

## MUSICAL TEXT AS ARTISTIC EXPRESSION: THE AESTHETICS OF ROBERT SCHUMANN'S TITLE MUSIC

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The aesthetics of Romanticism, which became the dominant trend in European art of the 19th century, radically transformed the understanding of musical creativity. Central to this transformation were emotional expressiveness, individualized imagination, the cult of nature, and the pursuit of sensory experience. Within the framework of German Romanticism, music ceased to be perceived as a rigid structure and began to be understood as a direct carrier of emotions, ideas, and subjective experiences, opening broad possibilities for synthesis with literature and philosophy [1].

The work of Robert Schumann vividly illustrates this shift. His musical language is shaped by the Romantic concept of "inner narration", where the piano becomes a vehicle for emotional dramaturgy analogous to literary storytelling. The aim of this article is to explore the essence of Schumann's title music aesthetics through the analysis of his musical compositions.

**Material and Methods.** This study is based on an analysis of Schumann's piano works ("Butterfly" (Op. 2), "Carnival" (Op. 9), and "Colorful Leaves") which are examined as representative examples of artistic synthesis between music and literature. The research methodology includes scholarly literature review and musicological analysis.

**Results and their discussion.** Within the framework of the Romantic literary and artistic paradigm, interdisciplinary interaction between music and literature emerges as a defining feature of the era's aesthetic thought. Possessing profound literary erudition, Robert Schumann seamlessly integrates narrative elements, emotional structures, and archetypal imagery into the architecture of his piano compositions, shaping a distinctive concept of "title music" – a genre in which the musical text acquires literary orientation and symbolic depth.

Following the logic of literary narration, Schumann's musical development is built upon the conjunction and internal coherence of autonomous episodes. This structure allows the musical form to be perceived as narrative, with each section functioning as an independent semantic fragment, unified by an overarching emotional trajectory.

The transformation of imagery is achieved through the translation of literary archetypes – such as the metaphor of Eden or the theme of redemption, as exemplified in the piece Storm – into musical symbols. The composer employs tonal contrasts and motivic development to construct a symbolic conflict that reflects inner struggle and the pursuit of spiritual purification.

Sonic synergy is manifested in the dissolution of the piano accompaniment's traditional role as mere background support. Instead, it becomes an active participant in the narrative, reproducing literary scenes through complex textures and tonal layers. In the cycle "Dichterliebe" ("The Poet's Love"), the piano part embodies poetic imagery, transforming into a voice that engages in dialogue with the vocal line.

Schumann deliberately guides the listener's perception through the use of titles and programmatic cues, turning music into a medium for concretizing emotional and philosophical content. His compositions transcend purely musical form, becoming a kind of "audible literature" that conveys a humanistic message and aesthetic reflection.

This model of artistic synthesis radically expanded the expressive potential of 19th-century piano music and laid the foundation for interdisciplinary interaction in Romantic art, where music, literature, and philosophy merge into a unified aesthetic system. In the cycle "Bunte Blätter" ("Colorful Leaves"), musical fragments emulate the structure of literary chapters, creating an effect of emotional journey akin to the form of a novel [2].

The Romantic pursuit of "immanence" – the revelation of the depths of the human soul through art – compels Schumann to transform music into a kind of "auditory diary".

In "Carnaval", he employs piano textures as a means of expressing the dialectical tension between imagination and reality, imbuing each musical phrase with symbolic meaning tied to inner conflict and psychological reflection [3].

A pivotal concept in the development of Romantic aesthetics is that of the "total work of art" (Gesamtkunstwerk), which, although systematized in the writings of Richard Wagner, finds its early manifestations in the work of Robert Schumann. His compositions reveal an organic fusion of music and poetry, where artistic elements from different media interact on a profound level. In the vocal cycle "Dichterliebe" ("The Poet's Love"), Schumann seeks to musically embody Heinrich Heine's poetic world, using melodic lines to transcend linguistic boundaries and generate a cross-media flow of emotion.

This synthesis is not a mechanical transposition of literary imagery into musical form, but rather stems from a Romantic inclination toward ambiguity and interpretive openness. Schumann deliberately employs dissonant intervals, fragmented structures, and motivic repetition – as in the piece *Butterfly* – to convey tension, metaphorical depth, and to stimulate the listener's associative engagement.

From a critical perspective, Schumann's contribution lies in his ability to concretize the abstract principles of Romantic aesthetics. He embodies the concept of "romantic irony", as formulated by Friedrich Schlegel, through his piano music, transforming it into a space of emotional transformation. In the "Fantasia", Op. 88, as well as in works with titular designations such as "Humoreske", he employs genre and lexical markers to create unity within emotional opposition, emphasizing the dialectical nature of Romantic thought.

