

## Music can make us lose awareness of ourselves but also cause us to perceive ourselves. (Wilhelm Killmayer)

*Stücke im Volkston, Romanzen, Bagatelles*, a wide range of smaller musical forms are recorded here. The Romanze in particular, having its origins in Spain (starting in the 14<sup>th</sup> century), and no longer in Latin like sacred song, but instead as a narrative strophic song in a Romance language, has experienced such rich variety in its historical development, including specific national characteristics with their high points, all the way to the art-song genre, that as a result it defies categorical definition. In works by Haydn and Mozart the name of this genre appears at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in purely instrumental music. The works recorded here encourage the listener to relate to the music in his or her own way; this is the best way to approach this genre. The listener will discover that the Romanze is not necessarily to be equated with song-like simplicity.

Wilhelm Killmayer himself can be quoted on the bagatelle genre. In the foreword to his *Eight Bagatelles* he says: It “[...] has no prescribed form, it negates (in the sense of its name) more or less any artistic aspiration, making it open for experiment [...] High compositional and aesthetic standards in the guise of entertaining trifles, of musical dalliance—something which Beethoven apparently wanted—was also my goal.” Those who discover the special interaction of the composers Schumann and Killmayer—it brings a unique aura of mental action—can include Killmayer’s texts *Schumann und seine Dichter [Schumann and His Poets]* as well as *Zu Robert Schumann [About Robert Schumann]* (in: *Der Komponist Wilhelm Killmayer [The Composer Wilhelm Killmayer]*, Mainz 1992). Highly personal immersion of oneself in the subject can be seen in Killmayer’s *Entwurf eines Bühnenprojektes Robert Schumann* [Outline of a Stage Project on Robert Schumann]. There “[...] (Schumann) searches for the globe [...] He spreads out slips of paper on the floor. He tries to organize the slips He counts them over and over again. He takes one away and crumples it up [...]”

### ROBERT SCHUMANN

#### FÜNF STÜCKE IM VOLKSTON, OP. 102 FOR CELLO AND PIANO (APRIL 3 - 15 AND 17, 1849) 3 ROMANZEN FOR OBOE AND PIANO, OP. 94 (DECEMBER 7 - 12, 1849)

It would be far too superficial in the case of these two cycles to be thankful only to the promoter of this appealing *Hausmusik* because he composed works for several instruments only rarely paired for duo performance with the piano. Instead, his contemporaries accused him of composing too many character pieces, too many “trifles,” saying the sublime quality of the large forms was lacking. The actual mainsprings for these pieces and what they mean to us actually lie at a deeper level and are more varied. The pulse and spirit of many social movements and contradictions of that period find expression. To be sure, all these pieces are characterized by the limitation of their compositional resources. This applies to the transparent, sparse piano part in which the bass register, which is otherwise common to Schumann’s writing, does not rhythmically shift and counter the emphasis of the melody and harmonic progression. Pedal points reinforce simplicity and clarity. The melodic expression of perfect fourths found in folk songs is integrated. The individual pieces are short. There is strophic structure and there are tripartite song forms; see *Romanze II* and the *Stücke II*. In essence, *Stücke I* is even a strophic song. However, it is haunting: *Vanitas vanitatum* (all is vanity)! The swelling from a minor to a major key verse in *fortissimo*, propels us to demonic outer limits. Two “instrumental” interludes, at first unfathomably unmelodic, then almost neurotically surging toward the climax with stereotypical sequences and agitation, contribute to this atmosphere. Finally, after an abruptly rising instrumental cadence, a (mockingly?) elegantly relenting half-verse. Schumann integrates a ‘freethinking tonal quality’ known from student fraternity melodic tradition. It should be noted that Schumann never glorified the state or cultivated hyper-Germanness. He espouses equal rights. Rushing the barricades frightens him. To him, revolution happens in the mind: for fruitful development of society which is not happening. Such an energetic and tightly organized outburst of festively progressing “song” with its goal-directed cadencing (*Volkston No. 4*) opposes—as did the *Davidsbund* members in Leipzig—narrowmindedness of our stripe. He sends his publisher “[...] a few marches [...] not [...] Dessau marches [...] rather, republican ones....” The audacity of such a formulation has no equal for that time. In the middle section the twofold isolated gestures (a wide upward leap with *subito forte*) and after that the release characterize outsider status all the more strongly as the melody echoed by the cello an octave lower is heard and only in *piano*. It is not sufficient to regard these pieces as Schumann’s attempts to achieve that “staged folk style” the way others had, a sound which was inspired in many settings after the rediscovery of the folk-tune with the collection *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. Incidentally, also in the poetry of writers such as Eichendorff. A shared spirit among creative writers and musicians is of fundamental benefit during this period. “In general, musical sound is composed

