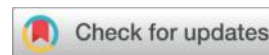




# Emotional Expression in Schumann's Art Songs from a Gender Perspective



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## Abstract

As an important composer of the German Romantic period, Robert Schumann's achievements in art song composition are extraordinary. This paper explores Schumann's life and his composition of art songs in 1840, investigating the characteristics of emotional philosophy in his works. By analyzing the vocal cycles <*Frauenliebe und Leben*, Op. 42 > and <*Dichterliebe*, Op. 48> , this study examines the differences in emotional expression from a gender perspective, delving into how emotional philosophy and aesthetic thoughts are reflected in music. The research provides meaningful insights for music enthusiasts and educators.

**Keywords:** Schumann; Art songs; Gender perspective; Emotional philosophy

# I. Schumann's Art Songs and Emotional Philosophy

## I. I Introduction to the Composer

**Biographical Background:** Robert Schumann (1810–1856) was one of the core composers of German Romantic music, renowned for his works with profound literary depth and delicate emotional expression. As a musical prodigy, Schumann exhibited a strong interest in both music and literature from a young age. Interestingly, Schumann initially aspired to be a professional pianist, but due to a hand injury caused by excessive practice, he had to abandon his career as a pianist. This forced shift allowed him to focus on composition and music criticism, ultimately resulting in a legacy of numerous beautiful art songs.

One of the emotional influences in his music was his love and marriage to pianist Clara Wieck<sup>1</sup>. Schumann's life was marked by numerous compositions, including over 100 art songs, more than 50 piano works, over 10 chamber music pieces, as well as symphonies, concertos, dramatic music, and choral works. Notable compositions from his "Liederjahr" of 1840 include <*Dichterliebe*, Op. 48>, <*Frauenliebe und Leben*, Op. 42>, <*Liederkreis*, Op. 24 & Op. 39>, and his piano works such as <*Papillons*> and <*Carnaval*>, as well as symphonies like <*Symphony No. 1 in B♭ Major*, Op. 38, "Spring Symphony"> and <*Symphony No. 4 in D Minor*, Op. 120>. Despite his exceptional contributions to music, Schumann's life was deeply affected by mental illness. After experiencing hallucinations and emotional disturbances from 1845, he was admitted to a sanitarium and passed

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<sup>1</sup> Clara Wieck (1819–1896) was a highly influential pianist, composer, and piano pedagogue of the German Romantic period. Guided by her father, she began studying piano at an early age and later undertook concert tours across various parts of Europe. She married Robert Schumann in 1840 and, after his death, continued to devote herself to music education. Her representative works include the <*Piano Concerto in A Minor*>, <*Piano Trio*>, and <*Lieder*, Op. 13>. Through her performance, composition, and teaching activities, she exerted a profound and lasting influence on the development of later Romantic music.

away in 1856. His compositions had a profound influence on the development of Romantic music in the 19th century.

**Musical Style:** Schumann's music radiates Romanticism, blending profound literary mastery with rigorous musical structure. His compositions center on portraying inner worlds through lyrical expression and nuanced emotional articulation. The harmonies he crafted intertwine with the poetic depth of his works, featuring rich chromatic variations that transcend the tonal stability of Classical music, embodying Romantic lyricism. His pieces are imbued with poetic imagination, maintaining a unique balance between lyricism and drama, emotional impulse and rational composition. In art song composition, he expanded musical storytelling to vocal artistry. Frequently building vocal suites from poetic collections, he employed multiple songs to convey emotions, achieving a seamless fusion of poetry and music. Here, the piano transcends mere accompaniment, assuming a secondary yet vital role alongside vocal performance. In piano compositions, composers often draw inspiration from literary works, poetry, or emotional imagery, frequently employing techniques like arpeggios or broken chords to enrich the musical harmony<sup>2</sup>. In symphonic works, the progression of movements is propelled by intense emotional contrasts, with a focus on the individualized expression of each instrument's timbre, embodying the Romantic ideal of blending music and literature. Chamber music emphasizes balanced distribution among instrument sections, avoiding dominance by any single instrument while carefully coordinating timbres to achieve a harmonious and unified sound.

