and musical vocabulary became widely disseminated. Composer Sir Edward Elgar called Schumann "my ideal." Schumann has not often been confused with Austrian composer Franz Schubert, but one well-known example occurred in 1956, when East Germany issued a pair of postage stamps featuring Schumann's picture against an open score that featured Schubert's music. The stamps were soon replaced by a pair featuring music written by Schumann. Schumann was born in Zwickau, Saxony, the fifth and last child of the family. Schumann began to compose before the age of seven, but his boyhood was spent in the cultivation of literature as much as music – undoubtedly influenced by his father, August Schumann, a bookseller, publisher, and novelist. Schumann's interest in music was sparked by seeing a performance of Ignaz Moscheles playing at Karlsbad, and he later developed an interest in the works of Ludwig van Beethoven, Franz Schubert and Felix Mendelssohn.

Symphony No. 2, Op. 61 was sketched in 1845. It is written in the traditional four-movement form, and as often in the nineteenth century the Scherzo precedes the Adagio. All four movements are in C major, except the first part of the slow movement (in C minor). The first movement begins with a slow Introduction brass chorale, elements of which recur through the piece. The following Sonata-Allegro is dramatic and turbulent and is characterized by sharp rhythmic formulae (double-dotted rhythms) and by the masterly transformation of the material of the Introduction. The second movement is a scherzo in C major with two trios, whose main portion strongly emphasizes the diminished chord. The *Adagio espressivo* is a sonata movement in C minor, with the character of an elegy, its middle section strongly contrapuntal in texture. The finale is in a very freely treated sonata form, its second theme related to the opening theme of the Adagio. The coda of the Finale recalls the material from the Introduction, thereby thematically spanning the entire work.