

# THE SICILIA

GYORGY SANDOR, PETER SCHICKELE, DICK HYMAN,  
SEYMOUR BERNSTEIN AND MAURICE HINSON  
ALL SCRAMBLED FOR AN ANSWER.

BY JOSEPH SMITH

Sometimes, a simple discrepancy in a piece of music can embody an astonishing range of issues, generating a never-ending series of questions and interpretive possibilities. Recently, I became obsessed with one such situation in a piece from Schumann's *Album for the Young*. The more I considered it, the less it seemed to have a sure solution. To help me with my problem, in true nineties fashion, I founded a support group: I decided to solicit opinions from interesting thinkers from a wide diversity of musical fields. Their answers were fascinating and provocative.

Here is the dilemma: In the *Sizilianisch*, number eleven, there is a controversy over where the piece actually ends; that is, where did the composer want to place the *Schluss* (*fine*)? Schumann's manuscript has it between the 6/8 and the 2/4, but both the first and second editions place it on the fermata (second ending). (The complete music is on page 28.)

It is important to note that the printed edition incorporates changes which Schumann presumably added to a proof—the autograph, therefore, is not necessarily the

last word. Even if we could ascertain that the first edition reading resulted from an engraver's error, though, we could not necessarily rule it out—it might have been an error the composer liked and decided to retain. (For instance, Griffes, hearing a pianist misread the end of his "The Lake at Evening," decided to adopt the "incorrect" version, and in fact the resulting unresolved sixth with which the piece now ends is a particularly poetic detail.)

How did my consultants resolve the discrepancy? In a variety of ways. Maurice Hinson (author of such invaluable books as *Guide To The Pianist's Repertoire*), composer and conductor Gunther Schuller, Rufus Hallmark (editor of *German Lieder in the Nineteenth Century*), and harpsichordist Igor Kipnis and his duo-partner Karen Kushner each gave "form" as the prime criterion for choosing the manuscript ending. Concurring, William Holab, Director of Publications for G. Schirmer, writes:

"In a relatively simple formal



Gyorgy Sandor

(according to first edition)

(according to manuscript)

# n DILEMMA

composition like this, the logical place for the ending would be at the end of an A phrase, taking the first four measures as A. If one looks at the larger form of the piece as A (6/8) B (2/4) A (without repeats), then the ending must surely be at the end of A—the manuscript ending.”

It is those who do not regard the “form” issue as conclusive who are faced with some curious decisions. The 6/8 portion is notated with the key signature of A minor, the key with which the piece seems to begin. If one chooses the manuscript ending, though, the piece ends in E minor. This means either that it ends in its own dominant key, or that it is *in* E minor, in which case its recurring initial phrase is misleading and the 6/8 portion is notated with the wrong key signature. Supporting this E minor hypothesis are the excursion to G major, and the absence of a single F natural throughout the 6/8.

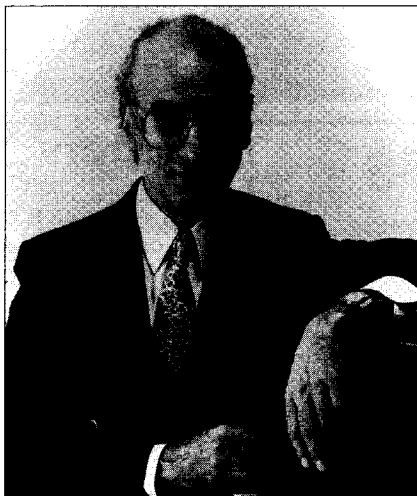
My acquaintance with pianist Gyorgy Sandor made me confident that his argument would be based on tonality, and that he would not be afflicted with Hamlet-like indecision: “The *Sizilianisch* is in E minor,” he states, “although it seems to begin in A minor. Since the tonality might seem ambiguous, it is a better idea to respect the manuscript, in which the real ending is indicated where the piece ends in E minor.”

