

ABSTRACT

THESIS: Recasting the Eighteenth-Century Sonata-Form Narrative: Compositional Strategies in Robert Schumann's opp. 105 and 121 Violin Sonatas

STUDENT: Sarah Fuchs Sampson

DEGREE: Master of Music

COLLEGE: College of Fine Arts, School of Music

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Although Robert Schumann's late style has been the subject of several probing studies in recent years, few scholars have concentrated their attention on the chamber works composed in the autumn of 1851. Perhaps most intriguing are the opp. 105 and 121 violin sonatas, whose first movements suggest a dialogue with the eighteenth-century sonata form by preserving many of the same rhetorical and structural elements. Throughout both movements, however, Schumann uses an intricate web of tonal ambiguities, metrical dissonances, and unusual key relationships to recast the internal workings of these outwardly conventional sonata forms. As he uses these techniques to undermine important structural moments of each movement, Schumann significantly changes the overall plot of the eighteenth-century sonata form, while also demonstrating his sensitivity to the dramatic possibilities of this historical form in the middle of the nineteenth century. By discussing Schumann's dialogue with the eighteenth-century sonata form throughout the opp. 105 and 121 violin sonatas, this study attempts to situate these works within both their historical and contemporary musical contexts, and thus considers a previously unexplored avenue toward rehabilitating the reception of Schumann's late chamber works.