language” says Schumann in his diary. Already very familiar with literature and poetry through his parents, he said himself that Jean Paul’s novel *Fegelei* inspired him to compose *Miniatures*. Before publishing his first art-songs he was planning a collection of “Songs without Words” based on poems by Heinrich Heine. Charles Rosen (“The Romantic Generation,” 1995) made a determined effort to have the fragment recognized as a defining element of Romantic style. Schumann became the most important representative of this fragment-based diction. Instead of convincing “symphonic” deployments and “classical” visions, during Schumann’s generation the breaking up into fragments became the formal principle. “Strike only one world string!” writes Schumann. The presentation of the pieces cannot succeed either, without taking note that Schumann’s folk style remains fragmentary, without being attuned to what in fact is the complicated inner world of Schumann. Unmistakably evident in his spirit are the contradictions of the entire period, for him personally uniquely inescapable: on the one hand aspiration to a holistic perspective and vision for society and on the other a rich but isolated inner world in an alienated outlook on life. Schumann immerses himself in this (juvenile) world to the point that those around him consider him mentally ill. Our perception is also affected by the fact that since E.T.A. Hoffmann real life is regarded as incomprehensible or incomplete without irrational visions and imaginings. The attitude toward insanity changed, the irrational became a source of creativity, and of its energy too. Schumann’s fragment, especially illuminating in the concept “Intermezzo” (see also *Novelettes, Bunte Blätter, Charakterstücke, and Phantasiestücke*, etc.), intrudes unexpectedly, intones restlessness, even disaster or an attempt at defense. For example, the middle section of *Romanze II*, while is not only bodily expansion, but also a branching and losing of oneself. Just when an intermezzo has interrupted—it was merely there and did not achieve anything—it is itself replaced. See *Stücke IV* above. In the process, the capacity of the composer to represent his feeling and gesture with immediacy and “parlando” seems to be unlimited. In the A major Couplet (*Stücke III*) the gesture of the duet upbeat in 6/8 meter, a repeated small motif, is idiosyncratic in its frequency, and extremely insistent. The predominating feature of *Romanze III* is the gift of transforming a single motif into highly different characters, of forming a single unit from the most highly varied gestures and material. Compared to the recitative, fairytale-like beginning, the main figure (“with reserve”) remains only suggestion, just as much a fragment as the following active major-key octave motif with added crescendo gestures. The repetition returns to the minor key. This middle section begins as a fragment of a very special kind: a wonderfully noble melody of just a few notes is quite naturally there, is transformed and remains separate, repeated by the cello *dolce* (intoverted). The staged aspect of works by Schumann is striking. Over 2,000 copies of his *Kinderszenen*, Op.15 (1838) were sold in the first year after its publication. They gained an international audience through editions together with the *Musikalische Haus- und Lebensregeln* (Advice for Young Musicians), which were translated into French by Liszt and into Russian by Tchaikovsky. The special tenderness, the heartfelt (“innige,” an exclusively German term) cannot fail to be heard. *Romanze II* bears the notation “simple, heartfelt.” However, in *Stücke II ‘Langsam’* (slowly) the situation is made more dense by the opening motif of third-fifth-octave heard a total of ten times. This singing in the opening three-measure phrase has no movement form, and only “puts down roots” for a short time with an ensuing four-measure phrase. Constantly above the pedal point F, this heartfelt devotion arising more in hypnotic intensity than from sustained breath retains a uniquely precious sense of being lost. As a master of harmonic relationships, Schumann gives his Romanzen an epilogue (coda) of only nine measures, marvelously descending from the outer realm of the Neapolitan sixth chord to the deep register, and then harmonically re-emerging in a glowing inward realm in the major key. Harmonically unique due to distant sub-dominants is the astonishingly irrational psychological downward fall to *pp* before the *da capo* of the main movement in *Stücke III*. This is the way Gabriel Fauré sounded at a much later date. The *Romanze I* remains an indescribable miracle of “onward flowing.” Just as a feeling gains delineation, but no emergence of true—such as formal rhythmic—stability through formation of a formal structure, as every surface is questioned, extended and stirred up by a gliding beyond itself, the ascent to the major key remains a fragment, too; this is truly innovative music. In *Stücke V* there is scarcely room for an intermezzo: the short, rising stepwise gesture in F major followed by the powerful *ff* stroke immediately forced into diminution only pushes the restless energy of the main movement onwards again. This piece has a through-composed texture. What a folk-like sound! Its character “strong and emphatically marked” is unrelenting complicated movement, in the main movement asymmetric widening to a five-measure phrase, and forceful strokes by the piano accompaniment. Rebellion: duplets against triplets (as in *Stücke III*), obsessed lashing out in all directions, loss of control and constricted beginning anew, impatient spasms. Energy expressing itself, but without a goal? There is no solution, the energy wanes in the stretta. Its abrupt conclusion is its exclamation point!

