

The Harmonious Blend: Unraveling the Magical Harmony in Mendelssohn and Schumann's Music

When it comes to the masters of classical music, two names that often come to mind are Felix Mendelssohn and Robert Schumann. Both composers were influential figures in the Romantic era, each leaving behind a rich musical legacy that continues to captivate listeners to this day. One of the key elements that sets their music apart is the exceptional harmony that permeates through their compositions. In this article, we will explore the beauty and complexity of harmony in the works of Mendelssohn and Schumann.

Understanding Harmony

Harmony, in the context of music, refers to the simultaneous sounding of two or more different pitches. It is the backbone of any musical piece, providing depth, emotion, and structure. While melody captures our attention, harmony shapes the overall sonic landscape, creating an intricate web of interconnected notes that propel the music forward.

Mendelssohn and Schumann were masters at crafting harmonies that were both expressive and technically brilliant. Their unique approaches to harmony showcased their individual voices and greatly influenced subsequent generations of composers.

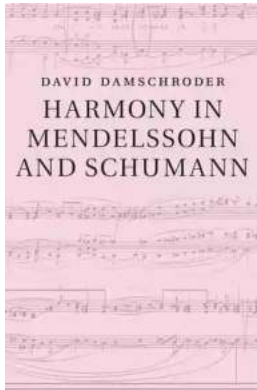
Harmony in Mendelssohn and Schumann

by David Damschroder (Kindle Edition)

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Mendelssohn's Harmonic Brilliance

Felix Mendelssohn was a prodigious composer who demonstrated a remarkable command of harmony from an early age. His music often features lush, flowing harmonies that effortlessly transition between keys, creating a sense of fluidity and emotional depth.

One of Mendelssohn's most well-known works, the *Wedding March* from his incidental music to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, exemplifies his harmonic brilliance. The opening bars of the piece showcase a perfect marriage between melody and harmony, as cascading chords and beautifully voiced harmonies set the stage for the joyous celebration of matrimony.

Another example of Mendelssohn's harmonic prowess can be found in his Symphony No. 4, also known as the *Italian Symphony*. The second movement, marked *Andante con moto*, exhibits a masterful use of harmonic progression and modulation. As the music unfolds, Mendelssohn effortlessly transports the listener through different tonal centers, creating a sense of wanderlust and adventure.

Schumann's Harmonic Complexities

Robert Schumann, on the other hand, approached harmony with a distinct complexity and emotional intensity. His music often features unconventional harmonic progressions, unexpected modulations, and sudden, dramatic shifts in tonality.

The opening movement of Schumann's *Piano Concerto in A minor* perfectly illustrates his harmonic idiosyncrasies. The piano's grand entrance introduces a chromatic descent that increases tension, leading to a rich harmonic tapestry that captures the listener's imagination. Schumann's unique harmonic choices give this concerto a distinct flavor that sets it apart from the typical Romantic-era compositions.

Another notable example of Schumann's harmonic complexities can be found in his song cycle, *Dichterliebe*. The cycle consists of sixteen songs that traverse a wide emotional range. Schumann's ability to employ harmonies that perfectly align with the subject matter of each song creates a deeply poetic and visceral listening experience.

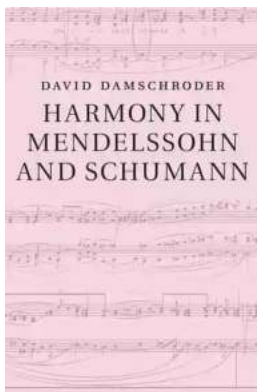
The Meeting of the Harmonic Minds

While Mendelssohn and Schumann showcased distinct approaches to harmony, they shared a mutual admiration for each other's work. Mendelssohn was particularly fond of Schumann's compositions and praised the harmonic finesse present in his music.

Additionally, both composers were enthusiastic supporters of each other's music, often performing and promoting each other's works. Their shared passion for harmonic exploration and emotional expression solidified their friendship and helped shape the course of Romantic-era music.

In the realm of classical music, harmonies play a vital role in evoking emotions, creating tension, and providing a sense of resolution. The music of Mendelssohn and Schumann stands as a testament to the power and beauty of harmony. Through their works, they demonstrated a deep understanding of this musical element, pushing its boundaries and enchanting audiences with their masterful compositions.

Whether you find yourself lost in the soaring melodies of Mendelssohn or enthralled by the harmonic complexities of Schumann, their music continues to inspire and captivate, proving that harmony truly is the magical ingredient that makes their compositions timeless.



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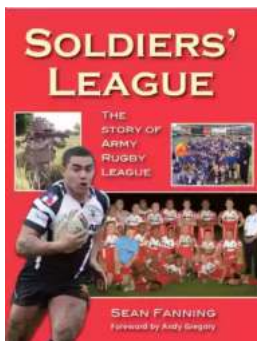
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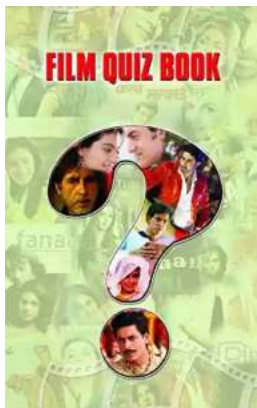
This innovative book continues David Damschroder's radical reformulation of harmonic theory, presenting a dynamic exploration of harmony in the compositions of Mendelssohn and Schumann, two key figures of nineteenth-century classical music. This volume's introductory chapters creatively introduce the basic tenets of the system, with reference to sound files rather than notated music examples permitting a more direct interaction between reader and music.

In the Masterworks section that follows, Damschroder presents detailed analyses of movements from piano, vocal, and chamber music, and compares his outcomes with those of other analysts, including Benedict Taylor, L. Poundie Burstein, and Peter H. Smith. Expanding upon analytical practices from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and strongly influenced by Schenkerian principles, this fresh perspective offers a stark contrast to conventional harmonic analysis - both in terms of how Roman numerals are deployed and how musical processes are described in words.



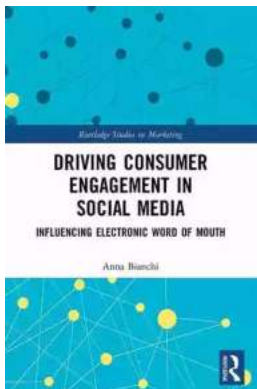
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