**Influence:** Schumann was a musician of profound literary cultivation and rich Romantic sensibility, and he exerted a far-reaching influence on nineteenth-century Romantic music. His most significant contribution lies in the field of art song, where he elevated the German Lied to a new level of poetic

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<sup>2</sup> Harmony refers to the vertical relationship formed when different pitches are sounded simultaneously, as well as the cooperative interaction between the sounds that results. It focuses on the construction, connection, and progression of chords, as well as the emotional color, tension, and sense of musical direction that these harmonic changes bring. Harmony not only determines the color and atmosphere of the music, but also influences the flow of the melody, the organization of the structure, and the emotional expression of the entire work. It is one of the essential elements that supports the musical language in Western music systems.

refinement. Building upon the tradition of Schubert, he strengthened the structural integrity of song cycles and the independence of the piano part, closely interweaving literature, poetry, and music. In doing so, he established a Romantic musical style centered on emotional expression, which provided an important point of reference for later composers such as Brahms and Wolf. His contributions to piano music, symphonic music, and chamber music made him a crucial bridge between Romantic literature and Romantic music, and his impact on German musical culture and the development of European musical thought in the nineteenth century is both unique and enduring.

## **I.II Compositional Characteristics of Schumann's Art Songs**

Schumann's creation of art songs differs in important ways from that of many other composers. Although his overall oeuvre can be divided into early, middle, and late periods, his work in the genre of the Lied is highly concentrated in the year 1840, commonly referred to as his *Liederjahr* ("year of song"). This was also the year in which he formally married the pianist Clara Wieck, and the happiness brought by this love and marriage triggered an outpouring of creative inspiration, resulting in nearly one hundred art songs. According to historical sources, Schumann had already begun experimenting with song composition as early as 1827, but these works were never published. It was not until 1840 that he devoted himself intensively to this genre and brought many of his songs into print. The songs composed during this year not only constitute a numerical peak, but also embody, in terms of musical language and emotional expression, the quintessential features of German Romanticism in his style.

In these works, Schumann achieved a high degree of integration among poetry, vocal melody, and piano. He did not simply set texts by various German Romantic poets to music in a systematic way; he also introduced profound changes into his musical treatment. Abandoning the stability of Classical tonality, he notably elevated the status of the piano part, deepened the fusion of poetry and music, and refined the depiction of emotion. In combining poetry and music, Schumann emphasized the unity of the two, transforming poetic rhythm, imagery, and emotional turns directly into musical language. He believed that music must arise from poetry. Consequently, his choices of poetic texts,

his handling of rhythm, and his imitation of speech inflection are all closely aligned with the inner emotional content of the poems. He had a particular predilection for works by Romantic poets such as Heine, Eichendorff, and Goethe. For instance, in <Dichterliebe, Op. 48>, the tightly interwoven musical language intensifies the irony, disillusionment, and bitter images of love in Heine's poetry, revealing not only the re-presentation of emotion but also a profound literary interpretation. In this way, Schumann attains a perfect synthesis of musical lyricism and literary narrativity.

In his treatment of the piano, Schumann further strengthened the role of the accompaniment in art songs, making it a primary vehicle of emotional expression. The piano is often given independent solo passages in the prelude and postlude, thereby articulating the musical meaning and creating a closer integration between voice and piano. In <Im wunderschönen Monat Mai>, for example, the unstable harmonic progression in the piano part hints at the protagonist's inexpressible emotions; the piano, more than the vocal line, conveys the character's inner anxiety.

With regard to emotional expression, Schumann frequently adopts an introspective, monologic mode that endows the works with a clear psychological narrative. The songs encompass not only the characters' subjective feelings, but also underlying symbolic meanings. Such emotional expression transcends simple joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure, and instead presents a complex, inwardly directed Romantic sensibility that can be regarded as an embodiment of emotional philosophy. In <Widmung>, for instance, the music moves from passionate exuberance to tender calm, portraying a lover's emotion as a process of gradual inner intensification and transformation.

