

PORTFOLIO OF RECORDED PERFORMANCES AND EXEGESIS

Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel and

Clara Wieck-Schumann:

a study through performance of their selected piano
works

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	i
LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES	iv
LIST OF TABLES	x
ABSTRACT.....	xi
DECLARATION	xiii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	xiv
EDITORIAL NOTES	xv
INTRODUCTION TO THE SUBMISSION	1
PART A: RECORDINGS.....	6
CD 1	7
CD 2	8
CD 3	9
PART B: EXEGESIS.....	10
INTRODUCTION.....	10
CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW	12
Nineteenth-Century Piano Music	12
Women in Music	15
Literature on Mendelssohn-Hensel and Wieck-Schumann	16
Performance Practice Resources	23
Scores and Editions	27
Recordings	32
CHAPTER 2: INTRODUCTION TO THE COMPOSERS	35
Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel	35
Clara Wieck-Schumann.....	38
CHAPTER 3: THE PIANO SONATAS	41
The Piano Sonata in the Nineteenth Century.....	41
Mendelssohn-Hensel’s Piano Sonata in G Minor: An Overview.....	43
Wieck-Schumann’s Piano Sonata in G Minor: An Overview	57
Performance Issues	65
Tempo	65
Pedalling	74
Score Interpretation.....	80

Summary.....	89
CHAPTER 4: THE PIANO TRIOS	91
The Piano Trio in the Nineteenth Century.....	91
Mendelssohn-Hensel’s Piano Trio in D Minor, Op. 11: An Overview	92
Wieck-Schumann’s Piano Trio in G Minor, Op. 17: An Overview	106
Performance Issues	111
Instrumental Balance	111
Articulation	117
Tempo	121
Summary.....	124
CHAPTER 5: THE PIANO MINIATURES	127
The Piano Miniature in the Nineteenth Century.....	127
Mendelssohn-Hensel’s Songs without Words: An Overview	128
<i>Lyrische Klavierstücke</i>	130
<i>Vier Römische Klavierstücke</i>	132
<i>Vier Lieder ohne Worte</i> , Op. 8.....	135
Wieck-Schumann’s Character Pieces: An Overview	139
<i>Quatre Pièces Caractéristiques</i> , Op. 5	140
<i>Drei Romanzen</i> , Op. 21.....	146
Romance in A Minor	149
Romance in B Minor.....	150
Performance Issues	152
Time Signatures	152
Rhythm.....	153
Arpeggiation	156
Pedalling	159
Summary.....	161
CONCLUSION	163
APPENDICES.....	171
Appendix 1: List of Piano Works by Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel and Clara Wieck-Schumann (sorted by year of issue).....	171
Appendix 2: List of Published Scores of Works Selected for Study (sorted by year of issue).....	177
Appendix 3: List of Available Commercial Recordings of Works Selected for Study (sorted by year of issue).....	178
BIBLIOGRAPHY	182
Text-based Materials	182

CD Recordings	190
Musical Scores.....	193

LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

Example 1: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, first movement, bars 1–9.....	47
Example 2: Mendelssohn, Piano Concerto No. 1 in G minor, Op. 25, bars 1–9.....	47
Example 3: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, first movement, bars 66–73.....	48
Example 4: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, first movement, bars 34–37.....	49
Example 5: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, first movement, bars 88–91.....	49
Example 6: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, second movement, bars 141–150.....	51
Example 7: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, second movement, bars 166–177.....	51
Example 8: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, third movement, bars 282–289.....	53
Example 9: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, third movement, bars 305–310.....	53
Example 10: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, third movement, bars 332–337.....	54
Example 11: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, fourth movement, bars 368–372.....	55
Example 12: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, fourth movement, bars 408–412.....	55
Example 13: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, fourth movement, bars 629–638.....	56
Example 14: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, fourth movement, bars 368–372, with performance notes.....	56
Example 15: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, fourth movement, bars 408–412, with performance notes.....	57
Example 16: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Sonata in G minor, first movement, bars 1–9.....	59
Example 17: Weber, <i>Konzertstück</i> in F minor, Op. 79, bars 1–10.....	59
Example 18: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Sonata in G minor, first movement, bars 210–219.....	61
Example 19: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Sonata in G minor, second movement, bars 1–5.....	61
Example 20: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Sonata in G minor, second movement, bars 12–18.....	61
Example 21: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Sonata in G minor, third movement, bars 1–6.....	62

