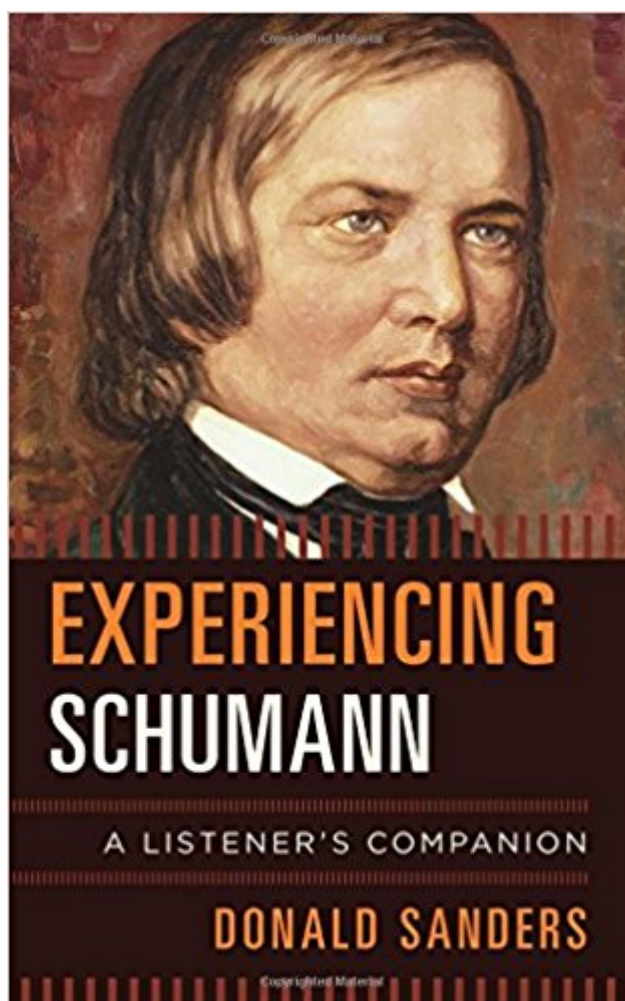


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Experiencing Schumann: A Listener's Companion



Synopsis

During his lifetime and for at least a century after his death, Robert Schumann and his music were commonly misunderstood. His long struggle with mental illness was well known, and as a result some of the most original and innovative features of his work were often dismissed as bizarre and irrational. In recent years, however, the rhythmic complexities and unorthodox harmonic practices that lovers of his piano music and lieder have found so appealing are now being received with more objective treatment in critical and scholarly circles. His influence on the music of Brahms and other later composers now seems obvious. The refinement of Schumann's literary taste is evident not only in his songs, but also in the marvelous fantasy world of his piano pieces. Experiencing Schumann: A Listener's Companion combines a concise biography of Robert Schumann with an analysis of works from the most important genres in which he worked. The music is discussed in the frame of Schumann's eventful and ultimately tragic life, and the important influence of his brilliant and adoring—but strong-willed—wife, Clara Wieck Schumann, is also examined. A selected listening discography lists outstanding recorded performances of the featured compositions. Delving into Schumann's most famous pieces in engaging and accessible style, Donald Sanders provides insightful analysis for dedicated lovers of Schumann as well as newcomers to his musical innovations.

Book Information

Series: Listener's Companion

Hardcover: 200 pages

Publisher: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers (September 2, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1442240032

ISBN-13: 978-1442240032

Product Dimensions: 6.3 x 0.8 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: Be the first to review this item

Best Sellers Rank: #2,800,436 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #95 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Sheet Music & Scores > Composers > Schumann #1120 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Biographies > Classical #8202 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Classical

Customer Reviews

Ranging widely from David Bowie to Mozart, titles in the "The Listener's Companion" series seek to present the societal world and historical place for the creation of the music. The basic premise of the series is to stay away from unusual, cutting-edge scholarship and instead examine the canon of the known and understood at the present point in time. In Sanders's volume on Robert Schumann (1810-56), readers get a strong sense not only of Schumann's intense life experiences but also of the composing styles that make his music fascinating. The book's extensive music analysis is "written in the style of concert program notes" fleshes out the music itself. Sanders has captured a middle ground between musical analysis for experts and analysis for music lovers. Sometimes the recitations of motion from key to key are tedious and seem purposeless, but there is still much to learn from these basic analyses. Young performers and listeners who need guidance through Schumann's complexity would do well to study these oddities of pattern that make Schumann's music so charming and exciting. Performers and students new to Schumann will value this book. Summing Up: Recommended. Lower- and upper-division undergraduates; general readers; professionals. (CHOICE)

Donald Sanders is professor of music and coordinator of keyboard studies at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. He is the author of *Music at the Gonzaga Court in Mantua* (2012) and *Experiencing Verdi: A Listener's Companion* (2014).

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