In shaping his Romantic style, Schumann often uses nature imagery with symbolic significance as a vehicle for psychological expression. Forests, night, and moonlight become musical images endowed with specific harmonic and timbral qualities, through which he creates an *Atmosphäre der Poesie*. <Mondnacht> is one of the most representative works in this respect: the piano accompaniment constructs the natural imagery of a moonlit night, and sound itself becomes a symbol of spiritual transcendence.

In the structure of art songs, he further consolidated and developed the paradigm of his vocal suites. Moving beyond the creation of individual art songs, he linked multiple songs into large-scale vocal

suites with internal logic and emotional progression. Representative works like the vocal suite <Frauenliebe und Leben, Op.42> and <Liederkreis, Op.24 & Op.39> exemplify this approach.

### **I.III The Emotional Philosophy in Schumann's Art Songs**

Schumann's art songs transcend mere musical expression, offering multifaceted emotional interpretations that embody the philosophy of emotion. Rooted in Hume's seminal concept of placing emotions at the core of human nature and morality, this philosophy diverges from traditional rationalism by distinguishing between direct and indirect emotions. This emotional emphasis resonates with 19th-century Romanticism's focus on subjective experience, creating conceptual parallels in their emphasis on personal perception, emotional manifestation, and the cognitive dominance of emotion. Through his 1840 art songs, Schumann reinforced this core emotional dimension via musical structure, harmonic language, and poetic expression—a trend that epitomized 19th-century emotional aesthetics. In 1840, after enduring numerous hardships, Schumann and Clara Wieck were finally able to marry. At this time, Schumann's inner world was filled with overwhelming passion; he was immersed in the happiness of fulfilled love, torn between inner conflict and ecstatic joy. He poured all of this—his realization of love, his struggles, and his rapture—into musical creation. From the perspective of emotional philosophy, the art songs composed in 1840 constitute an exemplary realization and shaping of inner emotional life, forming a musical aesthetics centered on the expression of interiority. This may be analyzed in roughly five aspects.

First, emotion is treated as the sole driving force and highest aim of creation. In this conception, reason is subordinate to emotion, while emotion is the ultimate manifestation of human will and action. In Schumann's art songs, his love for his wife is transformed into the impetus for composition, and his emotional needs are directly converted into creative activity, so that rational construction is wholly placed in the service of profound emotional expression. He virtually sets to music the ecstasy, anxiety, dream-like fantasy, and melancholy of love. The vocal cycle <Dichterliebe, Op. 48> may be read as an epic of emotional flux, portraying the protagonist's

journey from encounter in love, to its beginning, intensification, breakdown, despair, and finally a kind of calm acceptance. From the first song, <Im wunderschönen Monat Mai>, with its tremulous awakening of feeling, to the deep sorrow of <Und wüßten's die Blumen, die kleinen> in the middle of the cycle, and finally to the transcendence and release of the closing song Die alten, bösen Lieder, the emotional progression constitutes the narrative logic and structural force of the work. The musical expression of emotion follows the rise and fall of Heine's poetic sentiments, and this cycle will be analyzed in greater detail below.

Second, there is an absolute and highly subjective quality to inner expression. Schumann's art songs display an extreme inwardness of feeling. In his music, the voice is not the only carrier of emotion; the piano part is equally crucial. It does not function as a mere accompaniment, but participates in the delineation of the inner world, in the suggestion of the subconscious, and in the evocation of atmosphere. Voice and piano are thus placed on an almost equal footing. The poetic images are internalized into pure emotional experience. In <Widmung>, for instance, the richly varied piano arpeggios<sup>3</sup> render the expression of love more vivid: the sound itself becomes a concrete embodiment of emotion. Yet the song does not offer an objective description of the beloved; it presents instead an inner state suffused with love.

