


The Technological Priestess: The Piano Recital, Photography, and Clara Schumann

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Musicologists often consider Clara Schumann to be one of the most influential figures in the establishment of the solo piano recital – a musical experience that encouraged the dominance of the serious music aesthetic. Schumann’s connection to this ideal is perhaps most evident in her enshrinement as the priestess, a nineteenth-century title that honoured the interpretive power of her virtuosic performances. While her commitment to canonical values cannot be questioned, Schumann’s piano virtuosity was also undeniably popular, incredibly physical and acutely tied to the century’s rapidly changing musical and visual technologies.

Attention to the analytical and imaginative connections between these transformative technologies actively complicates the divine, dehumanized and mythological stature that has come to centre Schumann’s historiography. Her mass-produced photographs, and especially her cartes-de-visite, could both compound her priestesshood and stimulate unresolvable fissures within it. Aligned with recent scholarship that expands Schumann’s virtuosity into the realms of the popular, photographs and other forms of mass media reveal the inherent flexibility of the priestess ideology and this mythology’s (seemingly) easy inclusion of various ambiguous and sometimes contradictory ideals. In effect, photographs of Schumann could instigate a kind of exhilarating, cognitive dissonance in their viewers: seeing was not necessarily believing her as only priestess. Seeing could, in fact, mean imagining and reimagining Clara Schumann in all kinds of fantastical ways: ways that aligned her piano virtuosity with the commodified visual technology in an increasingly mechanized world, or ways that underscored her feminine sexuality and virtuosity as socially destabilizing or democratizing.

In *Dreams of Love: Playing the Romantic Pianist*, Ivan Raykoff considers the fascinating historical coincidences between the invention of photography and the invention of the solo piano recital.¹ As Raykoff explains, the 1839 Parisian development of the daguerreotype – the first publicly available photographic process – corresponded with Franz Liszt’s experimentation with a new solo concert format he called ‘musical soliloquies’.² A year later, just as Henry Fox Talbot ‘was perfecting his paper photography method, which enabled multiple prints to be reproduced from a single negative’, Liszt was promoting his London solo concerts as a series of ‘recitals on the pianoforte’.³ While the term recital had well-

¹ Ivan Raykoff, *Dreams of Love: Playing the Romantic Pianist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 102 and 95. See also Alexander Stefaniak, ‘Clara Schumann’s Interiorities and the Cutting Edge of Popular Pianism’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 70/3 (2017): 697–765.

² Raykoff, *Dreams of Love*, 95.

³ Raykoff, *Dreams of Love*, 96.

established associations with historical recitations, legal summations, dramatic interpretations and even vocal music, Liszt's use of the word was new. The musical recital sought to 'reproduce' musical works and values, and the photographic portrait attempted to 'reproduce' aspects of a person's likeness and character.⁴ By the later decades of the nineteenth century, the solo piano recital would sound a standardized, homogenized programmatic structure centred around musical masterworks.⁵ Just as historical and legal recitals had long transmitted certain kinds of knowledge, so the solo piano recital ratified the dominance of the serious music aesthetic and elevated the music of the past. The photograph, while a more artistically suspicious medium, similarly instigated a new relationship to time and history, as it captured moments of the past to be experienced in the present.⁶

Musicologists often position Clara Schumann alongside Liszt as one of the most influential figures in the establishment of the solo piano recital. Even though she adopted this format relatively late in her career, by the early 1840s she had begun transforming her repertoires and pianistic approaches to align with canonical traditions and values.⁷ Her connection to these ideals is perhaps most evident in her enshrinement as the priestess, a nineteenth-century title that honoured her saintly devotion to the work and the interpretive power of her virtuosic performances.⁸ Within this priestess mythology, as Ludim Pedroza writes, 'Schumann came to endorse an aesthetic doctrine that require[d] the performer to render an "exact" – literal, Liszt would have said – likeness of the work'.⁹ Eduard Hanslick described her performances as 'perfect reproductions', and Leopold Zellner acclaimed her 'wondrous clarity and fidelity': both Viennese critics aligned her piano virtuosity with a (divine) reproducibility that intimated early recording

⁴ Jan von Brevorn, 'Resemblance After Photography', *Representations* 123/1 (2013): 10.

⁵ Clara Schumann waited until the 1870s to programme solo recitals. See Kenneth Hamilton, 'Creating the Solo Recital', in *After the Golden Age: Romantic Pianism and Modern Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008): 33–72.

⁶ Raykoff, *Dreams of Love*, 102.

⁷ See Alexander Stefaniak, 'Schumann's Early-Career Concert Vehicles: Transcendent Interiority and the Cutting Edge of Popular Pianism', in *Becoming Clara Schumann: Performance Strategies and Aesthetics in the Culture of the Musical Canon* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021): 1–66.

⁸ For an overview of the serious music aesthetic, questions of piano virtuosity and Clara Schumann's position within these constructs, see David Gramit, 'Performing Musical Culture: The Concert', in *Cultivating Music: The Aspirations, Interests, and Limits of German Musical Culture 1770–1848* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002): 125–60; Alexander Stefaniak, 'Festivals of Virtuoso Priesthood: Collaborating with Clara Schumann and Joseph Joachim', in *Schumann's Virtuosity: Criticism, Composition, and Performance in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016): 195–238; Alexander Stefaniak, 'Clara Schumann and the Imagined Revelation of Musical Works', *Music & Letters* 99/2 (2018): 194–223; and William Weber, 'Classical Music Achieves Hegemony: The Recital, Solo or Otherwise', in *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste: Concert Programming from Haydn to Brahms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 245–51.

⁹ Ludim Pedroza, 'Music as *Communitas*: Franz Liszt, Clara Schumann, and the Musical Work', *Journal of Musicological Research* 29/4 (2010): 314. The title of priestess certainly mitigated the problematic femininity of Schumann's virtuosity. For a brief overview of this argument, see April L. Prince, '(Re)Considering the Priestess: Clara Schumann, Historiography, and the Visual', *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 21 (2017): 107–40.

technology and collided with contemporaneous visual technology.¹⁰ For Raykoff, the piano recital was a kind of 'distribution network' that both anticipated musical recordings and emulated the photograph.¹¹

The recital is a technology – a way of (re)making a repertoire, history, and musical values – comparable to the taking of photographs, its contemporary development, not only the making of sound recordings, a later invention. Like photography, the recital is another technology of nostalgia reproducing an image of the past for the present. 'See it again', says the photograph; 'play it again' says the recital.¹²

Relying on Walter Benjamin's 'Little History of Photography', wherein the philosopher affiliates the new 'understanding of great works' with the development of the 'techniques of reproduction', Raykoff argues that attention to the synchronous developments of the photograph and piano recital can 'reveal a lot about the attractions of the Romantic pianist and the phenomena of musical performance'.¹³ In other words, the recital was an experience that created a 'dynamic interplay between sight, sound, and physicality'.¹⁴ The ontologies of these experiences – the virtuosic piano recital (sound and physicality) and the photograph (sight and physicality) – were tacitly interconnected. Each 'technology' stimulated similar, enthusiastic debates around the meanings of mechanical reproduction, aesthetic seriousness, artistic truth and authentic revelation or resemblance.¹⁵ Ephemeral musical performances coincided with new understandings of seemingly elusive photographic realities, especially in the camera's ability to capture accurate representations of the past.¹⁶ Photography depicted an historical moment

¹⁰ Both review excerpts were from Schumann's successful 1856 Viennese tour. Hanslick begins his oft-cited review with a celebration of Schumann's fidelity to the score and her connection to the Germanic masters: 'She gives a perfect reproduction of each composition, having first understood it in its entirety and then studied it in the utmost detail'. Eduard Hanslick, 'Clara Schumann' in *Hanslick's Music Criticism*, ed. and trans. Henry Pleasants (Toronto: General Publishing Company, 1950): 48. Zellner described her performance of Ludwig van Beethoven's Sonata op. 101 thusly: 'The work belongs to the sibylline books that the lofty master left us from his late period. Our artist has unclasped the seal of the volume, opened the pages, and proclaimed the oracle's speech with wondrous clarity and fidelity'. Ultimately, Zellner and Hanslick imply that when listening to Clara Schumann, audiences 'experience[d] the authentic intentions of composers and the defining truths of masterworks'; Stefaniak, *Becoming Clara Schumann*, 87.

¹¹ Raykoff, *Dreams of Love*, 96.

¹² Raykoff, *Dreams of Love*, 95. See also, Arved Mark Ashby, *Absolute Music, Mechanical Reproductions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010): 160.

¹³ Raykoff, *Dreams of Love*, 95. As Benjamin writes in his 1931 'Little History of Photography', 'It is all too tempting to blame [the decline of artistic appreciation], on a failure of contemporary sensibility. But one is brought up short by the way the understanding of great works was transformed at about the same time the techniques of reproduction were being developed'. Walter Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty and Thomas Y. Leving, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Rodney Livingstone, Howard Eiland and Others (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008): 290.

¹⁴ Raykoff, *Dreams of Love*, 9.

¹⁵ For an overview of the theoretical discourses swirling around photographic resemblance, see Brevern, 'Resemblance After Photography', 1–22.