Born in Munich in 1927, **WILHELM KILLMAYER** writes New Music in a completely unmistakable tonal language all his own, in which the familiar compositional elements do not speak as the usual ones do but instead as newly discovered ones through unusual and surprising combinations, upheavals and stops. “Surprise is important to me. It is an element that plays an important role in art. The surprising, the unexpected, the inappropriate, the catastrophic [...] is highly important [...] suddenly the surface you are on is off balance and slippery, and you start to slide. You

almost fall. And then it is even again, safe ground is under your feet. This happens all the time ... everything intentional, predictable is highly suspicious to me in art. There's always something fatal about things which are programmed." Killmayer thus denies his listeners that "music tradition [...] of the cozy home [...] that is widely misused as an idyll [...]" (Helmut Lachenmann), the kind of music that satisfies listening habits instead of expanding them. At first he is a scarcely acknowledged role model. For years dogmatic criticism dominates without being questioned, for example in the statement by Pierre Boulez "[...] that after the discoveries of the Viennese School any composer who places himself or herself outside the sphere of serial music composition is useless." First of all, he composes outside the sphere of any "blockage." He makes sounds perceptible. "I do not like composers who indulge in sound! I want to hear everything, hear right through it; I want music which is bright and allows a lot of air [...]" I strive towards a tangible quality, toward precision [...] I love the tones of music! A single musical sound is something very precious to me—like a crystal or a flower. That is why I am not fond of using up many notes. I like individual tones far too much to throw them into a pot, stir them, make soup and then spoon it out. When I "air" my hearing I hear more than those who flood or inundate their hearing. With New Music it often feels to me as though someone is uninterruptedly pouring bushel baskets of music over me, and as time passes I am as though paralyzed." On the other hand, Killmayer uses conventional building blocks, formulas of a tonal language, so that even when he devises new figures, all listeners immediately comprehend. "I cannot work with material I am not familiar with. There is something of the past, something experienced, something you lived through in all material [...]. I work with the familiar, what has been, without which people cannot live, for this bears the traces of impermanence, which reminds us of life." Those listening to his music have the feeling everything is simultaneously new and somehow familiar. Without fearing mistakes, they may hear newly valid relationships and a depicted unity unfolding in sound. In this regard, listeners are constantly challenged by varying methods used side by side, the deviations of a tonal gesture in sometimes highly divergent variants, gaiety and droll humor and a comedic burlesque, true earnestness and profound silence." Because my associations are dear to me, the aesthetically disreputable appeals to me. The sentimental, the lovely, the disorderly, the trivial, the brash, the nice, the tasteless [...] or whatever happens to cross your path." And finally there are the truly very well-known "high-spirited figures [...]. "We need the South 'at any price,' naive, bright, happy and tender sounds [...]" Humor has a role, and my pieces represent an attempt to entertain people." In the spirit of Paul Feyerabend, Wilhelm Killmayer acknowledges that his pieces are meant to convey: "It is not 'the truth,' it is joking, entertainment, and illusion which set us free." And quotes Friedrich Nietzsche: "Do we not have art so that we are not destroyed by the truth?" Attentive listeners to this music are to be congratulated. They are in an important central position as the sought-after pacemaker, and already bridge the fatal gap between listener and New Music. "What kind of listener do I wish for? Anyone who has no specific expectations or preconceptions, who is willing simply to listen, which they cannot do if they are reading this sleeve note while the piece is being played." (Wilhelm Killmayer).

