

Robert Schumann (1810-1856) 3 Fantasiestücke for clarinet & piano Op 73 (1849)

Zart und mit Ausdruck (Tender and with expression)

Lebhaft, leicht (Lively, light)

Rasch und mit Feuer (Quick and with fire)

1849 was to be a turbulent year in Dresden, where the Schumanns were then living. In opposition to Meternich's old order, popular forces were demanding, across Germany, the granting of basic and civic rights together with the creation of a German nation-state with a popular assembly. In Dresden, matters came to a violent head in early May: Robert was threatened with being drafted, causing the family to flee temporarily to the country. Against this gathering storm, Schumann was wonderfully productive. His physical and mental health was good and his young family flourished. He wrote to his composer colleague Ferdinand Hiller: *'For some time now I've been very busy – it's been my most fruitful year – it seemed as if the outer storms compelled people to turn inward'*.

The 3 *Fantasiestücke* date from February 1849 and were not written specifically for clarinet but *'for clarinet or violin or cello and piano'*. The first piece is in A minor; the next two in A major. They follow each other without a break, building from a melancholic start, through playful energy, then faster and faster to a fiery conclusion.