¹⁶ As Jan von Breven argues, 'Photography faithfully reproduced objects just as they were in the moment of exposure, but that, in able hands, it could also produce a difference

in time, and viewers engaged with that moment in captivating and confusing ways. In her decidedly interpretive performances, Schumann created a fascinating and similarly complicated engagement with the realities of the musical past. To be sure, the serious music aesthetic championed by Clara Schumann devalued music's 'explanatory narrative', exacerbated the necessity of the visual and elevated the import of the physical; 'performers bodies, in the act of realizing music ... helped to transliterate musical sound into musical meaning'.¹⁷ As Richard Leppert summarizes:

The nineteenth century marks the establishment of one of modernity's defining principles: it was the age of the visual, the time when we acquired our 'common sense' that a picture is worth a thousand words, and that seeing is believing.¹⁸

In the era of cultivating musical experiences, looking became an ever-more essential part of listening.

Attention to the analytical and imaginative connections between transformative visual and musical technologies actively complicates the divine, dehumanized and mythological stature that has become central to Schumann's historiography.¹⁹ Her mass-produced photographs, and especially her *cartes-de-visite*, could both compound her priestessness and stimulate unresolvable fissures within it. These images affirmed Clara Schumann's embodied piano virtuosity and opened up new ways to witness the sundry musical meanings that circulated around her. Clara Schumann in *carte-de-visite*, machine-made visual form, seemingly collapses the boundaries between high art and mass culture, between the 'purely' musical and extra-musical, between the virtuoso and anti-virtuoso and between the mindful and embodied. In embracing and perpetuating the ideology of the priestess within the confines of the piano recital, Clara Schumann carefully cultivated an almost benign version of public, female celebrity. She was so successful in fact, that the ideals of the priestess, combined with her serious approaches to virtuosity, have quieted the powerful ambiguities that were inevitably present in her performances – and in the performances of all publicly performing women. Her 'exterior' musical personality (as piano virtuoso, as woman) was often balanced with an emphasis on her 'interior' identity (as serious music interpreter, as priestess).²⁰ In other words, Schumann's potentially transgressive, publicly displayed femininity could intensify the tensions around the physicality of piano virtuosity: her domesticated 'exterior' masked the presence of her always-threatening 'interior',

from reality as it was known. The unsettling experience with photography was that it sometimes showed the world in a manner very different from how one was used to perceiving it, while there could be no doubt that it was the world itself being captured'. Brevem, 'Resemblance After Photography', 16.

¹⁷ Richard Leppert, 'Cultural Contradiction, Idolatry, and the Piano Virtuoso: Franz Liszt', in *Piano Roles: Three Hundred Years of Life with the Piano*, ed. James Parakilas (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999): 255.

¹⁸ Leppert, 'Cultural Contradiction', 255.

¹⁹ Attention to Schumann's more complicated, nuanced virtuosity initiates more ambivalent understandings of her musicality, which align with Alexander Stefaniak's recent arguments. As he notes, 'For [Robert Schumann], transcendent virtuosity was always an open question – not a straightforward category but an ideal that was subject to negotiation and reinterpretation'. Stefaniak, *Schumann's Virtuosity*, 7.

²⁰ Stefaniak, *Schumann's Virtuosity*, 15.

just as the interiority of her performances mediated the physicality of her incredible virtuosity. As listeners navigated the uncertainties of Schumann's feminine virtuosity and its connection to piano and recital technologies, the photograph becomes another technological medium that revelled in these unresolvable and captivating tensions.

By their very nature, mass-produced visual artefacts seem to delight in their banal, aesthetically suspect, embodied, capitalistic and democratized tangibility – qualities in tension with the priestess mythology. Patented in 1854 by André Disdéri, *cartes-de-visite* were small, sturdy photographs that ran 8.9 by 5.6 centimetres. Using a special multi-lens camera and moving plate holder, the photographer could make multiple copies of one sitting, which meant these images were much easier and faster to take, reproduce and sell in mass quantities. Not only were *cartes* cheap and plentiful, but their short, two-second exposure time also ensured detailed clarity.²¹ Because of their affordability and photographic precision, visiting cards soon caused an 'European-wide sensation, especially for celebrity portraits', as they were 'handled, circulated, and traded ... and readily slipped in and out of the windows of photograph albums', pockets, purses and cigarette cases.²² For Benjamin, mass-produced photographs challenged artistic uniqueness, creativity and authority by way of their unabashed capitalistic production; these artefacts became bound to a social function based on 'politics' instead of 'ritual'.²³ Certainly, *cartes-de-visite* were met with disdain both within and beyond the nineteenth century because they seemingly represented 'capitalism incarnate' by 'too obediently embody[ing] the sensibilities, economic ambitions and political self-understandings of the middle class'.²⁴ It was, of course, the very reproducibility of *cartes* that allowed them to move through society in new ways and raise new questions of artistic distribution, consumption, celebrity and everyday life.

As Geoffrey Batchen argues, *cartes-de-visite* categorically displaced notions of artistic individuality and innovation. Instead, they reified the 'creative role played by the viewer of the photograph'.²⁵ Similarly, Eva Giloi suggests that

consumers introduced their own subjectivity into the act of circulating the objects, deciding how to handle them and where to situate them, symbolically and physically,

²¹ Geoffrey Batchen, 'Dreams of Ordinary Life', in *Photography: Theoretical Snapshots*, ed. J.J. Long, Andrea Noble and Edward Welch (London: Routledge, 2009): 81. In 1860, the typical rate for *cartes* in France was 30F for 25 *carte* with two poses, 50F for 50 *cartes* with three poses, and 70F for 100 *cartes* with four poses. In Britain, some of the highest quality celebrity *cartes* during the 1860 sold for around 1s6d. While primarily associated with the middle classes, access to the *carte* was truly widespread. As John Plunkett outlines, 'The *carte-de-visite* had a distinctly egalitarian aesthetic. As the *Reader* put it in its edition of 9 August 1862, "Here there is no barrier of rank, no chancel end; the poorest carries his three inches of cardboard, and the richest can claim no more"'. John Plunkett, '*Carte-de-Visite*' in *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*, ed. John Hannavy (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2013): 276.

²² Eva Giloi, '"So Writes the Hand that Swings the Sword": Autograph Hunting and Royal Charisma in the German Empire, 1861–1888', in *Constructing Charisma: Celebrity, Fame, and Power in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Edward Benson and Eva Giloi (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013): 47.

²³ The *carte* pushes Benjamin's theories to the extreme, given that the mode of production itself was based on multiples. There was no authentic original.

²⁴ Batchen, 'Dreams of Ordinary Life', 81. See also Rachel Teukolsky, 'Cartomania: Sensation, Celebrity, and the Democratized Portrait', *Victorian Studies* 57/3 (2015): 462–75.

²⁵ Batchen, 'Dreams of Ordinary Life', 94.

in their daily lives. By personalizing the collector's experience ... the *carte-de-visite* album placed the consumer at the forefront of his or mediated interaction.²⁶

Within this medium, Clara Schumann had agency over her sartorial choices, backdrops, surrounding props and bodily poses; she had freedom to curate certain ideals of her public, musical celebrity. But, once the *cartes* were in the hands of the viewers, she had no control in how her photographs moved through idiosyncratic personal and private spaces, or what meanings they might set in motion.²⁷ Small enough to hold in your hand and examine carefully, *cartes* encouraged a deeply personal (and physical) engagement with the sitter, allowing the viewer to create new kinds of musical and visual realities: 'to form imaginary worlds that overcame time and space, class and gender'.²⁸ For Batchen, these creative possibilities directly resulted from the *cartes'* repetitive predictability. Visiting cards demanded and required *more* imaginative work on behalf of the viewer – privileging the *viewer's* experience above that of the artwork itself.

After all, anyone looking at a *carte-de-visite* photograph in the 1860s or 1870s would have known what we know now – that these figures are posing for a camera, pretending to be somewhere they are not, standing next to a studio prop in front of a painted backdrop. In [some] *cartes*, you can see the edges of the painted backdrop and the base of the head stand, as if revealing the means of production will make no difference to the viewing experience. Photography's realism is thereby openly declared an artifice, a matter of conventions. For an emotional connection to be established with the subject, a viewer is forced to look beyond these conventions, beyond the surface of the picture and the world it represents. To put it another way, the very banality of the *carte-de-visite* portrait, the lack of imagination evidenced in the actual picture, is precisely what shifts the burden of imaginative thought from the artist to the viewer. It is an open invitation to see more than meets the eye. This might lead us to the following paradoxical proposition: the more banal the photograph, the greater its capacity to induce us to exercise our imaginations.²⁹

Put another way, mass-produced photographs asked viewers to engage with the visual in new ways – ways that seemingly followed traditional conventions of looking, but ways that dramatically displaced the primacy of artistic creativity. By collecting Schumann's *cartes*, listeners could create a dynamic, living experience of the priestess; consumers could refashion her public musical expressions within the confines of their private and intimate lives. Just as piano virtuosos provoked all kinds of musical anxieties, part of the photographs' fascination perhaps similarly rested in their abilities to destabilize, celebrate and question the uneasy boundaries around public and private behaviour.

²⁶ Giloi, 'So Writes the Hand that Swings the Sword', 47.

²⁷ As Batchen continues, 'The public rooms tended to be exotically decorated and offered a variety of painted backdrops and props for customers to choose. Compared to the earlier processes such as the daguerreotype, this vastly increased the degree of theatricality and control that the consumer had over his or her final image ... As a consequence, the power of creation was transferred from the photographer, who was often no more than an operator behind a fixed camera, to the subject, who got to make all sorts of choices about how they wished to appear'. Batchen, 'Dreams of Ordinary Life', 82.

²⁸ Batchen, 'Dreams of Ordinary Life', 91.

²⁹ Batchen, 'Dreams of Ordinary Life', 94.

