

A mere month after completing these pieces, Schumann turned a more inward gaze upon himself in *Kreisleriana*. This work seems to inhabit the twilight world of German romantic literature, in particular the grotesque fables of Hoffmann, by virtue of perverse recurring motifs such as triplet skirls and arabesques. A compressed genius bursts forth from almost every bar in a work that asserts fresh possibilities for the expressive powers of piano music in terms of form, literary association, and adherence to the aspirations of High Romanticism. Hoffmann, revered by Romantic musicians for his fantastic tales no less than his critical acumen and weird, beguiling character, created in Kreisler the epitome of the bizarre unbalanced musician as a metonym for one aspect of Romantic feeling. The inspiration for Hoffmann's character may well have been the musician Ludwig Böhner (1787-1860), whom Schumann initially considered reviewing in his journal *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*; but his creative response in the form of *Kreisleriana* was more akin to the spirit of Hoffmann's work than the character Johannes Kreisler himself. The eight pieces that comprise *Kreisleriana* are considerably more substantial than the *Kinderszenen* and also much more unified: they are all linked by tonality – the key centre is G minor – and, unlike the *Kinderszenen* pieces, they could hardly be

performed separately. Two of them, Nos. 4 and 6, are among the strangest pieces Schumann ever wrote, deeply introspective and almost suggesting opera in their quasi-recitative opening, followed by a more sustained lyrical sequel. No. 2 is constructed as a distant analogue for the Classical minuet and trio (here, two trios) although the music is searching and personal, far removed from the eighteenth-century minuet's aristocratic pleasantries. Likewise the more urgent rondo movements are very different from their lighter Classical counterparts, appearing as a favourite form throughout the work in increasingly abbreviated and intensified epiphanies. *Kreisleriana* reminded Schumann of the emotional chaos within him during his separation from Clara, and perhaps also his own imaginary personifications of these extremes, Florestan (dynamic and extrovert) and Eusebius (melancholy and introspective), creatures of the mind who give us an insight into the progressive desolation in the composer's spirit.

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