With characteristic self-deprecation, composer and humorist Peter Schickele

enigma because, well, because you asked me. Taking the piece by itself . . . discounting the possibility that Schumann intended the following piece, ‘Knight Rupert,’ to be played without break—*attacca* . . . I definitely vote for the manuscript ending. I feel this not only because it is more



Seymour Bernstein



Dick Hyman

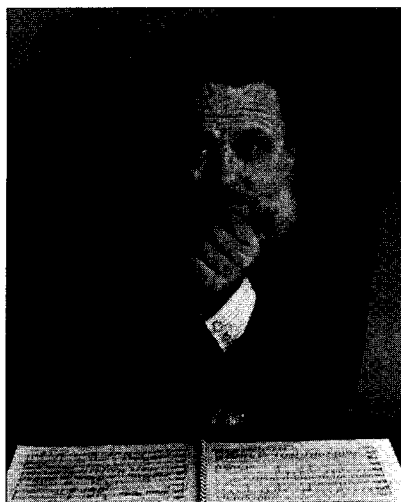
final in terms of tonality (in spite of the fact that it ends in E minor), but also because of the unusual rhythmic dislocation in the first edition ending, which leaves you up in the air both tonally and rhythmically.”

Several correspondents felt that they could accept the first edition ending *if* “Knight Rupert” were to follow *attacca*. However, there was little agreement as to the degree to which the pieces are interrelated. John Daverio, author of the recent *Robert Schumann—Herald of a “New Poetic Age,”* offers a strong assertion of the interconnectedness of the *Album* pieces.

Rufus Hallmark argues against the first edition ending on the basis that “every other piece in the album closes with a straightforward authentic cadence in the home key. This makes the manuscript ending at the meter change more logical.” Once stated, Hallmark’s comparison with the other *Album* pieces may seem obvious, but I confess frankly that I, for one, failed to consider it, nor did any other correspondent explicitly state it. After all, at stake is not simply “what is characteristic of Schumann?” nor even “what is characteristic of Schumann at this point in his life,” but also “what is the style of this individual work?”

On receiving Dr. John Daverio’s contribution, I was overcome with relief. All the entries I had received previous to his preferred the manuscript ending. Immediate unanimity may be a happy outcome for a sequestered jury, but not for a symposium!

*continued on page 52*



Peter Schickele

offers his own spin: “I am not a scholar, and I am certainly not a Schumann scholar: not only that, but I’m not even a pianist, in the concert sense (I play only my own music in public, and you won’t notice any fast runs in the left hand in the pieces I play).

“But I will give you my quick and gut reaction on the Schumann editing

## Sicilian Dilemma *continued*

Daverio begins by explaining that none of the sources he has yet been able to examine provides an unarguable answer, but on the basis of deduction and intuition . . . "My guess is that the reading in the first edition is probably the correct one. If the placement in the first edition was an error—it was a glaring one, resulting in an eight-bar discrepancy between manuscript and edition. In other words, it seems more likely that the placement in the first edition was intentional, and *were* it an error, I think that Schumann would have caught it."

Can we assume that Schumann would have caught such an error? Hallmark thinks not. As one example of the composer's imperfect proofing, he cited the third song of the *Frauenliebe und Leben* cycle: the light double-bar is a mistake—it belonged to an indication to the engraver that this section be repeated later, and was not intended to suggest a break in musical continuity. M'lou Dietzer, author of *First Impressions Intermediate Piano Method*, likewise prefers the first edition ending, finding it easier to believe that Schumann could end a minor-key piece with a dominant chord ("a modal gesture") than that he could have ended in a tonality other than that of his stated key signature.

Two of the correspondents chose a category I had not proposed—"none of the above"—but to diametrically opposite ends. Seymour Bernstein, pianist, composer, and author of the classic *With Your Own Two Hands*, wrote:

"Frankly speaking, I am not happy with either placement. Indulging in wishful thinking, I would prefer

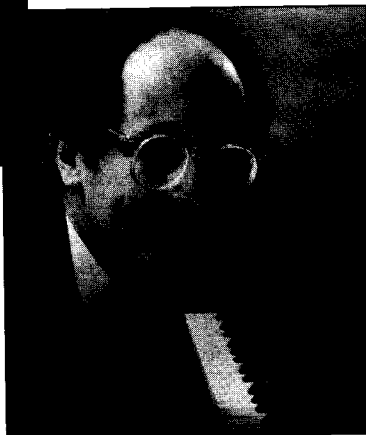
larity" of the piece evoked an echo. In conversation, Dr. Carl Schachter, a preeminent expert on Schenker analysis, observed that the *Sizilianisch's* refusal to commit to an unequivocal tonality reminded him of Chopin's Mazurka, Op. 7, no. 5. This mazurka ends with the bizarre marking, "dal segno senza fine," and therefore moves from the tonic key of C to its dominant G (or from tonic G to subdominant C) for eternity (and is one piece unlikely to be performed in its entirety).