Third, the fluidity and multiplicity of self-consciousness. Within a single cycle, or even between adjacent songs, Schumann's art songs can switch between sharply contrasting emotional personae, revealing internal dialogue and conflict within the self. <Wenn ich in deine Augen seh> and <Ich will meine Seele tauchen>, the fourth and fifth songs of Dichterliebe, form just such a striking contrast. The former presents a tender, quiet expression of love, with music that is calm and profound; the latter erupts suddenly into an ardent and passionate declaration, with lively rhythm and leaping melody. This contrast lays bare the fluid and multiple nature of personal emotion.

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<sup>3</sup> Arpeggio is a playing technique where the notes of a chord are played sequentially, one after another, rather than simultaneously. This technique imparts a light or undulating texture to the music and is often used to create lyrical, dreamy, or propulsive sound effects. It is one of the most expressive playing methods in Western music.

Fourth, the empathic adoption of another's emotional standpoint. Sympathy here refers to a psychological state in which one transforms the emotions of another into one's own felt experience through the imagination. Schumann's careful selection of poems by Heine and Eichendorff is not only a matter of aesthetic appreciation, but also an expression of sympathetic affinity with these poetic geniuses. Through music he magnifies and deepens their emotions, and at times even endows the original poems with implications that go beyond the text. In <Frauenliebe und Leben, Op. 42>, for example, Schumann, as a male composer, uses sympathetic imagination to portray in full the emotional and existential journey of a woman—from first acquaintance, falling in love, and marriage to motherhood and widowhood. The piano part meticulously captures the psychological states at each stage, enabling the listener to enter deeply into the woman's entire inner world.

Fifth, as the foundation of morality and existence, love is defined in emotional philosophy as a core social emotion stemming from feelings that bring joy or pain to others. In art songs, love is portrayed as a positive and uplifting image. It transcends personal emotion to embody an ethical state, echoing Hume's philosophical view that social emotions form the moral bedrock. For instance, in the piece <Du bist wie eine Blume>, love is imbued with a near-sacred purity, where the act of singing itself becomes an expression of love.

From the above analysis, it becomes clear that Schumann's art songs are imbued with a distinct emotional-philosophical orientation. When we speak of emotion, we inevitably think first of human feeling, and in Schumann's songs, viewed from a gender perspective, we see a profound Romantic concern with subjectivity, sensibility, and inner life. Through music, he reveals the delicate experiential nuances and psychological strata of emotion from a female perspective, and at the same time, from a male standpoint, he presents the loneliness, longing, and hesitation of the lyrical protagonist, exposing the vulnerability and sensitivity of the Romantic male subject. With his refined, beautiful musical lines and highly literary texts, Schumann renders the psychological states of both men and women musical and structurally articulated. These songs are thus not only expressions of emotion, but also concrete modes of existence embedded in particular social roles, gender identities, and inner experiences. The following sections will analyze Schumann's art songs and their emotional expression specifically from the perspective of gender.



## **II. Emotional Expression from the Female Perspective**

### **II.I Characteristics of Emotional Expression from the Female Perspective**

In art songs, emotional expression from the female perspective often portrays delicate and frequent inner emotional activities, along with a progression of emotions. Most of the famous composers, despite writing from a male perspective, have portrayed female perspectives very successfully. Through their works, we understand that art songs from the female perspective are typically created in a lyrical style, using associations, symbolism, and imagery to depict emotions such as heart fluttering, anticipation, passionate love, and sorrow, creating a continuous emotional development. In musical composition, composers often use gentle melodies, pleasing rhythms, and ever-changing harmonic colors to reflect the sensitivity and emotional changes of the female psyche. Therefore, emotional expression from the female perspective in art songs is a complex and rich field, which not only reflects the social presentation of women in the era but also illustrates the emergence of female subjectivity and the experience of love.

The following characteristics are often found in emotional expression from the female perspective in art songs:

First: Inner emotional expression and the exhibition of personal space. This emotional expression often appears in the female perspective's emotional portrayal of personal scenes. For example, the female protagonist may deliver monologues, keep a diary, or express herself about natural surroundings while alone in her room, by the window, or beside the hearth. This is an introspective emotional expression that reflects the social reality of how female emotions are often confined to the private sphere. From an emotional philosophy perspective, it becomes an inner language, an intense expression of self-consciousness within a limited space, where female emotions oscillate between memory, present perception, and future expectations. In Schumann's <Ich kann's nicht fassen, nicht glauben> and Wolf's <Das verlassene Mägdlein>, both works depict women speaking

alone in solitude, where memories and loss intertwine, and the music reflects the ebb and flow of thoughts.