The dual creative identity of Robert Schumann – as both composer and music critic – forms the core of his artistic synthesis, uniting musical and literary modes of thinking. In his critical writings, particularly within the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, he championed the idea of "poetic music", asserting that a musical work should be as rich in meaning and imagery as a literary text. This concept was not merely theoretical but found direct realization in his compositional practice [4].

For instance, in the piece *Butterfly* from the "Carnaval" cycle, Schumann interprets the relationships between characters from Jean Paul's novel "Flegeljahre" ("The Awkward Age") through musical analysis, transforming literary archetypes into sonic symbols. These piano miniatures function as a kind of "silent literary criticism", where musical gestures take the place of verbal commentary [5].

Schumann's literary education was shaped from an early age: his father's profession as a bookseller gave him access to the works of Goethe, Schiller, and E.T.A. Hoffmann. This influence is reflected in the cycle "Bunte Blätter" ("Colorful Leaves"), where the musical structure imitates the genre characteristics of Romantic prose and legend, creating the effect of literary composition through musical language.

Robert Schumann's role as a music critic had a significant impact on the evolution of his compositional style. He formulated the idea of the "League of David" – a fictional artistic society aimed at opposing aesthetic vulgarity – which he satirically portrayed in the Carnaval cycle through the characters of Eusebius and Florestan, representing the duality of his inner world. This concept of dual identity became the foundation for the intertextual approach in his creative work.

In the genre of art song, Schumann assigns the piano accompaniment not merely a supportive role, but a critically descriptive function. In the cycle "Dichterliebe" ("The Poet's Love"), the piano part becomes an independent vehicle for conveying the emotional subtext of the poetry, using textural techniques – such as dense chords that imitate a heartbeat – to express hidden feelings.

**Conclusion.** Comparative analysis reveals that Schumann's distinguishing feature among Romantic composers is his commitment to the systematic integration of literary and musical elements. He consistently implements the concept of "musical poetry", as outlined in his critical essay on the *Fantasia*, Op. 88, and constructs a complex "literary dialogue" through instrumental interplay, weaving together the voices of violin, cello, and piano into a unified artistic statement.

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## REGIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HUNAN FLOWER DRUM OPERA

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**Ключевые слова.** Хунаньская опера барабана и цветов, региональные особенности, культура Хусян, нематериальное культурное наследие, исполнительское искусство.

Hunan Flower Drum Opera is a general term for various local folk operas in Hunan Province. Its melodies and singing styles are closely related to local folk songs and ditties, and its lyrics and dialogues are performed in local dialects, making it a beloved folk art form among the local people. The opera is characterized by its strong local color and vibrant essence of life, enjoying a deep foundation among the masses. Due to its beautiful melodies, lively forms, accessible language, simple and vibrant performance art, and its ability to reflect real life effectively, it is deeply embedded in the cultural life of the people of Hunan. The aim of the study is to analyze the regional features of Hunan flower drum opera from different perspectives, including its historical evolution, regional genres, traditional themes, and stage performance.

**Material and methods.** The source materials for this article include studies that examine the performance culture of Sichuan opera and provide a characterization of the distinctive features of Hunan Flower Drum Opera. The research employed general scientific methods, as well as historical-cultural and comparative approaches.

**Results and their discussion.** The historical origins of Hunan Flower Drum Opera can be traced back to the mid-Qing Dynasty or even earlier folk song and dance forms. It originated from folk songs and gradually developed into the primary form of Flower Drum Opera performed by a "dan" (female role) and a "chou" (clown role). The "Liuyang County Annals," published in 1818 (the 23rd year of the Jiaqing reign), describes the Lantern Festival activities: "Children dressed as "chou" and "dan" perform operas, with drums and gongs creating a lively atmosphere, lasting from the beginning of the month until the night of the festival." This indicates that the earliest form of Flower Drum Opera, known as "Ground Flower Drum" performed by a "dan" and a "chou", had already taken shape by the Jiaqing period at the latest.

The development of Flower Drum Opera underwent three main stages. Its primary stage manifested as "Ground Flower Drum" and "Duet Flower Drum" forms, a period that lasted for a considerable time, maturing gradually from the early Qing Dynasty until the Jiaqing period. During this time, performances were mainly semi-professional, seasonal grass-roots troupes, with role types limited to "chou" and "dan", and repertoires primarily depicting the lives of working people. In its development stage, the "Three Small Roles Opera" form emerged. This was the most characteristic phase in the development of Flower Drum Opera, where the expansion of roles and the establishment of vocal styles led the genre to maturity. After the Tongzhi reign, the emergence of professional troupes and the synthesis of various vocal styles marked the maturation of Flower Drum Opera. The vocal style evolved from early performances using folk ditties and labeled tunes for simple, song-and-dance life skits to incorporating "Gong and Drum Tunes" and "Sichuan Tunes," enabling the performance of folktale-based plays with stronger narratives [1].