

Schumann's Dichterliebe: From the problem of performance to the performance of the problem

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Abstract

This paper proposes a new approach to the performance of Schumann's music, in particular to his song cycle *Dichterliebe* op. 48. Starting from the many productive instabilities and inconsistencies that characterize the compositional approach in *Dichterliebe*, I ask under which conditions we could think a performance practice that embraces these inconsistencies instead of stabilizing them into a finished performance. To do so, I propose the appropriation from music performance of the philosophical notion of "the problem" as formulated by Gilles Deleuze, connecting it with the "pre-individual" in Gilbert Simondon and the notion of "outside," mostly in the acceptance of Maurice Blanchot and Michel Foucault. A critique is enacted of what I suggest calling the traditional "image of musical thought." From this critique can emerge a performance practice that moves away from the "problem of performance," regarded in its traditional form as a representative practice oriented towards recognition, and that embraces instead the "performance of the problem," where the problematic dimension of Schumann is enhanced and further dynamized.

Introduction

In several texts dedicated to the music of Robert Schumann, Roland Barthes puts frequently forward a sort of duplicity, the coexistence of two parallel levels. On one side there is the «well-behaved» Schumann, who submits his music to the code of tonality, formal regularity, and musical grammar (1985a [1979]: 295). On the other side, «contradictory (and yet concomitant),» is a dimension that Barthes calls of madness, or the possibility of delirium (1985b [1975]: 308). This madness, it must be noted, is far from a psychiatric diagnosis linked to the medical history of the composer. It is the *music* itself that is delirious, that contains a seed of dissociation, internal disarticulation, an inconsistency that does not ask to be resolved but that lives and thrives as such. This music is «ceaselessly 'mutant',» always in-between, denying the possibility of stabilization and clear-cut definition.

This dimension of internal split and delirium is reprised from a Lacanian perspective by Slavoj Žižek, when he comments that Schumann can be considered «the first 'anti-humanist' in music» (Žižek 2008: 263). The fundamental non-coordination between the internal elements of Schumann's music (between piano and voice in the lieder; between left

and right hands in the piano pieces; the micro-fissures at the level of rhythm and harmony) is for Žižek a manifestation of the passage away from the “human person,” with the consistency of its emotions and intentions, towards a Lacanian “barred” subject, which, far from expressing itself and being represented in its world, is precisely the result of the failure of expression and representation.

The question arises of where this “delirious” and “antihumanist” potential of Schumann’s music lies, beyond all-too-human psychologizing and biographical readings, especially since it is not located within the strictly musical text, but rather in a zone that is in friction with it. In this article, I would like to further explore the directions indicated by Barthes and Žižek in relation to Schumann’s unique compositional endeavor, especially to its epistemic potential which, starting *in* music, can reach out to other domains of thought. I propose that the internal split and disarticulation characterizing Schumann’s music can be productively read through the philosophical notion of “problem” as articulated by Gilles Deleuze in his criticism of the traditional “image of thought,” most prominently in *Difference and Repetition* (2011 [1968]: esp. 192–67). Although the notion of problem is genealogically inherited by Deleuze through thinkers such as Heidegger, Plato, Kant, Bergson, Nietzsche, Lautman, and Bachelard (see Wasser 2017: n. p.), I will focus on its close relationship with the philosophy of Gilbert Simondon. Simondon’s formulation of “problem” is particularly useful for my reading of Schumann’s music especially because of its strong link with the notion of pre-individual and with processes of individuation, and to Simondon’s critique of the “good form.” In addition, I will connect the problematic with the notion of “outside,” linked to Maurice Blanchot and Michel Foucault.

