

CLARA SCHUMANN

4 PIÈCES FUGITIVES (FOUR FLEETING PIECES), OP. 15

FOR THE PIANO

EDITED BY OLIVIA ELLIS



AN ALFRED MASTERWORK EDITION



Copyright © 2026 by Alfred Music
All rights reserved. Printed in USA.
ISBN-10: 1-4706-8875-1
ISBN-13: 978-1-4706-8875-2

Cover art: Rotterdam Ferry-Boat (1833)
By Joseph Mallord William Turner (British, 1775 - 1851)
Oil on canvas

No part of this book shall be reproduced, arranged, adapted, recorded, publicly performed, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means without written permission from the publisher. In order to comply with copyright laws, please apply for such written permission and/or license by contacting the publisher at alfred.com/permissions.

4 PIÈCES FUGITIVES (FOUR FLEETING PIECES), OP. 15

Edited by Olivia Ellis

Contents

Foreword	4
About the Composer.....	4
Introduction to Op. 15	4
Editorial Notes	4
Practice and Performance Suggestions.....	5
No. 1: <i>Larghetto</i>	5
No. 2: <i>Un poco agitato</i>	5
No. 3: <i>Andante espressivo</i>	5
No. 4: <i>Scherzo</i>	6
Sources	6
4 PIÈCES FUGITIVES (FOUR FLEETING PIECES), OP. 15	8
I	8
II.....	11
III.....	15
IV.....	20

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Foreword

Few musicians of the nineteenth century enjoyed a career as remarkable as Clara Wieck Schumann (1819–1896). Celebrated throughout Europe as an accomplished pianist, she was also a gifted composer whose music has been increasingly recognized for its artistic sophistication. Her output includes more than sixty works, ranging from brilliant concert works written for her own performances to intimate character pieces that reveal a refined musical voice. Although she also composed chamber music, songs, and orchestral works, the piano remained central to her creative identity.

Clara's earlier compositions typically showcased the grand virtuosity for which she was renowned, but her later works began to reflect a more introspective approach, with greater lyricism and a richer harmonic language. Her set of *Quatre pièces fugitives* (*Four Fleeting Pieces*), Op. 15, represents an important transition in her compositional development and provides a window into the expressive nature of her later piano works. This edition offers an invitation not only to explore a captivating collection of Romantic pieces but also to discover Clara Schumann's distinctive musical voice through her compositions.

INTRODUCTION TO Op. 15

Clara composed *Quatre pièces fugitives* between 1841 and 1844, shortly after her marriage to Robert Schumann (1810–1856). During these years, Clara and Robert both explored the expressive possibilities of vocal music in their writing, and the lyrical qualities of the Lied can be heard in Clara's piano compositions of the time. The four pieces of Op. 15 offer a varied emotional landscape while sharing a distinctly Romantic sense of lyricism. From the simplicity and songlike quality of No. 1, *Larghetto*, to the greater technical brilliance of No. 2, *Un poco agitato*, Clara demonstrates her compositional mastery within compact forms. No. 3, *Andante espressivo*, continues this exploration with a cantabile, almost hymn-like main theme, while No. 4, *Scherzo*—originally conceived as part of her Piano Sonata in G Minor—offers a more spirited and structured conclusion while retaining the melodic elegance that pervades the set.

Robert recognized this development in Clara's compositional style, writing in their marriage diary that she had composed “a group of smaller pieces that are more tenderly and musically conceived than any she has succeeded in doing before.”¹ Together, this intimate collection reveals Clara's ability to balance contrasting moods and characters while maintaining a beautiful sense of unity and coherence.

EDITORIAL NOTES

This edition is based on the Breitkopf and Härtel edition, originally published in 1845.² The editor has tried to honor the composer's intent throughout, adhering to the original score whenever possible. When deemed musically helpful, added dynamics and other expressive markings that were not dictated by the composer are indicated by use of parentheses. Editorial fingering is provided, with the understanding that each pianist's physiology is unique and may require alterations for ease of performance.

Of note in Clara's writing are the wide hand spans and thick textures of some chords. Pianists may find some of the chords uncomfortable at best or even occasionally impossible to play as written. A few solutions are available. If the musical flow allows, rolling large chords maintains the harmonic integrity. For these and other long reaches, it is acceptable to use a touch of pedal to connect. In some passages, a redistribution between the hands may allow for a more legato sound. This edition has provided some suggestions for redistributions throughout, indicated with brackets and corresponding fingering.