In my previous work, which positioned Schumann's visual legacy as an important aspect of her reception, I advocated for analytical and interpretive freedom regarding her portraits.³⁰ My analyses sought to access the ways her publicly performing feminine body complicated a reception history that hinged on a masculine, mindful aesthetic.³¹ This article builds on those ideas, especially given that mass-produced images seem to invite us to centre Schumann's corporality and to experiment with historical interpretation *even more*. Indeed, for Rachel Teukolsky, these machine-made objects counter the 'prudery and puritanical attitudes' that are usually highlighted in nineteenth-century middle-class sensibility, and instead reveal 'an overwhelming and almost delirious investment in physical life and physical pleasure'.³² Teukolsky positions mass-produced photographs as another crucial piece of the sensationalist aesthetic – a concept most often associated with novels of the era.³³ The sensational elicited physiological responses through cultivated novelties, suggestions of criminality or confusions of class

³⁰ See Prince, '(Re)Considering the Priestess', 107–40.

³¹ By deviancy, I attach Clara Schumann to charges of transgression that had the potential to define *all* women as such, but *especially* those performing publicly. Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres makes this point explicit regarding nineteenth-century German women writers. "In the specific case of Germany, the struggle to assert and identify oneself as a woman seems historically to have been especially difficult ... [and it has] more to do with the widespread dismissive and often negative view toward women who attempted to enter a realm in which they were generally not welcome ... The situation was exacerbated by an ongoing problematic relationship between German women in general and the judicial system: women were essentially deprived of numbers of rights that would have acknowledged and permitted their autonomy; they were in fact legally grouped with the young, and occasionally even with the deviant'. Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres, *Respectability and Deviance: Nineteenth-Century German Women Writers and the Ambiguity of Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998): 9–10. When considering women in the performing arts, Robert Montemorra Marvin writes that 'It was ... common to singing actresses and speaking actresses that their authority, independence and power both repelled and attracted male spectators because of the threat posed to male hegemony, while the freedom from norms that these features suggested intrigued female spectators ... the theatrical display of the female body encouraged their objectification, commodification, and sexualization, making them alluring and seductive'. Roberta Montemorra Marvin, 'Idealizing the Prima Donna in Mid-Victorian London', in *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Rachel Cowgill and Hilary Poriss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 23. As a publicly performing woman, Schumann inevitably challenged social norms. She also frequently shared the stage with some of the most prominent and important operatic performers of the era. The source material for the regulation of nineteenth-century femininity is copious. For a brief overview of materials that focus on the musical and performative, see also Daniel Chua, 'On Women' and 'On Masculinity', in *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 136–49; Tracy C. Davis, *Actresses as Working Women* (London: Routledge, 1991); Richard Leppert, 'Sexual Identity, Death and the Family Piano' and 'Piano, Misogyny, and "The Kreutzer Sonata"', in *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993): 119–87; and Ruth Solie "'Girling" at the Parlor Piano', in *Music in Other Words: Victorian Conversations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004): 85–117.

³² Rachel Teukolsky, *Picture World: Image, Aesthetics, and Victorian New Media* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020): 15.

³³ For an overview of sensationalism in nineteenth-century novels see Andrew Radford, *Victorian Sensation Fiction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) and Andrew Maunder, ed., *Varieties of Women's Sensation Fiction: 1855–1890: Volume 1, Sensationalism and the Sensation Debate* (London: Pickering, 2004).

and gender; for Teukolsky, these experiences could also be occasioned by a 'series of *image* effects, a form of visuality associated with a new, problematic female celebrity'.³⁴ Given that publicly performing women inherently challenged ideals of respectable femininity, their *cartes-de-visite* also

invited physiological response, as a woman's body could be bought and sold and handled in card format. But the image component of this equation added an element of fantasy, a web of socially-constructed visual meanings that filtered and shaped the physical effects of perception. This imagery suggests the power of new media, and of mediation itself, in creating the sensation phenomenon.³⁵

As such, Teukolsky invites us to think generously about these frequently disdained historical artefacts; to take them seriously; 'to locate authentic feeling in some very inauthentic places'.³⁶

In centring viewers' (and listeners') imaginations *vis-à-vis* the *carte-de-visite*, this article draws on a kind of reception history that is at times analytically speculative. Melanie Lowe's work, in particular, seems especially applicable to Clara Schumann, considering she is a musician whose historiography is perpetually caught up in the (oppressive) tensions between the 'prevailing binary opposition of musical and extra-musical meaning'.³⁷ As Lowe examines the ways eighteenth-century listeners constructed mindful and emotional responses to music, she positions the listener as a crucial and 'rather messy' interdependent piece in accessing historical meaning.³⁸ Lowe argues that 'there are as many interpretations as experiences, as many experiences as listeners, and as many meanings constructed as

³⁴ Teukolsky, 'Cartomania', 463. As Teukolsky writes, the images induced a physiological and erotic experience of female celebrity, one with which we are now very familiar: 'While photography scholars have trained us to read the medium's transcriptions of reality with skepticism, Victorian critics often took a contrasting view, fixating upon photography's primal touch of light to an exposed surface. The mythical purity of that exposure ... imparted to a photographed body an inexorable materiality, no matter how mediated the image itself might have been. Photography's new, haptic visuality inaugurated an eroticized celebrity culture organized around pictures of women's bodies, a connection that has come to be definitive in our own contemporary media culture'. Teukolsky, *Picture World*, 217.

³⁵ Teukolsky, 'Cartomania', 463.

³⁶ Teukolsky, *Picture World*, 14. Teukolsky argues powerfully against the continual disparagement of these media: 'For scholars trained in forms of aesthetic high culture, mass-cultural items or technologies are often consigned to a denigrated realm of "guilty pleasures". This book takes a different view. I suggest that culture consumption does not take place away from the self, or beyond identity, merely in off-hours or apart from truly important matters. The very concept of ephemera, locating certain forms of culture in the margins, is incommensurate with its import in conjuring aspects of self and identity. We are often purposeful in choosing our mass-produced worlds, in whatever forms these materialize'. *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁷ Melanie Lowe, *Pleasure and Meaning in the Classical Symphony* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007): 5. I rely on Lowe because of her willingness to embrace the fictive in historical writing. For additional discourse on nineteenth-century listening, see Thomas Christensen, 'Four-Hand Piano Transcription and Geographies of Nineteenth-Century Musical Reception', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 52/ 2 (1999): 255–98; Mark Evan Bonds, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); and Leon Botstein, 'Listening through Reading: Musical Literacy and the Concert Audience', *19th-Century Music* 16/2 (1992): 129–45.

³⁸ Lowe, *Pleasure and Meaning*, 5.

listening subjects capable of performing even the simplest of performative acts'.³⁹ Ultimately, by concentrating on the listeners' subjectivity, Lowe creates a theoretical structure that reasserts the import of extra-musical meaning within the frame of serious, absolute music. In an attempt to retrieve the listener's subjectivity, Lowe experiments with 'musical-historical writing ... that not only takes the role of the fictive for granted in historical narrative, but embraces it unabashedly in a pursuit of plausible, if not probable, historical meaning'.⁴⁰

In effect, photographs of Schumann could instigate a kind of exhilarating, cognitive dissonance in their viewers: seeing was *not* necessarily believing her only as priestess. Seeing could, in fact, mean imagining and reimagining Clara Schumann in all kinds of fantastical ways: ways that aligned her piano virtuosity with the commodified visual technology in an increasingly mechanized world, or ways that underscored her feminine sexuality and virtuosity as socially destabilizing or democratizing. The two analytical snapshots that follow seek to tease out possible 'ways of seeing' that might instigate moments of reimagination or even ambivalence. My interpretations follow the trajectory of the arguments by Batchen and Teukolsky, who in their insistence upon viewer agency, encourage multivalent and creative analytical approaches. In so doing, I try to recapture some of the sensationalist aesthetic that these *cartes* introduced; I attend especially to the images' (very real) depictions of celebrity female bodies and the compositional elements that surround and frame it.⁴¹ These imaginary readings pay special attention to the composition of the *cartes* and the sundry interpretations they might invoke for viewers of all kinds. My positionality as a removed, twenty-first viewer considers the rhetoric of the photograph, embraces 'a visual habit of picturing social, political, and cultural life' and affirms the fluidity of photographic meanings circulating across space and time.⁴² I welcome aspects of the emotional, the contingent and the imaginative in hopes to explore the ways different kinds of viewers might have responded to these photographs. As Cara Finnegan writes, 'We cannot study photographs without engaging the interpretive communities surrounding them'.⁴³ Following these creative readings, I create a brief, fictional vignette that positions Schumann's *cartes* inside a personal, imagined photo album from the later nineteenth century.⁴⁴ Precisely because mass-produced images were so deeply commodified, so socially unstable and so artistically suspect, these artefacts can provide banal, yet enticing experiences – for the viewers and sitters (and even historians).

Ways of Seeing: Commodifying

Over the course of the century, fears swirled around the virtuoso pianist as a figure who could disrupt musical markets and cheapen the musical work. These charges underscored the uneasiness around the commodification of art, which

³⁹ Lowe, *Pleasure and Meaning*, 20.

⁴⁰ Lowe, *Pleasure and Meaning*, 79.

⁴¹ *Cartes* provided much more specific details to women's bodies than other mediums, and 'responses to carte portraiture dwelled upon the materiality of the image, reflecting the way that the imagery concentrated in itself many of the Victorian desires and anxieties surrounding embodiment'. Teukolsky, *Picture World*, 264–5.

⁴² Cara A. Finnegan, *Making Photography Matter: A Viewer's History from the Civil War to the Great Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015): 5.

⁴³ Finnegan, *Making Photography Matter*, 6.

