

Sample Essay for Chapter 7

Why does "Liebst du um Schönheit" paint an incomplete picture of Clara Schumann as a musician?  
Why do you think that it is featured in so many music texts and on vocal recitals?

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Although "Liebst du um Schönheit" is a lovely work composed by Clara Schumann, there are several reasons why this song alone paints an incomplete picture of Schumann as a musician. **First** of all, Schumann considered herself a performer above all else. Given that many music narratives focus primarily on composition, many people first learn of Schumann as a composer rather than the highly regarded piano performer that she was. Even today, many accounts of Schumann fail to emphasize her astounding virtuosity and her role in premiering important works by composers such as Brahms.

**Even in terms of composition,** this particular art song does not fully showcase Clara Schumann's capabilities. The song is melodically simple, and in strophic form, with a fairly simple piano accompaniment. Other art songs by Schumann feature much more complex piano accompaniments, for

**example. In addition,** Schumann wrote large-scale piano works, including a concerto, that better exemplify her compositional talent and understanding of music theory and form.

**In terms of why “Liebst” is performed so much**, it could simply be that this was the first art song by Clara Schumann to appear in a highly regarded music history compilation, and thus the work is better known than others that she wrote. It is also possible, however, that gender stereotyping is at play. “Liebst” is a gentle, rather simplistic art song with a static piano accompaniment that speaks of love. All of these things fit well with historical notions about the proper role or place of women. Since many of Schumann’s other works were more formally complex, or more virtuosic, one has to wonder if gender stereotyping is also to blame.