My exploration of the link between music and philosophy is born from the conviction that the notion of problem, as many other philosophical concepts, can have an impact on the activity that is first and foremost involved with new understandings of Schumann’s music, namely, music performance. Concurrently, I propose that music composition and performance themselves can be seen not only as appropriating discourse from philosophy and critical theory, but also as veritable terrains for the generation of their own discourses, as platforms of creative experimentation that manage to engender *the reflection on practice through practice*. This in view of a perturbation of a dialectical externality between musical practice and philosophy; but crucially also in the perspective of a more important perturbation of the modes of music making itself, modes that are modeled, as I claim, on a traditional “image of musical thought,” privileging the “well-behaved” dimension of music to the detriment of productive instabilities and inconsistencies. From a (mostly uncritical) *representation* of preexisting structures according to predetermined

traditions and modes of thinking, performance can become the place for the *problematization* and *experimentation* of common and common-sensical approaches to music and thought.¹

A musical paradox

Despite many examples from Schumann's music could be brought up to introduce the notion of problem, I will refer to one single work by Schumann, paradigmatic precisely by virtue of its many instabilities, inconsistencies, and internal fragmentation and scission, namely the song cycle *Dichterliebe* op. 48, composed in 1840 and published, in a slightly abridged version, in 1844. *Dichterliebe* is based on a selection of sixteen (originally twenty) poems from Heinrich Heine's *Lyrisches Intermezzo* (1827), with whose texts it entertains a complex relationship, sometimes of resonance, sometimes of friction.² The composition has a notably articulated structure, enhanced through a web of tonal relations intertwined throughout the different songs. However, beyond the *facts* inferable through Schumann's specific use of the tonal system, *Dichterliebe*'s most striking feature is that brought to the fore by Beate Perrey, who in her study dedicated to the fragmentary nature of this song cycle underlines how it appears in the form of a *paradox*: still a "*magnum opus*," a complete and finished work, it somehow escapes the need to be analyzed and understood under the aegis of unity and completeness. The cycle's fragmentarity does not oppose the notion of integrity, as would do something that was or should be originally complete and has exploded, appearing now in the form of scraps and pieces. Rather, it manages to locate itself *outside* unity and completeness, «not beneath, but beyond, the law of limit» (Perrey 2002: 9 and 4). According to Perrey, *Dichterliebe*'s compositional conception does not place at risk the integrity of the work, but rather elevates the notion of fragmentary to the point that its radical openness is at the core of its aesthetic power. The question about the score's conclusiveness or inconclusiveness is therefore ill-formulated: conclusiveness is turned upside down by Schumann, who does not simply oppose it dialectically to finiteness; therefore, understanding *Dichterliebe* in relation to a supposedly unreachable completeness seems not commensurate with Schumann's compositional endeavor.

The cycle's disintegrative potency is clear from the onset. Song n. 1, the most celebrated "Im wunderschönen Monat Mai," starts with the most stabbing, the tensest of dissonances, that of major seventh: to the C sharp of the piano's right hand is added the D of the left hand, two octaves lower. What follows is far from solving this tension: A sharp and B, the

¹ The passage from representation to experimentation in music has been at the center of recent artistic research projects done by Paulo de Assis (2018) and Lucia D'Errico (2018). In particular, Assis proposes a «new image of musical works» based on a Deleuzian inspired musical ontology (41–70).

² On the relationship between Heine's poems and their setting into music in *Dichterliebe*, see Perrey 2002, especially 124–30.

same dissonance in inversion, this time appearing in two adjacent notes—as Henri Pousseur notes, an almost Webernian moment (1993: 12). The piano part follows along the same lines, through delays, anticipations, harmonies that are radically out of joint. But the most profound indication of the song’s unstable character—we can rightly say, in a literal sense, its lack of a center—is the fact that it is not clear which is the piece’s tonic chord. There is an unsolved (and actually not-to-be-solved) debate on whether it is F sharp minor or A major, and if we take into consideration the first hypothesis this would mean that the tonic chord does not appear one single time. The suspended ending on the dominant seventh of F sharp might lead us to a conclusion, if its very suspended state—the state of a profound *question*—would not prevent any sense of *conclusion* at all. As Charles Rosen notes, this internal asynchrony is also reverberated from the macro-level of harmony to a subtler micro-level. The vocal line and its doubling by the piano «appear to pull at each other,» generating dissonances which are to be resolved later, or not solved at all, keeping the level of tension throughout the whole piece (Rosen 1998: 46). Even if the “well-behaved” system of tonality is never questioned or challenged one single time, here Schumann «stands basic tonal structure on its head» (Rosen 1998: 47). Song n. 1 is not formed, in formation, forever germinating as the sprouts of Heine’s lyrics, as the birth of the desire of love—musically, a desire-production without a defined end (or ending).