⁴⁴ See also 'Enlightening the Listening Subject' in Lowe, *Pleasure and Meaning*, 70–98.

reverberated from their instrument, to their mechanized performances and to the mass appeal of their repertoire. As serious music advocates sought to fix Schumann as a performer of cultivation and divinity, photographs of her could effortlessly summon problematic associations with commodification and, tangentially, problematical virtuosic musical experiences. For, by their very nature, *cartes* were designed to be commodities: they were *meant* to be bought and sold and traded as objects. As Batchen notes,

The *carte-de-visite* is a particularly distinctive commodity form because what is being exchanged is pictures of people. The person being photographed is turned into a thing, a picture, and then the thing is sold, exchanged and consumed.⁴⁵

As piano virtuosos flooded the musical markets, having the potential to upend musical economies, their *carte* could either mute or heighten their threat to the serious-music infrastructure.⁴⁶ In machine-made, cheap form, a *carte* of Schumann could ‘simultaneously [distance] her (by turning her into a reproduction) and [bring] her closer (by dislodging her former “cult value”).’⁴⁷ Schumann-as-commodity could normalize her publicly displayed femininity and, subsequently, the physicality of musical expression: her *cartes* conform to the sameness across all middle-class *cartes*.⁴⁸ As such, however, her musical expression could then be sublimated to an industrialized ordinariness, compromising the divine aesthetic of the priestess.

And, while photographs of Schumann could be understood as expendable commodities in their own right, the use of familiar photographic props meant that the medium’s composition relied on even *more* commodities – more *objects* – to situate and inscribe the sitter’s social identity. As photographic technologies progressively saturated visual culture, critics of the era called their associated props out as overly familiar and overused. Benjamin, perhaps unsurprisingly, identifies these props as pointless ‘junk’ that compromised the artistic integrity of the image; for Batchen, however, ‘it is precisely in this junking, in the banal detritus generated by the reproduction process, that photography’s political efficacy is best sought.’⁴⁹ As with *cartes* more generally, Clara Schumann’s show a variety of photographic props, many of which appear in a kind of repeated familiarity.⁵⁰ In some photographs she stands or sits alone with few markers to ascertain space, while in others,

⁴⁵ Batchen, ‘Dreams of Ordinary Life’, 87.

⁴⁶ See Gramit, ‘The Threat from Within: The Virtuoso’, in his *Cultivating Music*, 139–43.

⁴⁷ Batchen, ‘Dreams of Ordinary Life’, 90.

⁴⁸ Batchen, ‘Dreams of Ordinary Life’, 88: ‘Similar poses were endlessly repeated in photograph after photograph, as predictable as the rectangular format itself’.

⁴⁹ Batchen, ‘Dreams of Ordinary Life’, 90. In an extended denunciation, Benjamin argues ‘The accessories in such portraits, with the columns, balustrades and little oval tables, recall the time when one had to give the models points of support so they could remain steady during the long exposure ... Next came the columns or the curtain. Even in the ‘60s accomplished men protested against this junk ... At that time arose the ateliers with their draperies and palms, goblins and easels, which stand so ambivalently between execution and representation, torture chamber and throne room’. Walter Benjamin, ‘A Short History of Photography’, in *Classic Essays*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven: Leete’s Island Books, 1980): 206.

⁵⁰ For a broader discussion of nineteenth-century celebrity culture, see Francesca Vella, ‘Jenny Lind, Voice, Celebrity’, *Music & Letters* 98/2 (2017): 232–54 and Edward Benson and Eva Giloi, eds., *Constructing Charisma*.



Fig. 1 *Carte-de-visite* of Clara Schumann taken around 1862 by an unknown photographer. Courtesy of the Robert Schumann Haus in Zwickau.

the objects initiate associations to her active performing career, middle-class identity, powerful musicality and, inevitably, to her transgressive femininity as a publicly performing woman. As with the commodity status of Schumann herself, these commodities find ways to normalize and disrupt.

We see a range of familiar props in Schumann's *cartes*: elaborate columns, cascading curtains, ornate rugs, *Biedermeier* furniture, books, bowls, ink pots, fashionable clothing and accessories, and, somewhat surprising in Schumann's case, an upright piano and sheet music.⁵¹ Figure 1, especially, seems to overuse accessories in delightful and disruptive ways. Taken during a time of Schumann's international concertizing and incredible success, this German *carte-de-visite* from 1862 relies on gratuitous, even overwhelming accessories to assert Schumann's virtuosic mobility and success.⁵² When combined with Schumann's lavish attire and crowned photographic lighting, these objects work hard to underscore her prominence and prestige. On the one hand, Schumann seems to be almost otherworldly;

⁵¹ There are very few photographs of Clara Schumann with a piano or sitting at the piano in active engagement.

⁵² See my alternative analysis of this image in Prince, '(Re)Considering the Priestess', 136–8.

she cannot be defined by banal, everyday objects. On the other hand, however, these objects might suggest the disorder Schumann inherently instigates. The partially obscured column, often representative of Classical ideals and masculine rationality, sits easily alongside props that were often used to denote the domestic drawing room: the ornately decorated table leg, floral-embellished bowl and stack of books. Seemingly piled on top of one another and assembled in the corner of the photograph, these well-established signifiers cannot even fit into the frame – they are pushed behind Schumann in a jumbled array. All of these props, therefore, do little to establish themselves as signifiers of anything specific; rather their meaning is in their sheer commodified excess and almost confusing clutter. In other words, these props bewilder *both* spatial and gender hierarchies, and this way the image invites the viewer to make sense of this commodified mayhem. The material culture could easily represent the disordering of public and private that Schumann instigates, while also perhaps visually representing her seeming disdain for any kind of gender order. For that matter, in an era where the serious aesthetic depended on a kind of idealized ordering of the mindful (masculine) over the bodily (feminine), this image dynamically dissolves that hierarchy.

This vibrant *carte* stimulates a curious tension with [Figure 2](#), captured a mere three years earlier. While the column is pushed almost outside of the photographic frame in [Figure 1](#), the ornamental column here stands prominently and almost too enormously – practically the size of Schumann herself. Perhaps adorned with a black shawl that draws attention to her billowing white sleeves, her attire neatly blends with the column's colour and textured base. Her deep connection to the artistically serious is made explicit through a photographic prop that, as mentioned earlier, evokes 'strength and historical patrimony, or civilization', and yet the clout here seems distributed equally between the two figures.⁵³ Schumann's waist even aligns with the plinth of the column, where she rests her right arm. This column, therefore, while working to associate her with masculine authority, just as easily underscores her formidable, feminine power. The image seems caught in between a figurative balance between feminine subservience and empowered dominance. This tension also seems evident in [Figure 3](#), one of the few photographs of her to include a piano, and one of the only photographs I have seen that features her alone, seated at the keyboard *and* playing. The upright, decorative piano, sheet music, and ornamental stool underscore the privacy and domesticity of the image. However, this cabinet card exudes powerful excess in the tasselled stool with its opulent, spiralled legs, upon which Schumann sits in an incredibly lavish, ruffled skirt, bracelet and ornate hair snood.⁵⁴ This artefact documents the sheer, matter-of-fact dominance of Schumann who overwhelms the space and piano, both seeming surprisingly small and insignificant in her presence. The instrument even drifts slightly outside of the frame. As with the famous 1854 Adolph von Menzel chalk drawing, the image cannot seemingly contain *both* Schumann and her instrument.⁵⁵ In contrast with von Menzel's work, however, which denied us access to her playing hands in a public concert, Schumann seems to invite our view in private. She allows us generous access to her hand placement and technique. And, as opposed to looking at the score, Schumann

⁵³ Leppert, *The Sight of Sound*, 95.

⁵⁴ This image is a larger cabinet card.

⁵⁵ See my analysis of Adolph von Menzel's drawing in Prince, '(Re)Considering the Priestess', 130–36.



Fig. 2 *Carte-de-visite* of Clara Schumann taken in 1859 by Julie Haftner in Vienna. Courtesy of the Robert Schumann Haus in Zwickau.

turns her body towards us. Here, she almost encourages the visual commodification of her musical expression.

Photographs also persistently suggest her success within the musical marketplace: her virtuosic travel, dedication to her concertizing and organizational activities. Figures 2, 4, 5, and 6 show prominently displayed pocket watches, an especially personal item that had clear associations with *bourgeois* modernity, the capitalist workday and personal reliability. Schumann's adornment visibly symbolized the necessity of synchronicity when traveling long distances and, in particular, the 'post-1850 transformation of transport and communication which rapidly created a need to coordinate time measurement for people in widely dispersed locations'.⁵⁶ The repeated inclusion of this jewellery summons her celebrated, international touring of the 1860s, as do the traveling clothes in Figure 7. Her

⁵⁶ Jerrold Seigel, *Modernity and Bourgeois Life: Society, Politics and Culture in England, France, and Germany Since 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 269.



Fig. 3 Cabinet Card of Clara Schumann taken around 1878 by Franz Hanfstaengl in Munich. Courtesy of the Robert Schumann Haus in Zwickau.

spectacular bonnet with its large bow, flowers and lace trim accents her fur-lined travelling coat, ruffled sleeves and billowing, embellished skirt. Schumann's fashionable dress, while calling attention to her movement through both public and



Fig. 4 *Carte-de-visite* of Clara Schumann taken around 1864 by G.&A. Overbeck in Düsseldorf. Courtesy of the Robert Schumann Haus in Zwickau.

private spaces, reminds the viewer of her feminine celebrity and financial successes.