Example 22: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Sonata in G minor, third movement, bars 41–47.....	62
Example 23: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Sonata in G minor, third movement, bars 115–126.....	63
Example 24: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, second movement, bars 141–150.....	67
Example 25: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, second movement, bars 166–177.....	67
Example 26: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Sonata in G minor, second movement, bars 12–18, with performance notes.....	68
Example 27: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Sonata in G minor, second movement, bars 23–30, with performance notes.....	69
Example 28: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, first movement, bars 22–29.....	69
Example 29: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, first movement, bars 22–29, with performance notes.....	70
Example 30: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, first movement, bars 18–25.....	71
Example 31: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, first movement, bars 1–9.....	71
Example 32: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, first movement, bars 22–29.....	72
Example 33: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, first movement, bars 18–25, with performance notes.....	72
Example 34: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, third movement, bars 290–295, with performance notes.....	73
Example 35: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Sonata in G minor, fourth movement, bars 1–10, with performance notes.....	74
Example 36: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, third movement, bars 278–286.....	76
Example 37: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, third movement, bars 287–289.....	76
Example 38: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, third movement, bars 332–337.....	76
Example 39: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, third movement, bars 287–289, with pedal notations.....	77
Example 40: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, third movement, bars 314–316, with pedal notations.....	77
Example 41: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, third movement, bars 323–325, with pedal notations.....	78

Example 42: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, fourth movement, bars 620–628, with performance notes	78
Example 43: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, second movement, bars 166–171.....	80
Example 44: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Sonata in G minor, first movement, bars 6–14.....	81
Example 45: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Sonata in G minor, first movement, bars 128–136.....	82
Example 46: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Sonata in G minor, first movement, bars 128–136, with adjustment to dynamics	83
Example 47: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Sonata in G minor, first movement, bars 128–135, with performance notes.....	84
Example 48: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Sonata in G minor, first movement, bars 44–51	85
Example 49: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Sonata in G minor, first movement, bars 59–70.....	85
Example 50: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Sonata in G minor, first movement, bars 166–172.....	86
Example 51: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Sonata in G minor, first movement, bars 180–192.....	86
Example 52: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Sonata in G minor, first movement, bars 180–192, with tempo adjustment.....	87
Example 53: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, second movement, bars 166–171	87
Example 54: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, second movement, bars 223–227, with added pedal sign.....	88
Example 55: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, second movement, bars 249–254, with added pedal sign.....	88
Example 56: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Sonata in G minor, second movement, bars 274–277, with added pedal sign.....	88
Example 57: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, first movement, bars 1–5.....	95
Example 58: Chopin, <i>Revolutionary Étude</i> , Op. 10, no. 12, bars 19–21	95
Example 59: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, first movement, bars 162–167.....	96
Example 60: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, first movement, bars 58–65.....	96
Example 61: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor Op. 11, first movement, bars 74–81.....	97
Example 62: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, first movement, bars 231–241	97
Example 63: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, first movement, bars 205–218.....	98

Example 64: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, first movement, bars 253–256.....	98
Example 65: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, second movement, bars 1–6.....	99
Example 66: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, second movement, bars 35–40.....	99
Example 67: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, second movement, bars 72–84.....	100
Example 68: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, second movement, bars 102–108.....	101
Example 69: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, third movement, bars 1–5.....	102
Example 70: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, fourth movement, bars 1–9.....	103
Example 71: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, fourth movement, bars 32–35.....	103
Example 72: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, fourth movement, bars 58–62.....	104
Example 73: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, fourth movement, bars 68–77.....	104
Example 74: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, fourth movement, bars 208–216.....	105
Example 75: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 17, second movement, bars 1–5.....	108
Example 76: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 17, second movement, bars 13–19.....	108
Example 77: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 17, second movement, bars 35–43.....	108
Example 78: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, first movement, bars 231–241.....	114
Example 79: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, first movement, bars 74–81.....	114
Example 80: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, first movement, bars 108–114.....	115
Example 81: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, first movement, bars 58–65.....	115
Example 82: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, fourth movement, bars 58–62.....	115
Example 83: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Trio in G minor Op. 17, third movement, bars 26–30.....	116