Since nineteenth-century pianos produced less resonance than the modern piano, the use of the sustain pedal in Clara's time differed from contemporary practice. Performers could often sustain more freely with long or open pedals on these instruments, whereas similar pedaling on a modern instrument may quickly result in a blurred or overwhelming sound. Additionally, pedaling indications in nineteenth-century editions were not always prescribed exactly; many

passages were simply left to the performer's discretion, and even when included, the marking may not indicate when to release or change the pedal. Performers should therefore be mindful of the historical context of the instrument and conventions of nineteenth-century publishing when approaching pedaling in this work. In select passages, this edition provides additional pedaling indications and footnotes to support clarity of texture while preserving the intentions of the original score.

Practice and Performance Considerations

No. 1: *Larghetto*

The first piece of Op. 15 offers a quiet yet compelling introduction to Clara's piano works, inviting performers to discover the expressive possibilities contained within its elegant simplicity. Brevity and approachable technical demands make it accessible to a wider range of pianists than some of her other works, but it does require both careful listening and a nuanced interpretation.

The piece features long, singing lines and a flowing accompaniment that sets a tranquil atmosphere from the opening. Pianists should pay close attention to balance of the hands, as Clara frequently passes ideas from one hand to the other. The fuller texture and sometimes lower register of the left hand require particular care so the melody remains prominent and the musical dialogue between the hands can unfold naturally. Even from the first measure, pianists should ease into the phrase, allowing the theme to float in over the accompaniment. The middle section provides further opportunities for developing a sense of line through its wide leaps and sweeping melodic gestures. Here, isolating and practicing the melody independently can help pianists incorporate all elements effectively in performance.

Freedom of rubato is needed in this piece and even encouraged by the composer. Clara's markings suggest moments of expressive freedom, and the piece needs a sense of stretching of time during important moments, such as the transitions between sections. Additionally, taking time with some of the large reaches stresses the sentimental quality while making the technical difficulties more accessible.

No. 2: *Un poco agitato*

The second piece of the set is vividly different from No. 1, with a vibrant motive in $\frac{3}{8}$ meter that seems to take over the ABA form. The opening contains two of the main technical challenges: staccato scalar passages and quick, successive chords, both of which can create physical tension. A light touch with fingers close to the keys can be helpful, while also allowing the arm to relax when the phrase pauses. Clara indicates a metronome marking per each dotted quarter note, so the overall feeling should be an energetic dance in three large beats. Whereas No. 1 invites greater freedom of tempo and rubato, No. 2 calls for a steadier pulse, with flexibility reserved for climactic moments.

While the spirit of the opening motive permeates the entire piece, the B section offers a striking contrast in touch, mood, and thematic material. A shift to the relative major and a slower harmonic rhythm create a brief moment of warmth and repose before the restless energy gradually returns. When the scalar motive reappears in measure 36, it is exchanged between the hands, requiring careful balance and attentive listening so that each contrapuntal entrance is clearly projected. Although the temptation may be to focus on the technical demands, pianists should allow thoughtful phrasing and attention to the motivic development to guide their performance.

No. 3: *Andante espressivo*

Following the driving momentum of No. 2, the third piece offers a much-needed moment of quiet reflection, almost like a peaceful prayer. Perhaps more than any other piece in this collection, No. 3 is the most connected to Clara's introspective period. One can almost hear it performed as a Lied, with its beautiful cantabile melody and rich accompaniment. The intricate texture provides the greatest challenge to the pianist and requires sophisticated voicing: the bass line can function as a lyrical countermelody to the main melody, while the inner figures throughout should provide harmonic color without overpowering. Sensitive pedaling is equally important to preserving the transparency of the texture while capturing the resonance; quick pedal changes and occasional half-pedaling can enhance the sound without obscuring the independent voices.

Reminiscent of a nocturne in its character, this movement rewards patience and restraint rather than overt display. The longest of the set, it serves as an expressive centerpiece, where warmth and simplicity take precedence over exaggerated rubato or excessive dynamic contrasts.