By invoking time and motion, all frozen within the photograph, these details persuade us to consider Schumann's inherent connection to the *most* powerful technological symbol of nineteenth-century modernity: the train. Itself a kind of floating signifier, the locomotive represented industrialized innovation, mechanized prowess, social disruption and irreversible change.⁵⁷ And, by connecting

⁵⁷ Indeed, music critics and caricaturists frequently likened virtuoso pianists to literal musical machines. There are wonderful caricatures of Liszt as a steam engine and



Fig. 5 *Carte-de-visite* of Clara Schumann taken in 1863 or 1864 by Franz Hanfstaengl in Munich. Courtesy of the Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg.

Schumann to a machine whose ‘technical “rationality” ... remained outside the scope of common knowledge’, this frequent prop perhaps further elevates her virtuosity and her publicly displayed femininity ‘beyond the scope of ordinary understanding’.⁵⁸ In this case, however, I would argue that this symbol simultaneously suggests a liberation from private, domestic activities. This hyper-masculine symbol of technology becomes feminized and commodified. It is intimately affixed to Schumann’s body (Figures 2, 4, and 6) and carefully held in her hand (Figure 5). In this way Schumann asserts the ease, frequency and independence with which she moves throughout public spaces; she persistently reminds the viewer of the instability of both her musicality *and* her gender identity.

Thalberg as a performer with some eight arms and sprocket-like elbows. See Leppert, ‘Cultural Contradiction’, 272–8.

⁵⁸ Leppert, ‘Cultural Contradiction’, 273.



Fig. 6 *Carte-de-visite* of Clara Schumann taken around 1868 by Herbert Watkins in London. Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London.

The 'junk' in Schumann's *cartes-de-visite*, therefore, intertwine her public and private identities almost effortlessly – these things can become highly political. While often mundane and quotidian, the everyday, unquestionable commodities at the centre of Schumann's (seemingly) banal photographs could conform to the dominant *bourgeois* aesthetic or fade into the background. Many of these choices, in fact, confirm Schumann's class and gender belonging, and the 'sublimation of the individual to the mass'.⁵⁹ Because of her celebrity status, however, Schumann-as-commodity could instigate *more* attention to her individuality, not necessarily less. The props can just as easily provoke, confound and, in so doing, demand the viewer's attention. To be sure, these artefacts seemingly delight in stimulating fanciful and sentimental reactions in their viewers; as a commodity Schumann becomes intimately connected to those that look.⁶⁰ In *carte* form, her associated piano virtuosity is powerful in its ambiguities. She is divinely inspired,

⁵⁹ Batchen, 'Dreams of Ordinary Life', 88.

⁶⁰ Batchen, 'Dreams of Ordinary Life', 92.



Fig. 7 *Carte-de-visite* of Clara Schumann taken in 1864 by H. Prothmann in Königsberg. Courtesy of the Robert Schumann Haus in Zwickau.

decidedly independent, delightfully transgressive, mechanically powerful and undeniably popular.

Ways of Seeing: Democratizing

From their destabilizing repertoire that blurred generic boundaries and spatial locales, to their hyper-physical performing bodies that could invoke charges of *Handwerk* or aristocratic effeminacy, the virtuoso pianist could upend and subvert *bourgeois* mores at the centre of serious musical experiences. Virtuoso pianists distracted and engaged listeners by their fantastical physical abilities, elevated the bodily (feminine) over the mindful (masculine) and celebrated their own individuality at the expense the work. In essence, their performances had the capacity to problematize social class, gender expressions and the hierarchical goals of a cultivating musical experience. Even as Clara Schumann became increasingly aligned with the musically serious, her virtuosic performances certainly evoked these spurious suggestions – especially given the immediate associations her public performing, deviant feminine body could elicit. Her celebrity *cartes-de-visite* intensified these possibilities.

Akin to the embodied experience of piano virtuosity, the tactility and corporality of the photographic medium meant that the celebrity *cartes* were ‘both titillating and aesthetic’.⁶¹ This tantalization was achieved most often through photography’s intimation of women’s sexual immodesty or immorality – through its suggestive displacement of traditional gender hierarchies. Teukolsky situates this sensationalist experience inside of the medium’s processes and modes of engagement.

A photographic portrait is not the mere mute objectification of a person, but rather a lingering engagement with that person’s intimate, unique surfaces, a literal touching of the body with light ... [For example,] even though Queen Victoria’s portraits seem stubbornly tame, they became sensationalized, even sexualized, in photographic form: the medium itself was touching her. The *carte* thus offered a two-way street between sensation and perception, between the sitter’s body and the viewer’s body – mediated by a two-dimensional “skin”, to be collected and possessed in hand-sized cards easily touched or passed around. Unlike a painting or even a larger-sized print, the *carte* offered a unique experience of tactility and proximity.⁶²

While actresses and operatic stars were sometimes captured in a range of erotic poses and facades, *cartes* instigated greater accessibility and physical engagement, sexualizing even the most modest and ordinary woman’s body.

By their very nature, therefore, photographs of Schumann celebrated her feminine sexuality and the physical sensations her body could provoke, just as they tried so desperately to control it. Figure 5, for example, accentuates photographic technology by using incredibly bright light, drawing attention to the intimacy of photography and dramatically emphasizing how the ‘medium ... was touching her’. In Franz Hanfstaengl’s 1860 image, a photo by a famous, well-respected studio, we can plainly see the mole on her left cheek, the sheen of her dark hair, and the fine bones and veins of her hands. Her corporality is front and centre. In most of her photographs, Schumann’s hands resist and defy our full gaze. Figure 5,

⁶¹ Teukolsky, ‘Cartomania’, 468.

⁶² Teukolsky, ‘Cartomania’, 472–3.

however, shows them in a kind of striking, dynamic movement in dramatically highlighted display. The openness of the photograph and the lack of any true spatial orientation exaggerates the suggestions of movement; we can place her almost anywhere. To draw the viewer's attention further, Schumann's watch chain drapes neatly around her left wrist, while her right hand wears a band. Her left hand gently grasps her shawl, which floats around her waist, gently held by her thumb and forefinger. When coupled with her open shoulders, profiled gaze, small smile and full-length posture, it becomes impossible to deny the emphasis on the feminine body: the photograph's erotic potential. This dramatic lighting of the photograph is evident again in Figure 6. While this photograph appears more modest, restrictive and static, as Schumann denies us access to her body by wrapping her arms around her waist, slumping slightly forward and awkwardly resting her elbow, the photographic light shines vividly on the left side of her face. It touches her skin with intimate warmth, creates an obvious shadow on her right cheek and shines brightly on her perfectly styled hair. A closed book mirrors her closed posture, and yet its pages face us. We can make out the sharp details of its rumpled pages, as if it summons us to open it – to read what is written on its pages – to see what is inside its cover; it serves as a metaphor for the potential sexual availability of the celebrity widow who sits beside with her body bathed in photographic light.

The technological lighting of Figure 1 also draws overt attention to Schumann's profile, clasped hands, shoulders, and arms. Her slight reclined pose invites our appraisal of her body, and resonates in an intriguing way with Figure 8. In most cases, Schumann's body appears more controlled, or perhaps less dynamic, through static poses and restrained, modest clothing; she rarely even looks at us directly or holds an active facial expression.⁶³ This image, perhaps more than the others, feels almost too informal and relaxed: too human. While this *carte* results in a more muted lighting technique, there is a vibrant interplay between the darkness of the background and the colour of Schumann's skin. The overall texture of the photograph appears soft and, when combined with her overly relaxed pose, casually crossed legs and smile, this photograph highlights a side of Schumann that feels vulnerable and exposed, as if we intrude by looking. Taken by one of the first professional woman photographers, Bertha Wehnert-Beckmann, this image somehow feels more familiar and much more comfortable. It eschews the unnatural stiffness that sometimes pervades her (and, really, all) *cartes*. Because we know the photographer is a woman, this photo seems to break the *façade* that the other images more forcefully uphold. Schumann refuses to perform or conform her body into an accepted position of feminine modesty. Here, she is *truly* in a private, feminine space – a space that seemingly encourages her to un-discipline her body.⁶⁴ Figures 1, 5 and 8 are particularly destabilizing. In effect, these images

⁶³ It is as almost if she was aware of the panoptical, class and gender disciplining possibilities of the camera itself. See Michael Foucault, 'Panopticism', in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1991): 195–230. Her restrained facial expressions also speak to the import of physiognomic appeal. These 'scientific' ideas emphasized that facial features could reveal a person's morality, intelligence and general character.

⁶⁴ This reading could be understood to essentialize or over-simplify the gendered aspects of this unique photograph, or implicitly suggest that all women photographers would have a more relaxed relationship with women sitters. While I am aware of these possible pitfalls, it is nevertheless fascinating to get a glimpse into what *might* have been a more exclusive,



Fig. 8 *Carte-de-visite* of Clara Schumann taken around 1866 by Bertha Wehnert-Beckmann in Leipzig. Courtesy of the Robert Schumann Haus in Zwickau.

disrupt and confuse the dominant idealization of Schumann herself: as modest, constrained, and (asexually) divine. Her body, in dynamic and lighted movement adds undeniably hyper-feminine, erotic and corporal layers to her performative identity.