Example 84: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 17, fourth movement, bars 7–13.....	116
Example 85: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, second movement, bars 35–46.....	118
Example 86: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, second movement, bars 41–51.....	119
Example 87: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, fourth movement, bars 52–62.....	120
Example 88: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, fourth movement, bars 208–216.....	121
Example 89: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, third movement, bars 1–5.....	122
Example 90: Mendelssohn-Hensel, Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, second movement, bars 102–108.....	122
Example 91: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 17, first movement, bars 259–268.....	123
Example 92: Wieck-Schumann, Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 17, fourth movement, bars 313–326.....	124
Example 93: Mendelssohn-Hensel, <i>Lyrische Klavierstücke</i> , no. 1, bars 1–7.....	131
Example 94: Mendelssohn-Hensel, <i>Lyrische Klavierstücke</i> , no. 2, bars 10–14.....	131
Example 95: Mendelssohn-Hensel, <i>Lyrische Klavierstücke</i> , no. 2, bars 99–101.....	132
Example 96: Mendelssohn-Hensel, <i>Lyrische Klavierstücke</i> , no. 3, bars 208–212.....	132
Example 97: Mendelssohn-Hensel, <i>Vier Römische Klavierstücke</i> , no. 1, bars 1–3.....	133
Example 98: Mendelssohn-Hensel, <i>Vier Römische Klavierstücke</i> , no. 2, bars 1–8.....	134
Example 99: Mendelssohn-Hensel, <i>Vier Römische Klavierstücke</i> , no. 2, bars 18–19.....	134
Example 100: Mendelssohn-Hensel, <i>Vier Lieder ohne Worte</i> , Op. 8, no. 2, bars 1–6.....	137
Example 101: Mendelssohn-Hensel, <i>Vier Lieder ohne Worte</i> , Op. 8, no. 3, bars 1–5.....	138
Example 102: Mendelssohn-Hensel, <i>Vier Lieder ohne Worte</i> , Op. 8, no. 3, bars 15–22.....	138
Example 103: Mendelssohn-Hensel, <i>Vier Lieder ohne Worte</i> , Op. 8, no. 4, bars 1–4.....	139
Example 104: Wieck-Schumann, <i>Quatre Pièces Caractéristiques</i> , Op. 5, no. 1, bars 1–10.....	141
Example 105: Wieck-Schumann, <i>Quatre Pièces Caractéristiques</i> , Op. 5, no. 4, bars 102–111.....	141
Example 106: Wieck-Schumann, <i>Quatre Pièces Caractéristiques</i> , Op. 5, no. 1, bars 57–62.....	142
Example 107: Wieck-Schumann, <i>Quatre Pièces Caractéristiques</i> , Op. 5, no. 1, bars 69–74.....	142
Example 108: Wieck-Schumann, <i>Quatre Pièces Caractéristiques</i> , Op. 5, no. 2, bars 1–12.....	143