No. 4: *Scherzo*

The final movement brings the set to an energetic close, drawing on the elegance of eighteenth-century dance forms. Although the contrasting middle section is marked *Un poco più tranquillo* rather than *Trio*, its change in material and the return of the opening section evoke the traditional minuet-and-trio design. Despite the $\frac{3}{4}$ meter, the piece is most convincing when felt in one, creating a buoyant, dance-like character. Clara's metronome indication is ambitious by modern standards; performers should choose a tempo that preserves the music's lightness and clarity rather than sacrificing articulation for speed.

One of the main challenges lies in the fast-paced changes in articulation, sometimes even between the hands. Alternations between legato and staccato touches and the use of delicate two-note slurs require graceful coordination. Although at first glance the return of the A section appears identical to the opening, a few important details should be noticed. For example, Clara leaves out an earlier crescendo in measure 111 and simply includes a diminuendo when the scalar passage is repeated. Observing these details not only respects the composer's wishes but also brings new life to an otherwise exact repeat.

Sources Consulted

Primary sources consulted include the diaries of Robert and Clara Schumann and correspondence with their contemporaries. Sources that contain relevant historical information were also consulted, most notably Berthold Litzmann's *Clara Schumann: An Artist's Life, Based on Material Found in Diaries and Letters*,³ Pamela Susskind's "Clara Schumann as Pianist and Composer: A Study of Her Life and Works,"⁴ Nancy Reich's *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman*,⁵ and Marian Wilson Kimber's contribution to *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music*.⁶

1. Nancy Reich, *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman*, rev. ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 309.

2. Clara Schumann, *Quatre pièces fugitives*, Op. 15 (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1845).

3. Berthold Litzmann, *Clara Schumann: An Artist's Life, Based on Material Found in Diaries and Letters*, trans. and abr. Grace E. Hadow, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1913; repr., New York: Da Capo, 1979).

4. Pamela Gertrude Susskind, "Clara Schumann as Pianist and Composer: A Study of Her Life and Works" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1977).

5. Reich, *Clara Schumann*.

6. Marian Wilson Kimber, "From the Concert Hall to the Salon: The Piano Music of Clara Wieck Schumann and Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel," in *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music*, ed. R. Larry Todd, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 316–55.



Portrait of Clara Wieck
From an 1839 lithograph



Portrait of Clara Schumann (1857)
By Franz Hanfstaengl

Dedicated to her sister Marie Wieck
4 Pièces fugitives
I

Clara Schumann (1819–1896)
Op. 15

Larghetto

p

cresc.

dim.

mf

5 2 1 2 1 2 5 3 1 2 3 5 4 5 3 1 2 3 5 3 2 1 5 5

17

17

20

20

23

23

26

26

29

29

33

37

40

un poco animato

cresc.

44

p

pp

rit.

(a) Although the composer indicated an open pedal from the beginning of m. 45 to the end of the piece, this edition recommends a half pedal change in m. 46 to accommodate the resonance of the modern instrument.

II

Un poco agitato (♩ = 108)

The musical score is for a piano piece in 9/8 time, marked 'Un poco agitato' with a tempo of 108 beats per minute. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The score consists of five systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. Measure numbers 4, 8, 12, and 16 are indicated at the beginning of their respective systems. The music features a variety of chords, arpeggios, and melodic lines. Dynamics include piano (*p*) and crescendo (*cresc.*). Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5. Articulation includes accents and staccatos. A circled 'a' in measure 10 refers to a footnote.

Ⓐ The composer only notated staccatos in the opening measures, but they are implied in similar passages.

20

p

p

25

a tempo

rit.

mf

cresc.

30

dim.

35

mf

39

cresc.

43

Measures 43-46 of a piano piece. Measure 43 starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The right hand features a melodic line with fingerings 1, 3, 5, 1, 3, 5, 2, 1, 4, 2, 1. The left hand has a bass line with fingerings 1, 5, 3, 5, 2, 5, 3, 1. Measure 44 continues the melodic development. Measure 45 features a forte (*f*) dynamic. Measure 46 concludes the system with a complex chordal texture.

47

Measures 47-50 of a piano piece. Measure 47 begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The right hand has a melodic line with fingerings 5, 2, 4, 2, 3, 2, 3, 2, 1. The left hand has a bass line with fingerings 2, 2, 4, 5, 1, 2, 3, 2, 4, 5, 1, 3, 4, 5. Measure 48 continues the melodic development. Measure 49 features a forte (*f*) dynamic. Measure 50 concludes the system with a complex chordal texture.