If Song n. 1 is an almost paradigmatic example of open-endedness, instances of equally idiosyncratic procedures can be found throughout the cycle. The ending of three out of four voice phrases in Song n. 2 presents a suspended dissonance that is resolved (yet in a non-resolving manner) by the piano cadence, leaving the voice in a state of questioning uncertainty. The central section of Song n. 6, where the lyrics compare the beauty of the loved woman to the image of a Madonna in a painting, are characterized by a superimposition of harmonico-melodic delays between voice, piano’s left hand, and right hand. A flickering tonal indeterminacy runs through Song n. 8, whereas the apparent stasis of Song n. 10 is perturbed by accented “weak” notes and subtly transfixed by micro-polyphonic patterns that question the seeming verticality of the accompaniment. *Dichterliebe*’s internal disaggregation seems to reach its (inverted) climax in Song n. 13, defined by Pousseur as the «veritable culmination *in negative* [*en creux*] of all the cycle» (1993: 27, translation mine), where voice and piano are completely dissociated, each resonating in the space left empty by the other. Throughout the cycle, voice and piano occupy different zones, related and yet in a strange relation of non-communication.

If it is true that, as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari note, the lied form, and especially Schumann’s lieder, inaugurate a movement of deterritorialization according to which music and instrument are brought together «on the same plane of consistency» (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 307–308), it is indeed by virtue of this “machination” of the voice, by means of which the voice ceases to be «a stratum or a line of expression that stands on its own» (*ibid.*: 307), that voice and piano start entertaining a different, divergent relationship. Hierarchical structures are blurred, the voice is “incorporated” in the piano machinery;

however, it is not through mimesis that this happens; the voice rather inhabits the same plan of the piano as a “virus,” a foreign body subtly undermining the instrument from the inside. Voice and piano are both equal and alien to each other, merging together but keeping a mutual millimetric delay that grows into the seed of an internal catastrophe.

The problem as such

Notwithstanding the forceful disintegratory potential of *Dichterliebe*—its “delirious” character—, the attraction towards the “well-behaved” side of Schumann’s music seems to prevail on the terrain that should occupy itself with challenging commonsensical modes of musical thinking, namely musical practice. The attention to musical «grammar» and «musical semiology» (Barthes 1991b: 307) seems overall dominant in both music analysis and—by virtue of a sort of unspoken subservience to the latter—in music performance. The result is that the paradox constituted by *Dichterliebe*, its radical openness, is often channeled by musicians and musicologists alike towards multiple kinds of closure. The closures of *signifiante*—an iconic work, consecrated by an illustrious history of interpretation; a composition rich in harmonic complexity, lending itself to in-depth structural analysis, and to attempts to discover hidden correspondences between numbers, pitches, proportions.³ The closures of *subjectification*—the lyrical attitude implied by the Romantic lied; the topic of love, of sentimental poetry; the numerous attractions of romantic platitude; the links to the biographical details of Schumann’s life, again caught in several attempts to find some secret system of correspondences that might disclose the “mystery” of *Dichterliebe*. I propose that all of these attempts, and the mode of musical thinking underlying them, stem from a common assumption, namely that there is an absolute and consistent *center*, however hidden or mysterious, that can be inferred from the multiplication of often inconsistent signs offered by a composition such as *Dichterliebe*. According to this vision, the musical text would become then a sort of riddle, of conundrum, whose *solution* lies, as it were, behind the closed and esoteric system of signs constituted by the score and by the data that can be gathered in, through, or around it. However mysterious or irretrievable, such a *solution* is taken for existent and pre-existing, and it is towards such solution that the stratification into a single, perfected, and stabilized performance is oriented every single time.⁴ Performance would then take place according to an anterior principle (anterior to itself and even to the score) which generates, orients, explains, and expounds it. This mode of thinking and making music, dominated by many dogmatisms and classicisms, is pervaded by a vision that considers instabilities and inconsistencies only in a negative acceptance, and that regards every performance, even in the ever-

³ Cf. Pousseur 1993, especially 71–76.