Example 109: Wieck-Schumann, <i>Quatre Pièces Caractéristiques</i> , Op. 5, no. 2, bars 44–48.....	143
Example 110: Wieck-Schumann, <i>Quatre Pièces Caractéristiques</i> , Op. 5, no. 2, bars 98–103.....	144
Example 111: Wieck-Schumann, <i>Quatre Pièces Caractéristiques</i> , Op. 5, no. 3, bars 1–8.....	144
Example 112: Wieck-Schumann, <i>Quatre Pièces Caractéristiques</i> , Op. 5, no. 2, bars 51–59.....	144
Example 113: Wieck-Schumann, <i>Quatre Pièces Caractéristiques</i> , Op. 5, no. 2, bars 59–62.....	145
Example 114: Robert Schumann, Piano Sonata in F sharp minor, Op. 11, no. 1, first movement, bars 1–13.....	146
Example 115: Wieck-Schumann, <i>Quatre Pièces Caractéristiques</i> , Op. 5, no. 4, bars 1–8.....	146
Example 116: Wieck-Schumann, <i>Drei Romanzen</i> , Op. 21, no. 1, bars 1–4.....	147
Example 117: Wieck-Schumann, <i>Drei Romanzen</i> , Op. 21, no. 1, bars 27–32.....	148
Example 118: Robert Schumann, <i>Novelletten</i> , Op. 21, no. 1, bars 18–27.....	148
Example 119: Wieck-Schumann, <i>Drei Romanzen</i> , Op. 21, no. 2, bars 1–4.....	149
Example 120: Wieck-Schumann, Romance in A minor, bars 35–42.....	150
Example 121: Wieck-Schumann, Romance in B minor, bars 1–4.....	151
Example 122: Brahms, Piano Sonata No. 3 in F minor, Op. 5, <i>Andante</i> , bars 1–5.....	151
Example 123: Brahms, Piano Sonata No. 3 in F minor, Op. 5, <i>Intermezzo</i> , bars 1–4.....	151
Example 124: Mendelssohn-Hensel, <i>Vier Römische Klavierstücke</i> , no. 4, bars 31–37.....	153
Example 125: Mendelssohn-Hensel, <i>Vier Lieder ohne Worte</i> , Op. 8, no. 1, bars 17–23.....	154
Example 126: Wieck-Schumann, Romance in B minor, bars 31–33.....	155
Example 127: Wieck-Schumann, <i>Drei Romanzen</i> , Op. 2, no. 1, bars 1–4, with performance notes.....	157
Example 128: Wieck-Schumann, <i>Drei Romanzen</i> , Op. 21, no. 2, bars 9–12, with performance notes.....	160
Example 129: Wieck-Schumann, <i>Drei Romanzen</i> , Op. 21, no. 2, bars 15–18, with performance notes.....	160
Example 130: Wieck-Schumann, <i>Drei Romanzen</i> , Op. 21, no. 2, bars 19–22.....	161
Example 131: Wieck-Schumann, <i>Drei Romanzen</i> , Op. 21, no. 2, bars 36–39, with performance notes.....	161

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel: List of Published Scores of Works Selected for Study	29
Table 2: Clara Wieck-Schumann: List of Published Scores of Works Selected for Study	31
Table 3: Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel: List of Available Commercial Recordings of Works Selected for Study	32
Table 4: Clara Wieck-Schumann: List of Available Commercial Recordings of Works Selected for Study	33
Table 5: Structural Outline of Mendelssohn-Hensel's Piano Sonata in G minor, first movement.....	46
Table 6: Structural Outline of Mendelssohn-Hensel's Piano Sonata in G minor, second movement.....	50
Table 7: Structural Outline of Mendelssohn-Hensel's Piano Sonata in G minor, third movement.....	52
Table 8: Structural Outline of Mendelssohn-Hensel's Piano Sonata in G minor, fourth movement.....	54
Table 9: Structural Outline of Wieck-Schumann's Piano Sonata in G minor, first movement.....	58
Table 10: Structural Outline of Wieck-Schumann's Piano Sonata in G minor, fourth movement.....	63
Table 11: Structural Outline of Mendelssohn-Hensel's Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, first movement	93
Table 12: Structural Outline of Mendelssohn-Hensel's Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, fourth movement.....	102
Table 13: Structural Outline of Wieck-Schumann's Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 17, first movement	106
Table 14: Structural Outline of Wieck-Schumann's Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 17, fourth movement.....	109
Table 15: Mendelssohn-Hensel: List of Piano Miniatures Selected for Study with Corresponding H-U Catalogue Numbers.....	130
Table 16: Analysis of Mendelssohn-Hensel's <i>Vier Lieder ohne Worte</i> , Op. 8, no. 1 in B minor (adapted from Sirota's Illustration I. Analysis of Fanny Hensel's <i>Lied ohne Worte</i> , Op. 8, no. 1 in B minor)	137

ABSTRACT

This project pursues an investigation into the piano works of Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel and Clara Wieck-Schumann, whose music had been largely forgotten until its revival as part of a recent renewal of interest in women composers. While the musical and individual styles of these two composers vary considerably, their music can still be usefully compared within the broad context of nineteenth-century Romanticism. The detailed study of their piano works poses questions relating to issues of performance practice, an area that has still not been widely explored in the literature surrounding their music. The aim of this project will therefore be to identify and address such issues from the perspective of the performer.

The research carried out in this project is performance based. Performance, being a significant component of the research, functions as a tool and serves as an outcome of the project. The submission is presented in two parts. Part A consists of three CDs and contains recorded performances of selected piano works by Mendelssohn-Hensel and Wieck-Schumann. The repertoire included in the CDs covers three different genres by both composers; namely, piano sonatas, trios and miniatures. Part B is an exegesis. The commentary contained in this section combines theoretical, historical and practical perspectives that document the processes of research and performance undertaken as part of the project.