The combined effect of the virtuoso pianist and woman performer, realized in Clara Schumann's performances, instigated new kinds of musical experiences that effortlessly challenged *bourgeois* masculine dominance. Similarly, the celebrity *carte-de-visite* photo album created a 'new kind of commercialized celebrity, a version of secularized star worship that had previously been reserved for notables in the religious sphere'.⁶⁵ For an artist that was relentlessly venerated in quasi-religious terms, Schumann's mass-produced photographs had the capacity to bring her decidedly down to earth. As the Elliot & Fry sample book pages in Figures 9 and 10 make plain, you could purchase a *carte-de-visite* of Clara Schumann for the same price that you could purchase a famous courtesan, bishop, theatre actress, opera singer or scientist. In image, Schumann was standardized in size and price, and placed equally alongside all kinds of other people and celebrities in personal photo albums.⁶⁶

While the *carte-de-visite* could blur class distinctions and gender boundaries in their uniform sizes and sale rates, these images were also sold in a variety of shops, stationary stores, booksellers, and high-end emporia. And, in order to provoke and interest customers, shop windows often advertised new *cartes* by upending and aggravating traditional notions of *bourgeois* morality.⁶⁷ The satirist Hans Wachenhusen noted in the mid-1860s that photographic displays of 'noble old men and matrons, brave warriors crowned with laurel wreaths, honest burghers, students, moral maidens' failed to entice, while those of actresses and artists that showed 'pretty faces' and 'the nape of the neck and the chest down to the underarms ... without any meddlesome clothing that might have interfered with the effect of beauty' triggered more sales.⁶⁸ These 'street portrait galleries' effortlessly confused the social stratification and values of *bourgeois* society in immediate ways.⁶⁹

While we cannot recover the *cartes* shop store fronts or Clara Schumann's potential placement within such displays, we do have access to visual artefacts that advertise and remember important musical celebrations by putting forward a visual advertisement (of sorts) to celebrate and entice. For instance, Figure 11

feminine photographic experience. This *carte*, then, might ask the viewer to imagine feminine behaviours and experiences that this unique studio could have welcomed.

⁶⁵ Teukolsky, 'Cartomania', 465.

⁶⁶ Teukolsky, 'Cartomania', 468.

⁶⁷ For an image of one such photographer's shop window, see 'Henry Taunt's shop in Oxford', c. 1874–94 in Teukolsky, *Picture World*, 231.

⁶⁸ As Giloi summarizes, 'Nor was Wachenhusen unusually cynical here: the photographic journal *Die Werkstatt und das Handwerkzeug des Photographen* specifically advised photographers to "stimulate patronage" by seducing passersby with pictures of women who were "decent and yet alluring, sumptuously but not showily dressed, with a free but not too daring a pose". ... As a result, throughout the city, shop windows featured the "blooming, youthful princes and princesses of the royal house" – and Wilhelm I as well, of course – alongside the "celebrated stars of the theatre" and women of the demi-monde in "the newest, daring French fashions"'. Eva Giloi, *Monarchy, Myth, and Material Culture in Germany 1750–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 252.

⁶⁹ Teukolsky, 'Cartomania', 465.



Fig. 9 Sample page book by Elliot & Fry titled 'Various composers, musicians, singers and others'. Clara Schumann's photograph is on the far right of the third row (1120). Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery in London. Bromide Print.

places Schumann in constellation with other musical artists and composers and balances serious musical expression with its mass appeal and celebration. To commemorate the forty-third Rhine Music Festival, this postcard's ornate border



Fig. 10 Sample page book by Elliot & Fry titled 'Various composers, musicians, singers and others'. Clara Schumann's photographs are on the far right of the fourth row (576 and 577). Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery in London. Bromide Print.



Fig. 11 Postcard from 1866 entitled 'Erinnerung an das 43te Niederrhein Musikfest'. The watercolors were drawn by Federzeichnung von Philipp Grotjohann, and were accented by a range of anonymous photographs. Courtesy of the Beethoven-Haus in Bonn.

includes charming illustrations of Bach, Handel, Gluck, Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Robert Schumann. Within this historical border, modern-day artists circle around the featured, laurel-leaved performer, Jenny Lind. In delightful contrast

with the ethereal nature of the drawn, Germanic 'greats', the festival participants are all in anonymous photograph. Their tangibility and their commodified, mechanically created humanity are on full display in their photographic form, contrasting starkly with the soft ethereality of the composers. The performers are seemingly placed in a figurative dialogue – a kind of 'festive socializing' – with one another.⁷⁰ There is also a clean, symmetrical organization, as the exterior images look towards each other and show similarities in pose and dress. Some performers look directly out at us and some look into space, some are captured in profile and some straight ahead, some sit and some stand. In effect, the performers showcase a variety of poses and bodily positions, plainly contrasting with the relative consistency of the bordered composers. In their photographed form, the musicians visually profess their heterogeneity and their 'real' individuality, while in their similar mirrored poses, the memorabilia expose a kind of dynamic interchangeability: an almost democratization or homogenization of the musical actors. The dynamism of the performers instigates a kind of ever-changing musical reality that can be created and re-created in infinite ways by the viewer, as we can envision various kinds of musical pairings, experiences and repertoires. There is imaginative freedom when we look, because we are not prescribed a clear visual hierarchy across instrument or gender or musical reputation. This enchanting souvenir reflects the mass, embodied appeal of the popular, which fits easily within the (literal and visual) confines of the serious.⁷¹ Figure 11, therefore, honours aesthetic and interpretive seriousness, just as it revels in its malleable, porous boundaries.

The Elliot & Fry sample book pages, Figures 9 and 10, provide additional glimpses of the ease with which constellated images could confuse and invite a reordering of social, gendered, and artistic ideals.⁷² The sheer number of images in the collection, along with their almost haphazard organization, shows both attention to and a rejection of social, gendered and artistic hierarchies. While these pages were likely never on public display, these images quite bluntly expose the incredible range of possibilities for disruption; in their uniformity, they reveal a variety of prominent figures, poses, sartorial choices and props. In Figure 9, Schumann is positioned alongside pianist Sophie Menter, singer Mary Cummings and the actress and singer May Fortescue, who poses in costume as Celina from Arthur Sullivan and W.S. Gilbert's comic opera *Iolanthe*. We also see prominent scientists, surgeons

⁷⁰ As Stefaniak notes, 'The Rhine Festival centered on canonic composers and repertoire ... This reach for cultural prestige mingled with festive socializing and recreation'. Stefaniak, *Schumann's Virtuosity*, 204.

⁷¹ Even though these festivals centred around canonical German composers and repertoire, these events inevitably featured a convivial, joyful experience. In this performing space Clara Schumann was celebrated with mass applause while performing virtuosic showpieces. In other words, these festivals revealed that 'Clara was not the austere medium Liszt described. Rather, she provided a charismatic conduit from her husband's genius to the applause of a wide audience'. Stefaniak, *Schumann's Virtuosity*, 204–5.

⁷² The London-based Elliot & Fry photographic studio was founded in 1863 by Joseph John Elliot and Clarence Edmund Fry. Figures 10 and 11 show two pages from an Elliot & Fry sample book, which contains a total of 27 pages of composite photographs. In its entirety, the sample book holds a total of 1,304 thumbnail portraits of sitters that include royalty, politicians, aristocratic ladies and courtesans, clergymen, writers, scientists, doctors, historians, philanthropists, actors and actresses and various musical celebrities. Sample books were used for the reordering of prints by photographic print sellers.

and poets.⁷³ Figure 10 shows Schumann on a page with other well-known musicians and composers. Figures 9 and 10 create a compilation of celebrities from across nationalities, artistic spaces, classes, and vocations – all confused on the same page, and all shown in the same equalizing size. While these sample-book excerpts are not a store display, the *cartes* within a sample book can potentially take on an imagined life of their own, in effect refashioning all kinds of socialized and gendered ideals. As we look at these pages, we see all the sundry, disquieting, and powerful facets of the performing woman crystallized in one singular, visually overwhelming moment. As an amalgamation, they create a composite of the latency in all performing women: to comfort or disquiet, to morally constrain or upend and to physically provoke or soothe. *Cartes* moved easily through shops, albums, newspapers and memorabilia – visually and physically creating infinite possibilities to instigate social instability.

Ways of Seeing: Imagining

From photography's very invention, portrait photographers 'sought to balance their exterior representations with the inner character, soul and personality of the sitter'.⁷⁴ While *cartes* were often disparaged for their repetitive nature, the consistent poses and similarities across a celebrity's photographic output could also 'reflect an unchanging, "actual" person, a "true" self that could be fixed and known'.⁷⁵ As with the pages of the *cartes* sample books and her presence in memorabilia, Clara Schumann's mass-produced images create a powerful amalgamation of her that circulated freely throughout all kinds of public and private spaces. When thumbing through a photo album, each *carte-de-visite* adds or removes layers to her identity – layers that I try to imagine creatively here.

The Fräulein at the Parlour Piano

When looking at Schumann's *cartes* in her personal album, a *Düsseldorfer Fräulein* reflects privately on her relationship to the piano.⁷⁶ This instrument has taught her the sometimes-frustrating lessons of middle-class domesticity: obedience, penance and familial service. But the piano has also served as her confidant and created a space for her to ruminate on personal, private thoughts and dreams. She knows the value musicality holds for her marriage prospects. She is also keenly aware of the potential dangers and distractions of musical excess – an excess that can instigate 'mindless sensuality' and even cause you to lose your senses.⁷⁷ (Yet she is not really

⁷³ For detailed information on the sitters in these images, see Images NPGAx139919 and NPGAx139911 in 'Photographs Collection', The National Portrait Gallery, London, www.npg.org.uk.

⁷⁴ See Audrey Linkman, *The Victorians: Photographic Portraits* (London: Tauris Parke Books, 1993): 35–7.

⁷⁵ Giloi, *Monarchy, Myth and Material Culture*, 253.