⁴ For a thorough criticism of this approach in traditional music interpretation, see D’Errico 2018 and 2019.

changing variety of interpretational modes and styles across different times, places, and cultures, as a solution already shadowed by the musical text.

To understand this vision, and to propose a creative alternative, it is not enough to find new solutions to the same “problem.” What has to be reconsidered is the “problem of performance” under a new, radically different light. In order to do so, I will resort to a philosophical project that has managed to turn the notion of problem “on its head”: that of Gilles Deleuze and of one of his acknowledged predecessors, Gilbert Simondon.

The notion of problem has been occupying Deleuze from early in his philosophical activity, taking up a prominent position in the main part of his “doctorat d’État” *Difference and Repetition*.⁵ This notion is intimately connected to the reflection on and critique towards what Deleuze regards as the dominant mode of thinking in philosophy since Plato: the “image of thought,” to which he dedicates the whole third chapter of *Difference and Repetition*. Such image of thought is based upon a series of presuppositions that dictate in advance how thought “should” be: good-willed, oriented towards truth and against errors, and conditioned by recognition. Deleuze maintains on the contrary that thought is not good-willed, that a pre-existing conception of truth is not its goal, and that it is crucially prompted not by recognition but on the contrary by what escapes any form of recognition. Connecting thought to the faculty of recognition would presuppose a consistent subject that is already thinking and located in a transcendental ground that would be disclosed under a “revealing” action. Subduing thought to recognition fails to account for a fundamental question: what allows thought to happen in the first place? Or in other words, what «forces us to think» (Deleuze 2011: xvi)?

It is in order to answer these questions that Deleuze moves his criticism towards the dogmatic image of thought. For him, such a mode of thinking cannot access the “problem as problem,” the problematic as such; instead, problems are «traced from the corresponding propositions which serve, or can serve, as responses» (157), so that a question or problem is intended as already “shadowed” by its own answer, and consequently annulated, as problem, once we come to its solution. Deleuze operates a shift of the philosophical weight from the solution to the problem: philosophy has to focus not so much on “good” or “bad” solutions, but rather on the formulation of “good” or “bad” problems, since if the problematic is grasped in itself it already carries the faculty of determining whether its solutions can be good or bad. In other words, the problem has to cease being considered as «a subjective category of our knowledge,» (Deleuze 1990: 53), or a hindrance that would cover a supposedly preexistent truth that thought would then have to “reveal” and “recognize.” By contrast, a problem and its solution exist at the same time, and the former is not eliminated by the latter, as two phases of the same knowing process. Problems «insist and persist» in their solutions, organizing their genesis through their own determination (2011: 163 and 1990: 53–54).

⁵ As indicated by Fabio Treppiedi (2016: 7) *Difference and Repetition* was originally meant to be centered around «the idea of problem.»

As the solution is unthinkable without its problem, it is at the same time important not to consider problems as pre-existing and external to their solutions. The problematic as formulated by Deleuze is not a transcendental field that would remain in dialectical opposition to solutions—what would amount to simply inverting in a specular way the representative mechanism of the dogmatic image of thought. Problems cannot exist independently of processes of individuation and of the encounters that make them sensible—they are «always incarnated» (Wasser 2017, n. p.). Problems and solutions have to be thought beyond dualism, as an in-between state, that of problem-formation, which is indissoluble from both sides. To better situate this important characteristic of problems, and to further understand the relevance of the notion of the problematic to the performance of Schumann's *Dichterliebe*, it is fruitful to explore its link to one of the genealogic influences of Deleuze: the formulation of the problem in Gilbert Simondon.