#### FIVE ROMANZEN (1989)

I IMPROMPTU: A ruptured, glaring clarion tone. It is true that the cello securely delineates G major in wide interval leaps, the first theme with a wide panoramic gesture of the 12/8 meter. The cloudless tonic is covered too quickly. The rising movement of the piano is contradictory in its dissonant. The polyphonic aspect remains when the main material reformulates itself, with more passion, intoned and stated in G-flat and D-flat major. No conclusion is found. A sudden stop: with a change to four measures in 4/4 time via G-flat major a primary voice plays f d e g, distributed among various positions and timbres of the instruments: a musical rebus? The newly started G major theme jumps to well known conventional closing gestures made up of descending scales. The cello also fails to find the threshold to resolution in the course of a powerful, 13-measure pedal point A. *Meno mosso* only emphasizes this. And now authentic Killmayer: in this situation a *bel canto* torso *molto forte* in B-flat major! This is followed by a lonely high note in minor in the cello over a low pedal point, virtually annihilating *secco* or *pizzicato* tritone intervals in *ff*; now the *appoggiatura* third has burst. What a dramatic poem! A screaming lament in F minor with extreme interval tension before the piece pauses in D minor.

II SCHERZO LENTO: New Music? Unbelievable! Pure A major with the simplest harmonic progressions, the most simple movement construction with symmetric overall rhythm. There is enough to be astonished by: the melodic line encompasses five octaves: "airy!" Can life-song be that easy? Can you always get by with simplicity? A Scherzo without being hectic? In fact the slightest tendency to sound a minor key is resisted with self-confident nonchalant street song verse which is apparently at all times free enough to intervene helpfully and to return to the weightless pace. Further smooth adaptability is revealed as the theme dallies in E and B major as called for. Continued cadence formulas bewilder: what ingenious developments there are in this conversation! The first true disaster, low E, attempts to get away from the cello (accelerando), humorously slips down from a high register (glissando) to a

bottomless series of whole tones. A long pause. The entry of melodic A major is conciliatory. The short *stretta* (poco mosso) makes it clear: a joke.

III CHORAL: Is the chorale's main quality not harmonic, a consistent frame of reference for the melodic lines as well? There are fifth/fourth chords whose indestructible force is felt, only "skewed" by a *Doppelgänger*. This is also what happens with the luminosity of rich dissonances. This kind of double identity is also experienced unconsciously in the opposition of the side effects (overtones). From the beginning, the heterogeneous main voices—which are dominated by the framing tritone interval and come in one at a time—lead to this concentration of energy. There are pauses for breath in a major key, bated breath for the horrid (the major third is unnaturally above the minor third, in opposition to the overtone row) structure of B-flat minor. We can hear low overlapping diatonic pairs of thirds as neighbor notes. After this the new A-flat major seventh chord with the major sixth in the top position sounds relaxed and new. Most strikingly: The chorale progressively loses the support of concentrated energy. A lonely unison chorale line, despite exclamation (major sixth upwards) entwined with two tritone relationships. Fermata. Terrible in *ff* the simple E minor triad in the closed position. Fermata. Is there hope? Several intervals of a sixth touch. A long sustained tone, a weak dominant stops extending its hand.

