

# Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra

(‘Concertstück’)

Robert Schumann (1810–1856), Op. 129  
 Edited by Josephine Knight

Nicht zu schnell ♩ = 126

Violoncello solo

Tutti

Solo

Piano

*p*

Str.

Ped.

\*

7

11

3

cresc.

*f*

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The musical score is written for a Cello solo in a single system. It begins with a **Tutti 2** marking and a woodwind section consisting of Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, and Bassoon. The Cello part starts with a **Solo** marking and a *p* dynamic. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings like *f*, *sf*, and *cresc.*. Measure numbers 9, 14, 18, 22, 27, 30, and 32 are indicated. A section labeled **A** begins at measure 32, which is marked **Tutti** and *f*. The score concludes with a final measure marked with the number 8.

## Preface

The early history of Schumann's work for cello and orchestra is one of neglect and alteration, the latter largely due to the input of the cellist Robert Emil Bockmühl (1810/11–1881), whose opinions Schumann solicited but, ultimately, seemed unwilling to accept. Schumann had given Bockmühl the manuscript in the hope that he would undertake to perform it but, following various excuses, a performance never materialized. Bockmühl perhaps had good intentions, but his markings on the autograph led to future generations of performers adopting bowings and other significant changes which ultimately diluted Schumann's original conception of the work beyond recognition. The present edition is intended to restore the original composition, to be a true representation of what Schumann envisaged. It is based on the composer's autograph found in Kraków and not on the first printed edition by Breitkopf & Härtel, published four years later in 1854.

The Kraków manuscript was in the Preußische Staatsbibliothek, Berlin until World War II. During the war, part of the collection, including Schumann's Cello Concerto, was moved from Berlin to Lower Silesia. It was first placed in the Princes of Pless castle in Fürstenstein (today known as Książ), and then it was moved to the Benedictine monastery in Grüssau (today known as Krzeszów, near Kamienna Góra). At the end of the war this area became part of Poland. The collection was moved to the Jagiellońska Library in Kraków between 1946 and 1947.

Significantly, Schumann originally called this work a 'Concertstück' ('Concert Piece') and, in a letter to Breitkopf & Härtel, the first publisher, he describes it as 'cheerful'.<sup>1</sup> The Concerto dates from 1850, a fertile period of composition: it was written in just two weeks, four years before an intense occurrence of mental disturbance. His wife Clara relates: 'The doctors put him to bed, and he gave no resistance for a few hours. Then he got up again and started making corrections in the cello concerto, feeling that this might relieve him of the interminable sound of the voices.'<sup>2</sup> The corrections were submitted to Breitkopf on the 21st February – six days before Schumann's attempted suicide. One identified alteration is the deletion of some bars before the recapitulation in the first movement – an alteration that should be considered as an authentic part of the original composition.

### Historical Background

Schumann gave up studying law in 1830 to concentrate on becoming a piano virtuoso. He composed profusely for the piano, but his ambition to be a concert pianist was thwarted by an injury, self-inflicted, when using a device intended to strengthen fingers. He had studied with Friedrich Wieck, a noted piano teacher at the time, but fell in love with Friedrich's daughter, Clara, a relationship to which the father was vehemently and implacably opposed. In spite

<sup>1</sup> Robert Schumann, letter from Düsseldorf to publishers Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig, dated 3rd November 1853: 'Das Violoncellconcert ist vielleicht auch etwas, das, da es an solchen Compositionen sehr mangelt, Manchem erwünscht kommen wird. Auch dieses Concert ist ein durchaus heiteres Stück' ('The cello concerto might also be something that will be welcomed by many, given the serious shortage of such compositions. This concerto, too, is quite a cheerful piece'), quoted in Robert Schumanns Briefe: Neue Folge, ed. Friedrich Gustav Jansen, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1904), p. 485; and Schumann-Briefedition, vol. III.1, ed. Thomas Synofzik (Cologne: Dohr [in preparation]).

<sup>2</sup> Clara Schumann, diary entry dated 17 February 1854: 'Die Ärzte brachten ihn zu Bett, und einige Stunden ließ er es sich auch gefallen, dann stand er aber wieder auf und machte Korrekturen von seinem Violoncellconcert, er meinte dadurch etwas erleichtert zu werden von dem ewigen Klange der Stimmen', Schumanns Briefverzeichnis, Nr. 2443 (Robert-Schumann-Haus Zwickau, shelfmark 4871/VII C,10), accessed online at <https://digital.slub-dresden.de/id1691429864> on 19/08/2020.

of a lawsuit brought by Friedrich, Robert and Clara were married the day before her 21st birthday in 1840. This inspired a period of great fecundity, beginning with songs, two symphonies in 1841 and, in 1842, important chamber music. Clara was a prodigious piano virtuoso and composer and un-doubtedly supported and inspired Robert. They lived together in Leipzig and Dresden, then Düsseldorf, where the cello concerto was composed in 1850.

During the 19th century, the cello was not an established solo concerto instrument, the only examples being works written by pedagogues as vehicles for self-promotion. It is therefore somewhat of a mystery why Schumann composed a cello concerto, especially, as far as is known, he did not have a soloist in mind, nor any cellist requesting it. He did, however, send the work to Robert Emil Bockmühl, a cellist based in Frankfurt, requesting technical editing, bowings and fingerings, for publication, but Schumann found Bockmühl's suggestions 'irritating' – particularly a suggested change of tempo for the first movement.

Breitkopf & Härtel published the concerto in 1854, two years before Schumann's death. The edition included Bockmühl's editorial additions: thus started a process of soloists adding their own interpretative suggestions to the cello part. While this was an established tradition in string concertos written by prominent pedagogic performers in the first half of the 19th century, it can, as we now realize, cause interpretative problems, especially if the composer does not play the instrument for which the concerto has been written. Furthermore, in Schumann's case, his acknowledged mental state seemed to provide an excuse for generations of performers to add unlimited changes.

The first performances of the concerto were given by Ludwig Ebert in 1860 at Oldenburg on 23rd April and Leipzig on 6th September. Alfredo Piatti, one of the most important and influential 19th-century cellists, gave the first London performance in 1866. He owned fragments of sketches of the manuscript, given to him by Clara, but he seemed not to have played it again in London, even though he had taken up residence in the city. It was not until 1880 that it was heard again in London, played by Robert Hausmann at the Crystal Palace on 6th March. In 1892, the Belgian cellist Ernest de Munck performed it at a Philharmonic Society concert on 24th March 1892. This lack of interest in the concerto prevented it from becoming an established work in concert programmes during the 19th century, until Pablo Casals' advocacy of it in the 20th century eventually brought about its now recognized status as the first cello concerto of the Romantic era.

### Metronome markings

As mentioned above, there was discussion between Bockmühl and Schumann regarding the first movement's tempo marking. Schumann wanted a faster tempo, initially requesting  $\text{♩}=144$ , whereas Bockmühl suggested  $\text{♩}=96$ , and no more than 100. The Breitkopf & Härtel first edition has  $\text{♩}=130$ ; however, the autograph has, written in ink,  $\text{♩}=126$  (see the section on pencilled markings, below) and this is therefore included in the present edition. Unfortunately, the tempo markings of the second and third movements are ambiguous; the manuscript contains suggested metronome markings written in pencil. However, given that these are not written in ink and therefore not conclusive, the decision should be at the discretion of the performer as to which tempo to take.

### Clefs, accents and dynamics

In the autograph, only bass and treble clefs are employed for the solo part, there are no instances of the more modern use of the tenor clef. The composer's use of clefs has been retained: the locations of clef changes seem to be not just for convenience. Noting the bass clef