Individuation as “resolutive invention”

Deleuze acknowledges the originality and richness of the notion of problem as expressed in Simondon in a 1966 review of *L'individuation à la lumière des notions de forme et d'information*. In it, Deleuze notes the new light under which the category of the problem appears, no longer designates «a provisional state of our knowledge, an undetermined subjective concept, but a moment of being, the first pre-individual moment» (Deleuze 2004: 88). Thus, the problem in Simondon is particularly important, since it not only refers to a prominent moment in the process of individuation—the moment of metastability and of passage from a dynamic system to another functional ensemble; it also acquires a certain ontological status, as a “moment of being,” the precondition of the process which Simondon names “ontogenesis.” The formulation of the problem as a quasi-ontological category, its relation to the pre-individual and to processes of individuation, has its root in Simondon's criticism of traditional philosophy, and in particular of how it has dealt with the theory of form and with the individual. According to him, the two main philosophical theories that have tried to approach and explain the individual, namely substantialism and hylomorphism, are marked by a common presupposition: they take individual entities as already stabilized and given, without considering that the process of individuation itself can—and must—be part of the explanation. What Simondon criticizes in both theories is that they have to resort to a principle of individuation *anterior* to individuation itself to explain how the process is generated. Not only does such an approach leave unexplained the operations according to which this process takes place, but importantly it grants an ontological privilege to the already constituted individual, failing to account for the metastability of systems, and the becoming that unceasingly takes place between the individuals and their environment. Simondon proposes to reverse the perspective altogether: not to understand individuation starting from already constituted

and stabilized individuals, but on the contrary, to explain the individuals from the very process of individuation—what he calls an “ontogenetic” approach (see Simondon 2007: 9–13). In this way, Simondon manages to focus on the intensive processes that take place “in-between,” “in the middle,” instead of explaining constituted beings according to an origin that is always anterior and unexplained, or to the specular processes of materialization of form and formation of matter.

We could say, to paraphrase Simondon’s discourse and apply it to music, that traditional performance happens in two principal ways. The first resembles a sort of “substantialist” approach, where performance relates to a musical work considered as a whole unity, founded solely upon itself and its own compositional rules, stabilized in the moment of its performance by a supposedly omniscient and consistent composer. According to this dominant vision, the score is a closed system, which coincides perfectly with a musical work and ultimately with the intentions of its creator. A performer inhabiting this approach sees the score as a system of signs from which a hidden truth has to be inferred in order to produce a performance of the work that is faithful to the original intentions. The second model is comparable to the “hylomorphic” principle. It distinguishes between an origin (score) and a telos (performance), an *a priori* and an *a posteriori*. If on the one hand this approach does take into consideration the fundamental *difference* between the two moments in terms of materiality, on the other hand such vision fails to account for a central zone of intensity where the crucial passage between one and the other happens. Score and performance are still seen as stable entities, already given independently of the energetic processes that generate them and that they are in turn able to generate. They are, to speak with Simondon, notions based on the *results* of an individuation process, rather than on their individuating potential and on the energetic processes underlying their genesis. As such, they are exhausted, without potential. The task of a performer inhabiting this model is simply to put in correct, meaningful, and possibly “pleasurable” relation one system with the other—what Barthes criticizes of most traditional performances in Schumann.⁶

This “problem of performance” can be further appreciated in the light of Simondon’s critique of the “good form.” Discussing the Platonic archetype, Simondon observes how there is a hierarchical relation of superiority between the mold and the minted coin. Between two or more minted coins there can be a slight number of fluctuations, but importantly these are encompassed by the general tendency dictated by the mold, the archetype. The archetype itself does not need real coins to exist, it is anterior and superior to them. In a similar way, traditional performance approaches the musical works regarded as coinciding with a score-archetype. Simondon directs his critique towards a vision that equates the “good form” with the “most stable” one, to the point of considering

⁶ A rethinking of music performance in Simondonian terms can be found in Assis (2018: 137–58). Assis focuses on the notion of “transduction,” as the crucial modality that allows the actualization of energy passing from the virtuality of the musical work and informing the materiality of music performance.