IV IM SCHUMANN-TON: It is the tone which fails to sound in real life. The melody suggests, it is fiction. The devotion to islands of major-third settings, weightless connections with the octave, remains unaccompanied except for a very few minor phrases. Only in the repetition are there two, then three, layers of voices, circling the *cantando la melodia*, wearing it down. The first onset of reality: *Tempo mezzo* (twice as slow), to the dissonant chord a very harsh *pizzicato forte*, but with a lot of vibrato; very "dryly" bowed cello chords. Then no classical *da capo*. The attempt to find the melody loses its way, passing from D, then G and then C major. The markings allow individual voices to continue to "sing." A change in meter, accents, considerable pressure with slow bowing (a stiff tone), bowing behind the bridge (*dietro il ponticello*), striking the bass notes of the keyboard with the lower arm: all this frightens, coerces, shatters. After a writhing submediant. We remember, *pianissimo*, our weakness for this insanity in G major (see *Romanze I*).

V CAPRICCIO. MOLTO VIVACE: A work which contrasts with the *Bagatelle VIII*, and has even more self-control for rhythm and lines running in parallel. A bizarrely interlocked figure in A major: not losing oneself, even during surprises! A moment of contemplation (pause), finding a C major cadence with ease. E major, be confused or shake it off? Cadence in D-flat major? No, now play C major in *forte*. Fermata. And then a carefree jump is made from the wrong F-sharp platform with vulgar upbeats (*rit. molto*), a trivial smash hit is intoned which asserts itself by swaying back and forth at changes in meter. A prodigious number of ideas! Only the high repetitive dinging sounds create a pause for breath. Strong pressure by the bow turns once again from the D-flat to the C major cadence. A delicious retreat from all hectic action, tonal afterthoughts, always familiar but heard in a new way. Heard completely, engraved precisely into C major, the virtuosic and chromatic departure. *Piano*—elegant fading away into the depths.

#### EIGHT BAGATELLES (1990/91)

1. MIT LAUNE, SEHR RASCH (in a positive mood, very rapid): This cheerful melody unfolding in classic D major, which the musical figure still in contrapuntal texture joins in a joyous rush, is anything but naïve. Pushed aside harmonically, the melody asserts itself again by means of an energetic tonal signal. After chromatic waywardness and horrifying silence a single long bagpipe breath attempts uproariously funny hyperactivity in F-sharp major. No connection is achieved any more without outside assistance. In the silence *bel canto* (*un pochissimo declamato*) is hinted at. The danger *misterioso* (*tremolo*) is opposed by the contrapuntal figure and the clearly delineated scale figures. Of course, no convincing cadence. After two fermatas deeply felt emotion around the subdominant harmony.
2. ANMUTIG (graceful): D major one more time? A pastoral idyll? Indeed, in broad oscillations, witty dwelling in metrical-melodic extensions. Tonal, the entire work does not require a single accidental! In the middle section in a low register the duet is close to healthy earth. A felicitous refrain adorned with embellishments even follows. However, something is now being clarified. From the beginning this round dance was not our possession, not our property. Beauty does not remain. Melody and rhythm lose contour. We cannot and—do not need to—cling on. As the music melts away a new melody emerges from the remaining tones! Heinrich Heine "[...] after all, it stops at a completely different place from where it started" (Wilhelm Killmayer).
3. KOMPLIZIERT, DOCH VERGNÜGT (complicated, but joyous) (originally only entitled "Light"): Now encouragement is called for in order to lithely, although with a limp, prevail on a bumpy path in a complex and brilliant rollercoaster gallop. Proudly swelling scales force themselves up and down and in parallel and all mixed up over stairways and

trap-doors in three sections which are each repeated. Perhaps the blows on the piano lid and keyboard in the performance markings are painful striking of oneself? But no, the marking says “joyous”!