Second: The tragic perspective of self-sacrifice. This type of emotional expression is often associated with sacrifice, separation, and death. It portrays how happy moments are fleeting, while sadness and loss are seen as the inevitable fate of emotion. This also reflects how, during the Romantic period, women's emotions were often bound to men (such as fathers, lovers, or sons). From an emotional philosophical standpoint, it shows the tragic side of women's emotional destiny, as if their emotional fate is already predetermined. This intense emotional expression highlights the immense pain of the female character. For example, in Schubert's <Gretchen am Spinnrade, D. 118>, the female character's emotions shift between longing and despair as she recalls her lover while working at the spinning wheel, ultimately expressing her sorrow in dissonant music when she realizes she cannot be with her lover.

Third: The naturalization and suggestion of emotion. This kind of emotional description often links female feelings to fragile and transient natural imagery, such as wilting flowers, flowing water, or solitary nightingales. These natural images, however, not only reflect a male perspective but also suggest a broader fate. For example, in Strauss's <Allerseelen, Op. 10 No. 8>, the female character mourns a lost loved one in a cemetery, blending her emotions with the autumnal natural scenery, thus creating a mournful atmosphere.

## **II.II Emotional Expression in <Frauenliebe und Leben, Op. 42>**

Schumann's <Frauenliebe und Leben, Op. 42> is a milestone work in his 1840 song cycle creations. It is based on the poetry of Adelbert von Chamisso and consists of eight songs that depict the emotional journey of a woman. This work is not only a pinnacle of Romantic art song but also a profound emotional philosophical text. It is presented from the first-person perspective of the female protagonist, showcasing the emotional process of a woman from love, marriage, pregnancy, and the death of her husband. The work reflects the internal nature of emotional expression and philosophy,

portraying a woman's vivid emotional experience centered on male love, and exemplifying female emotional expression within personal space and intense emotional experience. The songs often depict emotions with great subtlety and sincerity, such as the longing for a lover, shy happiness, the solemnity of a wedding, maternal tenderness, and, ultimately, deep mourning. In terms of musical structure, Schumann uses warm melodies, gentle rhythms, and nuanced harmonic changes to express the sensitivity and purity of female emotions, shaping the overall emotional narrative of the cycle and fully expressing the intimacy, emotional progression, and complete inner world of the female protagonist.

Through this work, we can understand several aspects of emotional shaping:

First: Emotional attachment and adoration. Female emotions begin by entirely attaching to and idealizing a male other. A woman's emotional value is established through her worship and beautification of the male figure. In terms of musical expression, this is often conveyed through solemn, hymn-like creation. This type of expression in emotional philosophy reflects how the female subject gains her sense of value through the absolute recognition of the male's dominant subjectivity. Her emotional expression thus becomes a validation of her self-worth. For example, in the song <Er, der Herrlichste von allen>, the melody is infused with a sacred rhythm, and the piano accompaniment uses block harmony to express the solemn admiration. The music emphasizes the female character's devotion and reverence, idealizing her lover as "the sun" and "life."

Second: Emotional personal space. The strongest emotional outbursts in the female perspective are often depicted within personal spaces, not in public. These emotional expressions are often monologues or dialogues with nature, and they must undergo a process of internal emotional digestion before they can be confirmed. This reveals the tension between the female emotional world and external societal constraints. In <Ich kann's nicht fassen, nicht glauben>, the piano's arpeggios and unstable harmonies mirror the female character's heartbeat, while the vocal part primarily uses lower registers to express the protagonist's hurried breathing. The emotions expressed in this song are deeply personal.