it as a superior and immovable archetype. For him, such a stability equates a state of death, where no transformation can happen anymore, lacking any potential for further becoming (Simondon 2007: 49). The real “good” form for Simondon is therefore not that which is perfected and eternally fixated, but to the contrary, that which is *pregnant*, namely, that is capable of further crossing and enlivening a multiplicity of different fields and situations. The form is not the One implicated in the archetype, but rather «one and multiple, meaningful link between the one and the multiple» (Simondon 2007: 53, translation mine). The dimension of good form is therefore that which is closer to paradox and contradiction, that which contains the tension according to which it can «*approach the paradox without becoming a paradox, to contradiction without becoming a contradiction*» (Ibid., emphasis original). This is the shift that it is necessary to operate when encountering a “problematic” work such as *Dichterliebe*: not to approach it as a mold capable of generating infinite “coins,” whose difference would be however subordinated to the *superiority* and *anteriority* of the mold, but rather as a form that 1) has been in turn the result or trace of a process of individuation occurring in a previous metastable state (such process being the moment of its composition), and 2) that is in turn capable of harboring new processes of individuation, being still in a phase of becoming. It is important to note that an individuated being, even if resulting from a finished process of individuation, is still multiple in its individuated state, because it is “multiphased.” Its potential for becoming is still active, unless it reaches a state of complete stability, which amounts to exhaustion and death. Contrary to the dead, the living being is a *problematic being*, which implies that it entails a becoming dimension. The problematic being is not subordinated, or inferior to the One (the archetype); it is «at once superior and inferior to unity» (Simondon 2007: 20).

The constitution of a musical practice able to account for the nature of *Dichterliebe* as a problematic musical work—and therefore a musical work that is still “living,” and whose potential is not the stabilized “good form” but a form in metastability and becoming—has to start from this awareness. Firstly, it cannot be subordinated to the score as One, neither in its Platonic archetypal version of the mold, nor in the Aristotelian hylomorphic version of a form that is materialized (or a matter that is formed). Secondly, its status of non-stabilized entity has to be acknowledged, and therefore performance has to take into account its “multiphased” character by allowing its potential for becoming to be expressed. We come therefore to a creative rethinking in Deleuzian-Simondonian terms of the musical-paradox-*Dichterliebe* indicated by Perrey. *Dichterliebe* is individuated as a musical work, therefore it is the result of intensive processes of individuation that have led it to be “phase-locked.” However, the cycle is not stabilized and exhausted, by contrast it is a multiphased entity, still containing enormous potential for further processes of individuation. As both individuated and *individuating*, *Dichterliebe* has a pre-individual component. Under this light we can read the productive tensions and inconsistencies that characterize it. Parallel to what Daniela Voss points out about the pre-individual, *Dichterliebe*

has a «relation to itself» that is characterized by an internal disparity: it can be further «resolved» in a performance, but its reality is not «totalizable», as it cannot anticipate the precise result of the processes of individuation that it can lend itself to (see Voss 2018: 100). The pre-individual component of *Dichterliebe* can give way to a succession of “phase-shifts” that resolve some of its tension, but this has to happen in an energetic sense, not in the sense of predictable events—what happens when music performance is subordinated to the predictable sequences and codes dictated by musical grammar and commonsensical processes of musical subjectification. In this change of perspective, the link with the Deleuzian shift in the notion of problem emerges: a problem contains its possible solutions, but without anticipating them, without “preforming” them in an archetypical way. Solutions (and performances) can happen only in the becomings of a «resolutive invention» (Simondon 2007: 227) constituting the becomings of the problem itself.