51

Measures 51-54 of a piano piece. Measure 51 begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The right hand has a melodic line with fingerings 5, 2, 3, 2, 3, 5, 1, 3, 1, 3. The left hand has a bass line with fingerings 1, 2, 4, 5, 1, 2, 3, 2, 4, 5, 1, 3, 4, 5. Measure 52 continues the melodic development. Measure 53 features a crescendo (*cresc.*) dynamic. Measure 54 concludes the system with a complex chordal texture.

55

Measures 55-58 of a piano piece. Measure 55 begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand has a melodic line with fingerings 3, 5, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 3, 5, 1. The left hand has a bass line with fingerings 2, 1, 4. Measure 56 continues the melodic development. Measure 57 features a diminuendo (*dim.*) dynamic. Measure 58 concludes the system with a complex chordal texture.

59

Measures 59-62 of a piano piece. Measure 59 begins with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic. The right hand has a melodic line with fingerings 1, 3, 5, 1, 3, 5, 2, 1, 4, 2, 1. The left hand has a bass line with fingerings 1, 5, 3, 5, 2, 5, 3, 1. Measure 60 continues the melodic development. Measure 61 features a forte (*f*) dynamic. Measure 62 concludes the system with a complex chordal texture.

63

Musical score for measures 63-67. The system consists of two staves. The right staff (treble clef) contains chords and melodic lines, while the left staff (bass clef) contains a continuous eighth-note accompaniment. Dynamic markings include *cresc.* and *p*.

68

Musical score for measures 68-71. The system consists of two staves. The right staff (treble clef) contains chords and melodic lines, while the left staff (bass clef) contains a continuous eighth-note accompaniment. Dynamic markings include *cresc.* and *p*.

72

Musical score for measures 72-75. The system consists of two staves. The right staff (treble clef) contains chords and melodic lines, while the left staff (bass clef) contains a continuous eighth-note accompaniment. Dynamic markings include *cresc.*

76

Musical score for measures 76-80. The system consists of two staves. The right staff (treble clef) contains chords and melodic lines, while the left staff (bass clef) contains a continuous eighth-note accompaniment. Dynamic markings include *p*. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above and below notes.

81

Musical score for measures 81-85. The system consists of two staves. The right staff (treble clef) contains chords and melodic lines, while the left staff (bass clef) contains a continuous eighth-note accompaniment. Dynamic markings include *dim.* and *pp*. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above and below notes.

III

Andante espressivo (♩ = 50)

5 2 1 4 1 5 3 2 1 4 2

p

5 3 2 1 3 2 1 4 1

cresc.

p

2 1 *dim.*

5 4 1 4 2 1 5 2 3 1 5 3 1 2 1 5 3 4 1

p

3 1 3 5 1 2 4 1 2 5 1 3 1 4 5

17

21

24

27

30

cresc.

mf *dim.*

un poco più animato

(mp)

pp

cresc. poco a poco

Ⓐ The performer may take the lowest note of this figure and similar passages with the left hand, but retaining the larger leap may sound more expressive.

33

Measures 33-35. Treble staff: Measure 33 has a triplet of eighth notes (1, 2, 3) and a quarter note (4). Measure 34 has a quarter note (3) and a half note (4). Measure 35 has a quarter note (3), an eighth note (2), a quarter note (4), and a half note (1). Bass staff: Measure 33 has a half note (5, 2, 1) and a quarter note (2). Measure 34 has a half note (5, 1, 2) and a quarter note (2). Measure 35 has a half note (5, 1, 4, 2, 1) and a quarter note (1). Dynamics: *f* (forte) starting in measure 35.

36

Measures 36-38. Treble staff: Measure 36 has a quarter note (1) and a half note (2). Measure 37 has a quarter note (1) and a half note (2). Measure 38 has a quarter note (1) and a half note (2). Bass staff: Measure 36 has a half note (5, 2, 1, 2, 1) and a quarter note (1). Measure 37 has a half note (5, 2, 1, 2, 1) and a quarter note (1). Measure 38 has a half note (5, 2, 1, 2, 1) and a quarter note (1). Dynamics: *f* (forte) starting in measure 36.