⁷⁶ This section is named after Solie's pioneering essay, which examines the multi-faceted experiences of the domestic piano. I have constructed the *Fräulein* from an amalgam of scholarship on women at the piano. See Ruth Solie, "'Girling" at the Parlor Piano', 85–117. See also Boetcher Joeres, *Respectability and Deviance*.

⁷⁷ See Leppert, 'Sexual Identity, Death and the Family Piano', 119–12; Chua, *Absolute Music*, 126; and Solie, 'Girling', 116.

sure she believes that.) The *Fräulein* sees a kindred spirit in art when studying her photograph of Clara Schumann. She is comforted in seeing reflected in the images her own apartment, which contains ornate rugs, tasselled furniture and inviting domestic details. She situates images of herself, family and friends alongside Clara. All of these *cartes*, in this order, show a familiar class and gender identity – one of which she is a part.

The young woman began this *cartes* collection in late 1860s, as she came of age during some of Clara's most wide-ranging concertizing.⁷⁸ She has seen the performer a handful of times in concert – she remembers when she played in in the Düsseldorf *Tonhalle* several years ago.⁷⁹ She even captured the moment in her diary, as she imagines Clara doing in Figure 4. On this concert, Clara played Robert Schumann's piano concerto, Chopin's Nocturne in B major and an arrangement of Mendelssohn's *Sommernachtstraum*. The virtuosic brilliance of the concerto astounded and left her breathless; she especially loved the brilliance and excitement of the third movement.⁸⁰ Clara's performance of the concerto and her intimate collaborations with Julius Stockhausen modelled the musical experience that her parents want her to have one day with her husband. 'Musicality is always desirable', they say.⁸¹

The *Fräulein* was also interested in the popular diversity of the programme, which included opera arias, piano concertos, arrangements and character pieces. As with the music, Clara's photographs are often freed from particular spaces, generic boundaries, and emotions; the young woman can visualize the performer in elaborate salons, concert halls and cosy apartments. She can see the pianist in her mass concerts in London's St James Hall with over two thousand listeners and traveling long distances; she can see her as a child prodigy and the accolades she evoked; she can see her at home teaching; she can see her collaborating with Pauline Viardot-Garcia; and she can see Clara doing, delightfully, nothing at all. When she looks at Figure 7, she pictures Clara's demanding performance schedule; indeed, she recalls that the performer travelled to Vienna shortly after her performances in Düsseldorf.⁸² Clara seems to be in constant, fantastical movement.

She briefly flips the pages to land on the *carte* of one of Clara's brightly contrasting contemporaries, Sophie Menter. When she examines Sophie's embellished, almost scandalous gown and piling hairstyle, the *Fräulein* feels a vicarious,

⁷⁸ See Reinhard Kopiez, Andreas C. Lehmann and Janina Klassen, 'Clara Schumann's Collection of Playbills: A Historiometric Analysis of Life-Span Development, Mobility, and Repertoire Canonization', *Poetics* 37/1 (2009): 50–73.

⁷⁹ The programme for 7 November 1872 is listed here: Part I: 1) Gluck, Overture to 'Iphigenia in Aulius'; 2) Handel, Aria from *Acis und Galatea*; 3) Max Bruch, *Römische Leichenfeier* for Choir and Orchestra; 4) R. Schumann, Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in A minor; 5) R. Schumann, 'Die Löwenbraut'; 6) Chopin, Nocturne in B major, Op. 62; 7) Felix Mendelssohn, Scherzo from *Sommernachtstraum* (arr. by Mendelssohn); 8) Schubert: 'Der Musensohn' and 'Der Schiffer'; Part II: 1) Haydn, *Oxford Symphony* in G major. For a listing of Schumann's German concerts see April L. Prince, 'Appendix' in 'Die anmutreichen, unschuldsvollen Herrin: Clara Schumann's Public Personas', (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2009).

⁸⁰ 'The finale contains the most substantial expanse of post classically textured, brilliant passagework in Robert's output'. Stefaniak, *Schumann's Virtuosity*, 193.

⁸¹ Solie, "'Girling" at the Parlor Piano', 11.

⁸² Schumann played concerts in Vienna on 20, 24 and 26 November and 3 December 1872.

unsettling excitement.⁸³ She flips to another page to see the famous Franz Hanfstaengl's image of Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient, with whom she knows Clara has collaborated.⁸⁴ Wilhelmine has a shawl draped over her left shoulder. Her dress slides down her right shoulder. In this delicious *dishabille*, the singer gazes off into the distance. The *Fräulein* places Figures 5 and 8 between Sophie and Wilhelmine. As opposed to the more constrained images of Clara, that seem to emphasize a feminine modesty through dress and hairstyle, in these *cartes* Clara looks more intimately aligned with *all* publicly performing and musical women. The potent sensuality of all of the images show these women as 'different, different from decent women, as it were' in their undeniably illicit and alluring sexuality.⁸⁵ While most of Clara's *cartes* are decidedly static, she always seems to be in her performance gowns. The young woman can see the virtuoso in exciting, physical involvement with her instrument. She imagines Clara leaning towards the keyboard and away from it, with her hands moving across the keyboard. She sees Clara's hair down, shining black as it does in the photographs and moving dynamically as she plays.⁸⁶ When she wants to imitate the young Clara or Franz in public performance, she plays works by Hiller, Hummel, Kalkbrenner and Thalberg. As Czerny wrote in his letters, a book within which she took copious notes, you should only play these kinds of when you are ready for brilliance and had 'reached a high degree of excellence'.⁸⁷

The young woman turns the page of her photo album and focuses intently on Figure 3. She imagines Clara practising the challenging passages of Robert Schumann's piano concerto, or perhaps even improvising arrangements. She knows of Clara's improvisatory ability and her compositional and editing skills.⁸⁸ The young woman taps her finger at her lips in a question, while the performer's aptitude for composition and editing might be considered unusual, Clara has seemingly made her career departing from many kinds of norms.⁸⁹ Above all, perhaps, Clara Schumann validates the *Fräulein*'s own pianism.⁹⁰ The young woman tries to make out the sheet music, but she changes the piece every time she looks at her photo album – she envisions asking the performer to play a Beethoven concerto, Bach prelude, or even a four-hand piano duet of Haydn's symphonies with her.⁹¹ While her personal piano is more compact than the one in Schumann's photograph, the image asks her to reflect on her own repertoire.

⁸³ See Figure 10, image numbers 1107, 1108 and 1109.

⁸⁴ Thomas Synofzik and Jochen Voigt, *Aus Clara Schumanns Photoalben: Photographische Cartes de Visite aus der Sammlung des Robert-Schumann-Hauses Zwickau* (Chemnitz: Mobilis, 2006): 86.

⁸⁵ Leppert, *The Sight of Sound*, 158.

⁸⁶ To be sure, 'Subversive ideas can emerge in the most unthreatening of individuals'. Boetcher Joeres, *Deviance and Respectability*, 117–18.

⁸⁷ Carl Czerny, *Czerny's Letters to Young Ladies on the Art of Playing the Piano Forte* (Boston: Oliver Ditson & Co.: 1870): 28.

⁸⁸ See Valerie Goertzen, 'Clara Wieck Schumann's Improvisations and Her "Mosaics" of Small Forms', in *Beyond Notes: Improvisation in Western Music in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, ed., Rudolf Rasch (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011): 153–62.

⁸⁹ Boetcher Joeres, *Respectability and Deviance*, 90.

⁹⁰ Clara Wieck was often described as a skilled improviser, which distinguished her from other child prodigies. While she was less known for 'freestanding' improvisation, she was celebrated for her use of improvisation as a form of musical transition and introduction. Stefaniak, *Schumann's Virtuosity*, 179.

⁹¹ Christensen, 'Four Hand Piano Transcription', 457.

When she feels she needs to engage more privately with her own thoughts, she plays Mendelssohn's *Lied ohne Worte* or Schubert's 'An mein Klavier'. When her frustration boils over, she chooses a piece about the *Backfisch*.⁹²

Figure 3 also invokes the famed mentorship of Clara Schumann. The *Fräulein* daydreams about being Madame Schumann's student, especially given she knows the performer recently accepted a position at the Hoch Conservatory – an unusual feat for a German woman. When looking at the picture she holds in her hand, it is almost as if the professor were in the room with her. The pedagogue's dynamic movement at the piano instigates an imaginary pedagogical moment: she sees the Madame's foot peek out from under her skirt, which is folded in active movement. She looks away from the keyboard to demonstrate a technical exercise. She looks back towards her student and asks her to repeat the passage. This imagined mentorship inevitably invokes Clara's celebrated collaborations, and the *Fräulein* briefly thinks of Robert Schumann. She envisions her own collaborations – perhaps some relationships more traditional than others.