Music and its outside

Let us go back to the two levels identified by Barthes in Schumann’s music, with which this article opened. One last aspect to address is to understand the nature of the relationship between the level of grammar or language and the level of “delirium” in the light of the notion of problem outlined so far, and in view of a renewed performance practice “of the problem.” We have put forth the existence of a traditional image of musical thought, which would dictate in advance the relationship between a musical work and its performance according to substantialist or hylomorphic approaches, which equate performance with a “solution” already adumbrated in the score. However, it is important to point out that countering this image of musical thought, however innovative and drastic a gesture, cannot be confined to an iconoclastic—albeit creative—endeavor. Indeed, such an image does dictate the thinkable and the unthinkable in relation to music (what belongs to a given work, and what can never belong to it); at the same time, the work itself, its structural organization, its language (the musical grammar indicated by Barthes) are important to understand what lies “outside” of it, and to point towards its incommensurable “other.” Commenting on Song n. 1 of *Dichterliebe*, Rosen proposes that voice and piano occupy «different musical spaces,» and that the resolution of the dissonances and tensions between the two arises «only outside the space in which the tension was principally defined» (Rosen 1998: 44). Rosen puts forward that (grammatical) dissonances are resolved in a space “outside” the plane where they are produced, a space that seems to be indicated through the compositional gesture, yet not occupied by it.

In discussing the Deleuzian trajectory around the image of thought in relation to the problematic, Fabio Treppiedi (2016: 11) suggests that it is important to acknowledge not only the oppressive power that it has exerted throughout most of the history of philosophy, power that has forced thought to think nothing outside what the image allows it to

think. Tracing the evolution of the image of thought throughout works as distant as *Difference and Repetition* (1968) and *What is Philosophy?* (1991), he proposes that the image of thought's almost despotic power should also be regarded as a "potency," an offer and an invitation towards *what it is not*. The image of thought prevents from thinking what is "outside" of itself, but this outside is not a simple, dialectical outside, an interiority that is opposed to another interiority. This "outside" cannot exist independently of what prevents one from thinking it, namely the image of thought. It is therefore important not to "limit" the image of thought itself to its "limiting" function; as a limit, the image of thought does not simply cut out a zone impossible to access because its entry is blocked. More complexly, the image of thought is rather a threshold looking onto an outside that it—and we—cannot occupy. The question then becomes less how to overcome the dominating power of the dogmatic image, and more: «How can thought coexist with its physiological potency of producing images?» (Treppiedi 2016: 15, translation mine). Returning to Schumann's music and to its duplicity of levels: how can the open-ended and problematic dimension of *Dichterliebe* coexist with the closures operated by the musical code, by the fact that such a code is what actually offers an opening towards another space, its own "outside," even without occupying it?

The notion of "outside," already developed in *Difference and Repetition*, is fundamental to Deleuzian thought, or better, to what with Guattari he names «the nonthought within thought» (1994: 59). Such notion is often put in relation by Deleuze with the discourse of Maurice Blanchot, also through its reading by Michel Foucault, especially in relation to (literary) language.⁷ For Blanchot, language becomes dimension of the "outside" when it is willing to point towards what it cannot contain. As long as language remains a means of representation, of designation, as a set of rules whose "solution" is biunivocally clear, it will stay «a language of assertion and answer, ... a linear language of simple development» (Blanchot 1993 [1969]: 6), a passage from problems to solutions that annul them. Language has always to strive towards its own "nonthought," the "outside" where the speaking (the composing, the performing) subject is dissolved. It is only by comprehending the binding necessity of language that it is possible to experiment with the possibility of escaping it, of opening it towards its "outside." If one cannot prescind from language, it is because the "outside" marks the very impossibility of "exiting": the outside is opening towards no interiority, absolute opening—«one is irremediably outside the outside» (Foucault 2006 [1966]: 27). In other words, one has to find «a language where language itself would . . . be at stake» (Blanchot 1993: 6), the exploration of the limit that puts language in question still acknowledging the impossibility to exit from it.