Third: Emotional ritualization and role identification. These emotional expressions are closely synchronized with the transitions in a woman's roles, such as from lover to wife to mother. Emotions are expressed through ritual, and fulfillment of these roles leads to emotional satisfaction. This type of emotional philosophy is defined by societal structures. Women's joy and fulfillment are tied to the realization of their roles as wives and mothers. In <Helft mir, ihr Schwestern>, the music uses a light, lively rhythm to transform the individual joy of the woman into a collective, ritualistic experience. Here, the woman's emotional expression is outward, shared, and marks a transition in her social identity.

Finally: The expression of sorrow. The emotion expressed in this part reflects the loss of a lover or family member, leading to not just sadness but a complete collapse of will. The departure of a loved one means the woman loses hope in life, highlighting the fragility of selfhood and emotions. In *Nun hast du mir den ersten Schmerz getan*, the death of the lover leaves the woman feeling utterly devastated. In the vocal section, the wide melodic range portrays the woman's crying and lamentation. At the end, the piano accompaniment quietly recalls the theme of the first song, <Seit ich ihn gesehen>, symbolizing the protagonist's despair and helplessness after the loss of her lover.

### **III. Emotional Expression from the Male Perspective**

#### **III.I Characteristics of Emotional Expression from the Male Perspective**

In art songs, emotional expression from the male perspective often shows a strong subjectivity and outward emotional tension, while also emphasizing the portrayal of personal inner life, such as passion, desire, loneliness, and confusion. In these works, male emotional expression is depicted through lyrical protagonists, direct statements, exaggerated tones, and symbolic natural imagery, making the emotional presentation more urgent and often imbued with Romantic color. Musically, composers tend to use more distinct rhythmic contrasts, melodies with wide fluctuations, and complex harmonic changes to reflect the male subject's contradictions and strength, while also illustrating the emotional vulnerability, such as disillusionment, despair, or psychological

breakdown. This musical expression reveals the complexity of male emotion in the Romantic musical style and presents the specific emotional structures and philosophical tendencies of the male subject.

The following characteristics of emotional expression are often found in art songs from the male perspective:

First: External expression of emotion and determination. This emotional expression often reflects a male character's active expectations and pursuit. The emotional outpouring is not limited to the lover but also extends to family members. The music, therefore, exudes determination and a clear rhythm. This approach suggests that emotion is an extension of will. For example, in Schubert's <Erlkönig, D. 328>, the father, son, and Erlking (the supernatural figure) are all portrayed by male voices. The music shifts between the protector's anxiety, the child's fear, and the Erlking's seduction, fully demonstrating the male character's attempt to control and confront the crisis with resolve.

Second: Fusion with nature. This emotional expression blends the male perspective with nature, but nature is not just a vehicle for emotional expression; it also symbolizes the protagonist's spiritual contemplation and self-reflection. In emotional expression, interactions with natural imagery—such as wilderness, storms, and the night—often lead to bursts of emotion, often with a sense of the sublime. From an emotional philosophy perspective, it represents the male subject experiencing transcendent emotion through the confrontation and integration with nature, demonstrating the spiritual strength of the male self. For example, in Schumann's <Frühlingsnacht, Op. 39 No. 12>, the depiction of the spring breeze and nightingale expresses the male protagonist's excitement, marking a key moment of emotional release.

Third: Self-reflection and melancholy. This type of male emotional expression moves inward, reflecting deep introspection and melancholic loneliness. The emotion does not rely on a specific object, but stems from contemplation on life, time, and meaning. Therefore, this emotional expression reflects the male character's inner world. In Schubert's <Der Lindenbaum>, the male

character recalls the linden tree, contrasting this memory with his present wandering existence. The emotional expression contrasts the warmth of memory with the harshness of current reality.

Fourth: Spiritual pursuit of emotion. This emotional expression abstractly defines love or pursuit as a spiritual goal, portraying the emotional journey in great detail. This type of emotional expression often appears in song cycles and represents an aspect of emotional philosophy, emphasizing personal growth and transformation through emotional experiences. For example, Schumann's <Dichterliebe, Op. 48> describes the male protagonist's emotional journey from the initial meeting of love, joy, jealousy, heartbreak, to final emotional acceptance, completing a full emotional progression.