Existing research on the repertoire, while gathering momentum, has centred largely on compositional techniques or gender-related studies. Aspects of performance have been substantially neglected. The present study draws heavily on existing scholarship, informed by the intimate experience of the music that comes from performing it. It addresses insights

generated through the process of rehearsing and performing Mendelssohn-Hensel's and Wieck-Schumann's piano works, and examines the musical characteristics and compositional styles of the two composers. The similarities and differences between their works within each genre are identified and assessed based on key musical elements such as form, tonality, texture, notation, rhythm, dynamics, articulation, tempo, and pedalling. Also included is a discussion of the interpretation of the scores and the stylistic issues encountered while studying and performing these works.

The primary outcomes of this research reside in the recordings and exegesis and differ fundamentally from the purely musicological perspectives that characterise most of the previous work devoted to Mendelssohn-Hensel and Wieck-Schumann. The project represents the first study to investigate the two composers and three of their most characteristic genres by combining the perspectives of performer and researcher, making it a distinctive contribution to the comparatively small but steadily growing body of research into these two composers. It is hoped that this project will serve as a guide and reference for pianists wishing to study the piano works of the two composers, stimulate publishers to commission complete editions of the composers' music, and to provide pointers towards possible areas of further investigation.

DECLARATION

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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EDITORIAL NOTES

To avoid confusion, the two composers in question are referred to as Mendelssohn-Hensel and Wieck-Schumann following the German styling of their names. Although Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel chose to be published as Fanny Hensel, to refer to her as either Hensel or Mendelssohn may cause confusion, since her celebrated brother Felix Mendelssohn, husband Wilhelm Hensel and German tenor Heinrich Hensel share these surnames. Clara Wieck-Schumann is likewise referred to by her hyphenated surname to distinguish her from her father and her husband.

The dates of all Mendelssohn-Hensel's and Wieck-Schumann's piano works are listed in Appendix 1. In the text, dates given in brackets for musical works refer to dates of composition, as cited in the H-U catalogue (Hellwig-Unruh 2000) for Mendelssohn-Hensel, and Reich's catalogue (2001) for Wieck-Schumann. For all other composers, dates refer to dates of publication as they appear in Grove Music Online.

Titles of compositions have been translated into English only when germane to the argument. For clarity, English has been used for generic titles such as Piano Sonata and Piano Trio. The titles of character pieces (such as *Ponte Molle*) have been italicised. In the case of character pieces without titles that are identified by their tempo designations (such as *Allegro molto vivace ma con sentimento*), italics have again been used. Italian terms in common usage (such as tempo, coda) are not italicised, terms indicating dynamics (such as *piano*) are. In the case of *piano*, the italicisation distinguishes between the dynamic level and the instrument.

In the case of Wieck-Schumann, some works were published as *Romanze* and some as Romance; Romance is used within the text for uniformity. The piece published as Wieck-Schumann's *Romanze ohne opuszahl* (1853) is referred to as Romance in A minor, her *Romanze h-moll* (1856) as Romance in B minor.

Some of the character pieces selected for study were published by different publishers over a period of time and appear in different collections under different titles. Works falling into this category include Mendelssohn-Hensel's *Lyrische Klavierstücke*, *Vier Römische Klavierstücke*, and *Vier Lieder ohne Worte*, Op. 8, as well as Wieck-Schumann's *Quatre Pièces Caractéristiques*, Op. 5, and *Drei Romanzen*, Op. 21. The individual pieces are then referred to according to the order in which they appear. For example, the three lyrical pieces in Mendelssohn-Hensel's *Lyrische Klavierstücke* are referred to as *Lyrische Klavierstücke* no. 1, *Lyrische Klavierstücke* no. 2 and *Lyrische Klavierstücke* no. 3 respectively. However, the CD contents listed in Part A: Recordings, give the tempo indications and/or titles of each individual piece as appropriate.

Upper case is used for all major and minor keys in the text, in accordance with the practice adopted in Grove Music Online, avoiding the confusion that occurs in English; for instance, between “a minor” and “A minor”.