Perhaps it is time to acknowledge my own initial reaction. While I could not say that the manuscript ending sounded wrong to me, I (like Dietzer) found it hard to accept that either Schumann notated the piece in the wrong key, or that it modulated to E minor and remained there. It seemed to me, though, that the first edition ending was plausibly an intentional archaicism—following the Baroque practice of ending minor key pieces with a major dominant chord. Schumann does this in *Auf einer Burg* (number seven of the Op. 39 *Liederkreis*), which bears a remarkable harmonic similarity to the *Sizilianisch*. Further, esthetically, I found the first edition ending piquant as well as intellectually acceptable.

It is probably a necessary evil that music schools and universities dice up the study of music into discrete disciplines—major instrument, theory, music history, ear-training, etc. In this project we see responses that draw on "theory" (form and harmony); "musicology" (style analysis of the work and the composer and consideration of bibliographical



Igor Kipnis



Joseph Smith

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### Frankly, I'm not happy with either placement.

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repeating the first eight measures at the *Da Capo* and then ending." Although Bernstein prefers the manuscript ending to the first edition ending, he still finds the piece "unbalanced." If the piece is in E minor, Bernstein's wished-for ending is more conclusive.

Jazz great Dick Hyman came up with a novel suggestion designed not to remove the tonal ambiguity, but, on the contrary, to further it. "It seems to me" he writes, "that the piece as a whole is circular—that is, there are several key centers, and the charm of the composition is that none of the endings is really final; we are impelled to go around once more. Accordingly, given the choice, I would opt for the first edition ending, which has a full chord and a fermata. However, perhaps the best treatment would be to record the piece at length and fade it out slowly and arbitrarily."

As I read Mr. Hyman's letter, his remark on the "circu-

sources); and, in the identification of the piece's primary tonality (or, lack thereof) "ear-training"; as well as "performance" (judgment and intuition as to what will prove effective). I hope that any young readers who may question the relevance of their music "course work" will observe how, among the participants, the performers are as likely to cite "theoretical" concerns as are the academics.

So, has the range of opinions of the others affected my own view? Yes. I am now determined *never, never* to play the piece in public, no matter how much I love it! As John Daverio concluded, "Schumann's character designation for the *Sizilianisch* (*Schalkhaft*, meaning 'roguish') is dead on. Only a rogue would have left us with a conundrum like this." ■

See Schumann's *Sizilianisch* in the music section.

See the Master Class on this piece—in which a group of experts deal with the tricky issue of where this music actually ends—beginning on page 8.

from Album For The Young

# SIZILIANISCH

ROBERT SCHUMANN  
(1810-1856)

Schalkhaft

The musical score is written for piano and bass. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked 'Schalkhaft' (Allegretto). The piece starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The first system includes fingerings: 5, 2, 1, 3, 1. The second system includes dynamics *cresc.* and *f*, and fingerings: 1, 2, 1, 2, 4, 3, 4, 3, 2, 1, 5, 1, 2. The third system includes a piano (*p*) dynamic. The fourth system includes dynamics *cresc.* and *f*, and a first ending bracket labeled '1.'. The fifth system includes a second ending bracket labeled '2.', a piano (*p*) dynamic, and a forte (*f*) dynamic. The score concludes with an 'end' marking and a note '(according to first edition)'.

end  
(according to first edition)

Schluss

musical score for the first system, showing piano and treble clefs with notes and dynamics.

cresc.

f

↑  
end  
(according to manuscript)

musical score for the second system, featuring piano dynamics and fingerings.

1

2

4

1

4

2

1

p

musical score for the third system, including fingerings and accents.

1

2

3

5

3

4

2

musical score for the fourth system, showing piano and treble clefs.

musical score for the fifth system, showing piano and treble clefs.

Vom Anfang ohne Wiederholungen bis zum Schluss  
(from the beginning without repeats until [the marking] end)