Compared to the female perspective, the male perspective often features an outward emotional expression, but also contains elements of loneliness, self-doubt, and dissatisfaction with the present. This perspective deeply shapes the color of the Romantic style.

### **III.II Emotional Expression in <Dichterliebe, Op. 48>**

Schumann's <Dichterliebe, Op. 48> is considered a pinnacle of Romantic art songs. It is based on the poetry of Heine and consists of 16 songs that present a complete emotional journey. The work portrays the emotional expression of the male perspective—from passionate love, fantasy, and injury to eventual emotional acceptance—demonstrating a strong sense of subjectivity and an intimate depiction of male inner feelings. In the work, Schumann uses exaggerated, symbolic, and even dramatic language to express the male protagonist's emotional changes, including the fervor of love, the pain of jealousy, and the despair following rejection. Musically, there is extensive use of unstable harmony, agitated melodies, and rich piano textures, which profoundly reflect the male protagonist's emotional turmoil and the complexity of his psychological state. The core characteristic of emotional expression in this cycle is that the emotions no longer simply point outward to the lover but are transformed into self-analysis and reflection.

The emotional expression in the work reveals the following emotional shaping:

First: Hopeful emotions. This expression begins with the portrayal of an unrealized or idealized object of love, filled with yearning for possibility. The music creates an uplifting emotional atmosphere, embodying the core Romantic concept of “Sehnsucht” (infinite longing). The emotion itself exists as a force prior to the object of desire, pursuing an idealized concept of love. For instance, in <Im wunderschönen Monat Mai>, the first song of the cycle, the music is beautiful and delicate, reflecting the male protagonist’s budding affection and hope for love.

Second: Self-centered fantasy. This emotional expression is reflected in the extreme idealization of the lover, becoming a projection of the protagonist’s own feelings. The expression is filled with exaggerated metaphors and vivid imagination. By reflecting the protagonist’s inner emotional activity, the lover is portrayed as an object that aligns with the protagonist’s ideal, amplifying self-awareness. In <Ich will meine Seele tauchen>, the male protagonist desires to pour all his love into his lover and hopes for the most beautiful outcome. The music here is fiery and passionate.

Third: Emotional self-protection. This expression depicts the male protagonist’s emotional reaction to betrayal, where the sadness is not directly expressed but is transformed into irony or self-mockery. This represents a psychological defense mechanism for emotional self-preservation. In emotional philosophy, irony is a defensive strategy employed by the subject to maintain integrity when faced with a significant gap between ideal and reality. <Ich grolle nicht> is a prime example of irony; although the poem repeats “I do not resent,” the music is filled with the protagonist’s unspoken grief and heartbreak. Similarly, <Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen> presents the protagonist narrating a story of unfaithfulness from a third-person perspective, where the seemingly simple melody intentionally expresses the protagonist’s pain in an ironic, understated manner.

Finally: Spiritual transcendence of emotion. This emotional expression portrays the resolution at the end of an emotional journey, where even the most intense pain is no longer expressed as catharsis but is ritualized and ultimately sublimated. This also demonstrates the Romantic belief that art is the ultimate redemption and home for emotion. In emotional philosophy, it reflects the transition from “sufferer” to “acceptor.” The emotional expression shifts from an internal reflection to external release. In <Die alten, bösen Lieder>, the final song of the cycle, the male protagonist expresses his despair over love, hoping to bury all his pain and move on. In the piano section, the music transitions

from tension to calm, symbolizing the completion of emotional release and the final ritual of letting go.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

This paper analyzes Robert Schumann's art songs and song cycles from 1840, aiming to further explore the characteristics of emotional expression from a gender perspective in art song. By analyzing the differences between male and female perspectives in these works, it has sought to deepen our understanding of the aesthetic ideas embodied in German art song. It is hoped that the present study will provide an academic point of reference for research on Schumann's art songs and emotional philosophy, and will also offer music lovers and educators practically meaningful insights and assistance in the study of German Romantic art song.

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