39

Measures 39-41. Treble staff: Measure 39 has a quarter note (3) and a half note (1, 2). Measure 40 has a quarter note (3) and a half note (1, 2). Measure 41 has a quarter note (3) and a half note (1, 2). Bass staff: Measure 39 has a half note (5, 1, 5, 2, 1) and a quarter note (1). Measure 40 has a half note (5, 2, 1, 2, 1) and a quarter note (2). Measure 41 has a half note (5, 1, 5, 2, 1) and a quarter note (2). Dynamics: *p* (piano) starting in measure 39.

42

Measures 42-44. Treble staff: Measure 42 has a quarter note (3) and a half note (2, 1, 3, 2). Measure 43 has a quarter note (3) and a half note (5, 4, 2, 1). Measure 44 has a quarter note (3) and a half note (1, 4, 2, 1). Bass staff: Measure 42 has a half note (5, 1, 5, 3) and a quarter note (1). Measure 43 has a half note (5, 2, 1, 2) and a quarter note (2). Measure 44 has a half note (5, 2, 1, 2) and a quarter note (2). Dynamics: *mf* (mezzo-forte) starting in measure 42, *cresc.* (crescendo) starting in measure 43.

45

Measures 45-47. Treble staff: Measure 45 has a quarter note (3) and a half note (4). Measure 46 has a quarter note (3) and a half note (2, 1, 3, 5, 4, 1). Measure 47 has a quarter note (3) and a half note (1). Bass staff: Measure 45 has a half note (5, 2, 1, 2) and a quarter note (2). Measure 46 has a half note (5, 2, 1, 2) and a quarter note (2). Measure 47 has a half note (5, 2, 1, 2) and a quarter note (2). Dynamics: *rit.* (ritardando) starting in measure 45, *dim.* (diminuendo) starting in measure 46, *p* (piano) starting in measure 47.

48

pp

riten.

51

1

5

3

4

2

3

1

4

3

2

1

1

5

1

2

3

5

1

2

55

Tempo I

p

59

mf

63

p

dim.

67

p

71

75

p *mf*

79

p *poco a poco rit.*

82

poco dim.

IV

Scherzo (♩. = 96)

The musical score is for a Scherzo in 3/4 time, marked with a quarter note equal to 96 beats per minute. It is written for piano in G major. The score is divided into four systems. The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second system concludes with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The third system starts with a repeat sign. The fourth system includes a fingering alternative labeled (a) and a 'Ped.' (pedal) marking. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1 through 5 above or below the notes. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

(a) This fingering offers one solution for redistribution of the inner voices, but performers could also play the left hand as written and adjust the pedal changes according to the resonance of the modern instrument.

25

cresc.

(p)

31

38

1. 2.

Un poco più tranquillo

p

1

45

mf

53

1 3 2 4 3 5 1 2 5 1 3 1 3 2 4 3 5 1 3 2 4 3 5 1 3 2 4 1 2 5 1 2

59

mp

1 3 2 4 3 5 1 3 2 4 2 3 4 2 5 1 3 5

66

cresc. *mf*

1 3 1 5 1 5 1 3 1 5 3 1 3

73

ritenuto

1 5 1 1 1 2 1 2 2 1 3 2 2 5 4 2

79

p

87

Tempo I

p

94

Musical score for measures 94-100. The piece is in G major (one sharp). The right hand features a series of chords and eighth-note patterns, while the left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines. Measure 100 ends with a half note G in the right hand and a whole note G in the left hand.

101

Musical score for measures 101-106. Measures 101-104 show a continuous eighth-note melody in the right hand. Measure 105 features a trill in the right hand. Measure 106 ends with a half note G in the right hand and a whole note G in the left hand. The word "Ped." is written below the left hand staff in measure 106.

107

Musical score for measures 107-112. Measures 107-111 feature a continuous eighth-note melody in the right hand. Measure 112 ends with a half note G in the right hand and a whole note G in the left hand.

113

Musical score for measures 113-119. Measure 113 has a "dim." (diminuendo) marking over the right hand. Measure 114 has a "(p)" (piano) marking over the left hand. Measures 115-119 continue the musical development with various chordal and melodic patterns. Measure 119 ends with a half note G in the right hand and a whole note G in the left hand.

120

Musical score for measures 120-125. Measures 120-124 continue the musical development. Measure 125 ends with a half note G in the right hand and a whole note G in the left hand. A "f" (forte) marking is present in measure 124.



alfred.com