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## **Recasting Gender: 19th Century Gender Constructions in the Lives and Works of Robert and Clara Schumann**

### **ABSTRACT**

Aesthetic, intangible and ephemeral, music reflects, reinforces, and even contests the cultural values of given times and places. Feminist musicology represents one such branch within the wave of "new" musicology steering away from traditional positivistic forms of analysis. Seeking out neglected women in music and exploring musical manifestations of gender, feminist musicology addresses the relationship between music, sex and society. Robert and Clara Schumann often frequent such discussions as a result of their simultaneous acceptance and defiance of 19th century gender ideologies.

Out of increasing homogenization and industrialization, shifting social systems and changing cultural values of the 19th century evolved the concept of the housewife. Occupying the "private sphere" of the home, women were characterized by qualities of passivity, self-sacrifice, sensitivity and irrationality. Men, typically within the public realm, adopted connotations of coldness, logicity, dominance and reasonability. Numerous cultural artifacts speak to the divide of power existing between the sexes, and consequently, the submissive attitudes towards female musicians, as well as musical depictions of "the fair sex."

Beginning with a brief overview of recent developments in gender studies, I will examine the social and musical climate of the 19th century to provide a point of departure for specific soundings of sex within music. This exploration ultimately leads us to an examination of Clara and Robert Schumann's simultaneous transcendence and submission to cultural conventions, as reflected through their personal and musical roles, and more specifically exemplified in Clara Schumann's Concerto for Piano in A minor and Robert Schumann's controversial *Frauenliebe und Leben*.