It is not a leap then, for her to revisit some of her favourite images, Figures 1 and 5. With their excessive and elaborate shawls, these photos captivate in their radiation of Clara's magnificence. She feels their sexual suggestion through her reclined repose and various modes of undress. She notices how the pianist carefully holds her cascading shawl with only two fingers. It would be easy for it to fall to the floor. While the *Fräulein* knows to exhibit firm control, she cannot help but fixate on the strong feelings and passionate experiences these images suggest.⁹³ Immediately, she experiences an intense connection to her piano – a kind of confidant where she can express her private, unmediated desires. Even though she sees Schumann's diary in Figure 4, the thought of writing some of these more lurid thoughts in detail feels morally suspect and even dangerous – especially given how everyone in her family seems to pick up and read any diary they come across! She can, however, express them through the tones of her piano and to the women in her photo album.⁹⁴ Clara's wrapped arms in Figure 6 imply that she cannot share her innermost thoughts publicly, either. The closed book next to her affirms the need for an inanimate confidant. The book's worn pages face her directly, as if it wants her to share in its private secrets and its stories. She thinks of one of her favourite novels, *Die zweite Frau* and recalls the compelling story of Liane Trachtenberg and Raoul Mainau. This story, by E. Marlitt, appeals in its subtle sexual undercurrents, idealized (and disruptive) femininity and satisfying happy ending – one instigated by Liane herself.⁹⁵

⁹² As Solie outlines: 'In the German-speaking world a teenage girl was familiarly known as a *Backfisch* – a baked fish or, perhaps, a fish suitable for baking – in any event, a dish, and one waiting for consumption ... in diaries and memoirs women describe this time as unhappy and tense; some of them bitterly accuse society of treating them like commodities, whose market value would decrease steeply if left on the shelf for too long. Others describe a protracted sense of emotional upheaval, a feeling that life was on hold and an intense reliance upon the intimacy that their pianos offered them as ways of killing time while they waited'. Solie, "'Girling' at the Parlor Piano', 97.

⁹³ See Solie, "'Girling' at the Parlor Piano', 114–17. As Leppert notes, 'The function of music in the lives of Victorians, especially its relation to desire, eroticism and sexuality, was attended to with extraordinary self-consciousness'. Leppert, *Sight of Sound*, 155–6.

⁹⁴ See Michelle Perrot, ed., *From the Fires of Revolution to the Great War*, vol. IV of *A History of Private Life* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990): 533.

⁹⁵ E. Marlitt's 'narration of the trials and difficulties and ultimate triumph of the second wife appear in serialized form in *Die Gartenlaube* in the first twenty-one issues of 1874.

In that story, the women manage to uncover and reveal the truths: they are the heroes. On the other hand, she thinks of another book, *Consuelo* by George Sand, a fantastical journey whose protagonist's musical life seemed to resonate with that of Clara Schumann herself. Even the opening sentences, spoken by an old professor, celebrate a young women's modesty and singular virtue.

Yes, yes, young ladies; toss your heads as much as you please; the wisest and best among you is – But I shall not say it; for she is the only one of my class who has a particle of modesty, and I should fear, were I to name her, that she should forthwith lose that uncommon virtue which I could wish you see in you –.⁹⁶

She feels an intimate connection to Schumann's private life. The performer's photographs celebrate that women can balance pianistic interest with household duties. She has read handbooks that question the seriousness of her musical study. They say that it interferes with her 'real' work – maintaining a household.⁹⁷ Figure 4 seems to dispel that myth, as Clara looks directly at the *Fräulein* with a frank, almost annoyed expression. And, while the young woman has learned well the expectations of domestic discipline, she sometimes feels the weariness of the unrelenting training regime.⁹⁸ The *Fräulein* sees that Clara can sympathize with her exasperation. In Figure 8, she imagines the slouched, almost bored-looking virtuoso as resigned and completely uninterested in playing the piano – or really doing anything at all. This image is especially funny, and the young woman giggles to herself.⁹⁹ It is almost as if Clara caricatures her public femininity by *pretending* to be almost too submissive to the point of immobility.¹⁰⁰ She turns back to Figure 3 and she refocuses, becoming obsessed with Clara's right foot. The famed performer seems almost too ready to leave her instrument. The virtuoso even turns slightly away from the sheet music – rejecting it. And, even though she is in an obviously awkward position to play, Clara nonetheless depresses the keys: she exaggerates and performs her feminine duty, even though it is clear she would rather be doing something – anything – else.¹⁰¹ In Figure 6, too, she notices Clara's outright defiance in her wrapped arms, hidden hands, and bored countenance. She spots a connection between the images: the tasselled table and tasselled piano stool. This small detail affirms the possibility of pianistic

According to one of the author's early biographers, *Die Gartenlaube* had at that point approximately 325,000 subscribers ... *Die zweite Frau* was certainly read by "Millionen". The book version was also published in 1874. Boetcher Joeres, *Respectability and Deviance*, 229. For an analysis of the work's sexual passion, see *Ibid.*, 228–46.

⁹⁶ George Sand, *Consuelo, A Romance of Venice* (New York: A.L. Burt Company: 1900–1909), 1.

⁹⁷ A recognized 'danger' of piano playing was that 'girls were wasting time at the piano, applying themselves to "frivolous" accomplishments'. Solie, "'Girling" at the Parlor Piano', 114.

⁹⁸ Solie, "'Girling" at the Parlor Piano', 105.

⁹⁹ 'Humor and inventive play were an important aspect of the *carte-de-visite* experience'. See Batchen, 'Dreams of Ordinary Life', 91.

¹⁰⁰ As Boetcher Joeres notes, "Deviance in any case, would be indicated were the characteristics of submissiveness, modesty and domesticity in some way ignored. And women who wrote and published – who presented themselves publicly – obviously were viewed as neither modest nor submissive". Boetcher Joeres, *Respectability and Deviance*, 4.

¹⁰¹ Solie, "'Girling" at the Parlor Piano', 88–97.

reluctance and, fundamentally, the spuriousness that makes her domestic femininity convincing.¹⁰²

Post-Script

In the 1889, a representative of Thomas Edison would make the famous recordings of Johannes Brahms at the Fellingner's Viennese residence. The technician, Adelbert Theodore Wangemann, operated the new, fragile phonograph technology.¹⁰³ As we might expect, visual technologies had readily kept pace with that of the musical. By the late 1870s, amateur photographers with means and skills flourished.¹⁰⁴ Marie Fellingner's photographs from 1895 and 1896 give us a glimpse inside the dynamic, domestic space of Brahms's earliest recordings.¹⁰⁵ Although over a half a century after than the invention of the piano recital, Figures 12 and 13, quite delightfully, show Clara Schumann's presence *again* at the collision of rapidly changing musical and visual technologies. And, while Schumann was not present at the phonographic recordings, her portrait seemingly observed the transformation of early musical technology (the recital) into its later technological form (the phonograph). Her figurative witnessing of this event was captured, of course, by the modern technology of the camera.

In these instances, however, her painted portrait of acts as a kind of substitute for her physical presence. In both photographs, Schumann's portrait is displayed prominently alongside the musicians and music-making. Like her *cartes*, her portrait instigates a creative imagining and re-imagining of her inside a technological, photographic frame. These images reveal to us a kind of living photograph album: the creative and personal ways Schumann's friends engaged with her visual artefacts. In Figure 12, she sits dynamically within the quartet, and Hausmann looks up as if Schumann gives him a direction. Brahms sits with his hand on his leg, as if in colloquial conversation. While in the background, Fellingner stands at the piano and rests her hands on the instrument in a casual pose with a warm expression. It is easy to imagine Schumann socializing with other musicians and friends – her portrait inevitably adding layers of personal and musical meaning. In Figure 13, Schumann presides over the shoulder of the seated piano player, with her hand resting at her chin. Her portrait gives the impression of her listening and enjoying, and perhaps even evaluating the young woman's musical expression.

This image powerfully exposes the personal engagement that Schumann's mass-produced images instigated, while complicating the power dynamics of

¹⁰² Solie, "'Girling' at the Parlor Piano', 95.

¹⁰³ See Helmut Kowar, 'Zum Fragment eines Walzers, gespielt von Johannes Brahms', in *Brahms-Kongress Wien 1983: Kongressbericht*, ed. Susanne Antonicek and Otto Biba. (Tutzing: Schneider, 1988): 281–90. The Fellingners were close friends of both Clara Schumann and Brahms, and Marie Fellingner was a prolific amateur photographer.

¹⁰⁴ Gretchen Garner, 'Photography and Society in the 20th Century', in *Focal Encyclopedia of Photography: Digital Imaging, Theory and Applications, History, and Science*, ed. Michael R. Peres, 4th edn (Oxford: Focal Press, 2007): 188. See also Mary Warner Marien, 'Women Behind the Camera: Women as Amateurs', in *Photography: A Cultural History* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002): 157.

¹⁰⁵ The Fellingners had a well-established reputation as important and influential musical hosts. See Katy Hamilton and Natasha Loges, ed., *Brahms in the Home and the Concert Hall: Between Private and Public Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014): 16–17.



Fig. 12 Photograph by Marie Fellingner of Johannes Brahms, Robert Hausmann, and Maria Fellingner in the Fellingner's Viennese Home in 1896. Courtesy of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna.



Fig. 13 Photograph by Marie Fellingner of the Fellingner's music room in Vienna, 1895. Courtesy of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna.

photographic looking. As opposed to Schumann being the one looked at (as she is in a medium that was designed to be looked at) she instead, looks out toward us and the player. This disruption ripples throughout the photograph. One listener mirrors Schumann's pose, as she sits with her left hand resting at her chin. Marie Fellingner stands behind the piano with her body facing Schumann; she turns and looks at us directly. Schumann, in portrait form, seemingly becomes part of an audience made up of embodied and portraited listeners that clutter the musical space. While we look at the photograph, we are also asked to look at ourselves, thanks to the large mirror alongside Schumann's picture. We are invited to imagine ourselves reflected in that mirror and, therefore, sitting alongside Schumann and inside the music room itself. This photograph, especially, seems to be all about the infinite possibilities of looking: both within and outside the image's frame. The photograph hinges on a direct engagement with the viewer – with an appeal to us to dream the fantastical, musical possibilities. In these instances, Schumann's visual imagery is placed in figurative, dynamic dialogues. Her portrait *becomes* her *vis-à-vis* the technology of the camera.