4. LENTO ESPRESSIVO: With 81 broad measures in 4/2 time and lasting 6 minutes it is the longest bagatelle. A monorhythmic cello solo, a series of 36 tones, ignores rules “as a matter of course” (anti-serial!). High ranges are repeated differently two to four times, the only missing d receives the serious sequence in a bright sixth chord. Every step of this lonely path must be individually won, cannot be anticipated, is only chained to the (also dynamic) upwards and downwards motion. The cello repeats the sequence, now so hard pressed by the sounds of the piano that the steps at other pitches sometimes sound forced. After the descending motion all that remains is the onward pulsing of the beginning tones e - f, which swell dissonantly into a cluster that contorts itself in *accelerando* and bursts. The equal pacing is back again, remains the main point of reference until the end; for cantabile approaches via strange chords. The cello searches in vain for a point of re-entry in the sequence. The maximum force of the renewed pressure: from very gradually - more and more - growing in intensity - all the way to *fff* wild and raw (strong bow pressure), striking with the fist, with sounds from seven octaves, emerges at the same time the stable fanfare D flat - A flat - D flat - A flat. After being played eight times, *poco a poco diminuendo (...) niente*, the fanfare also remains still unplayed within us. “Where there is danger, rescue emerges as well”? (Hölderlin) Is there a relationship to the final Chaconne in D flat from Schnittke’s Piano Quintet?

5. STOLPERN UND STOTTERN (stumbling and stuttering): Three complex and opposing phrases complexly displaced in the meter, the energetically bolting Scherzo gestures from Schubert’s String Quintet are only partially quoted. It “stumbles.” An episode in which an intermezzo makes no headway, but instead reduces itself, one at a time, from nine to four tones, flanked by drum beats in the bass. The familiar turn of phrase, strolling at the end, is repeated several times, what is being quoted? The end is there already: gentle *amabile leggiero*. In all, 35 seconds

6. CHIARINA: Dynamic, twofold meaning? Chiarina is the name of the soprano solo trumpet in Italian, but also the title of the eleventh piece, *Passionato*, in Schumann’s “Carnaval;” in German: Klärchen. As the cello tremolo is played, the piano intones the sound and signal of the high trumpet in a unison octave. The following swelling sound, once again swinging to D flat major, as though improvised, could also be called the “warbling figures” of a trumpet in a carefree hour. A test of courage, the need to be comforted, at any event stay in the background; Wilhelm Killmayer never wallows in self-pity. Something has been touched. A bel canto duo ensues, unmistakably intimate due to the piano *portato piu piano* and *pizzicato*, more loving than wistful. Now the cello cantilena begins a (very gentle) solo cadence, from a secondary level—despite some associations blinking in response to the strange harmonies—always in regard to D flat. From a classical appoggiatura six-four chord a sustained tone remains in the tenor range (“...to me the soulful individual tones of a stringed instrument number among the key events in music...” Wilhelm Killmayer). Initially dissonant compared to the crystalline A major seventh chord figure, eventually a minor third becomes a major third over a low, introverted D flat major region.

7. RUHIG, VERHALTEN (quiet, hesitating): Here the part played by the cello is only the harmonic e bowed in the high range six times. Mysteriously valid, woven into a tritone relationship, not harmonically at home. A bass figure also gropes inwards only twice A flat - G - F. The last harmonic is echoed *ppp* in the omnipotent whole-tone chord...

8. L’ECHAPEE DE FIGARO, PRESTO MOLTO: based only on the texture, a highly virtuosic *perpetuo mobile*: the cello part is almost always rapid sixteenth notes. Killmayer expressed his views on pieces like this “[...] the strictly unbroken sixteenth notes fend off the entries of the chaotic and prevent a collapse. Virtuosity as a defense mechanism is developed as a theme here [...]” The fully developed octave writing makes it possible to hear the full commitment, the full determination of the escaping Figaro. And what upheavals, what twists and turns the razor sharpener performs! There are chromatic deformations, daringly strange keys, fleet-footed and confused “accordion basses,” even heartily parodying tuba blasts. What horizon this kind of swift departure has is demonstrated by the *melodia* of classic periodic form in the spirit of the French revolutionary music for wind instruments, of the triumphant cadential signal at the second reentry. The greatness of the civil courage claimed by Wilhelm Killmayer, its “despite everything” will be measured by the person who not only perceives the exuberance, but also the more profound sense of the closing cabaret farce, with taps on the instruments, whistling, stamping of feet, clicking of the tongue, even spoken text.

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