Let us consider another example from *Dichterliebe*, Song n. 9. The singing voice is contemplating, as if from the outside looking in through a window, the wedding dance of the

⁷ Works that are frequently quoted in relation to the notion of "outside" include *The Infinite Conversation* (1969) by Blanchot, and the short text *The Thought from Outside* (1969) by Foucault. On the «unthought in thought», cf. also Foucault's *The Order of Things* (1966).

woman he loves. The split between two spaces (“outside” and “inside”) is clearly marked by a split in character between the voice and the piano. The voice speaks–sings from a place that is detached spatially, emotionally, and psychologically. Being left “out of” the wedding party, excluded from it, this outside is also experienced as interiority, a place inaccessible and untouched by the cheerfulness and agitation of what is happening inside. But this duplicity of spaces is not merely a matter of diegetic separation—both in terms of what is represented (inside/outside the hall) and of how it is represented (interiority of the subject/exteriority of the scene). In this song, Schumann is putting together two different *temperatures*, two different *speeds*, whose friction is incommensurate to both zones emerging as a sort of third plane. The singing voice is rigid and angular as if frosted with dejection. With almost no exception, it sings only one pitch per bar, with melodic changes always corresponding to the downbeat. This vocal rigor is—not contrasted, but rather *paratactically* placed next to the turbulent swirling of the piano, which agitates in a zone of warmth or heath in a fast waltz rhythm. Differently than the voice, the figurations of the right hand are unpredictable and ever changing, with a clashing note on every first downbeat of the theme (B flat over the A at the left hand to underline melodically the dominant ninth harmony).

The “outside” in Song n. 9 coincides with the “out of scene,” and at the same time with the maximum of interiority, of “intimacy.” And yet, it is also a zone that is neither vocal nor pianistic, out of language, pure externality: in the words of Deleuze and Guattari, it is «more distant than any external world because it is an inside deeper than any internal world» (1994 [1991]: 59). «Intimacy as the Outside, the exterior become the intrusion that stifles, and the reversal of both the one and the other ... ‘the vertigo of spacing’» (Blanchot 1993: 46). This vertigo, this incommensurable gap, is the real outside generated by the non-solved friction between the two planes occupied by voice and piano. To the point that, as already *in nuce* in the irresolution of Song n. 1, even the theme of romantic love is carried away to another plane. “Sehnen und Verlangen,” desire and longing, are brought beyond the subject: as Blanchot would say, they pass from the first to the third person singular. What speaks is the neutral, a desire that is located even beyond the logic of lack. Schumann’s music is written in the «third person indefinite» (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 254): it is not indeterminate, but it is not tied to a subject position. Its pre-individuality is exactly what prevents it being caught in the closures of *significance*, in the tyranny of subjectification, and fosters «a maximum number of occurrences and becomings» (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 255). Unhinged from a dialectical target and from the call to representativity and recognition, desire equals an excessive form of thought: «the thought that thinks more than it thinks.» Such form of desire does not ask to be fulfilled, it does not resemble a love that demands union. Rather, it is a «desire of the other as other, a desire that is austere, disinterested, without satisfaction, without nostalgia, unreturned, and without return.» It is «relation to the impossible, it is impossibility become relation»

(Blanchot 1996: 53): *Dichterliebe*, a poet's love carried beyond *love*, towards the a-subjective territories of desire.

Conclusion

This paper ends with a plea for creative critique. The problematic nature of *Dichterliebe* is the result of Schumann opening his musical discourse to its outside, putting musical language at stake. His critical act is not in contrast with artistic creation, but constitutes instead its germ and fostering force.⁸ Similarly, the passage from the “problem of performance” to the “performance of the problem” starts from a critique that is immediately creative, and that in turn has to resonate with a practice and with its materialities and operational ways. One therefore wonders: what is now to be done with *Dichterliebe*? What new systems should one adopt once we exit the representational terrains of music interpretation based on the traditional “image of musical thought”?

If this critique is inscribed in a practice of writing and a reflection of philosophy that reaches out towards music (as one of its possible outsides), the “solution” to this problem has to be pursued through a musical practice that in turn strives for its own outside, for placing its own language at stake. The musician willing to abandon “the problem of performance” in favor of the “performance of the problem” has to research his or her own results *through music performance*. In such process, philosophy and music appear as the possible outsides of each other, in a mutual dynamization of disciplines that refuse to be confined within their own traditional limits. Reflection can become an integral part of a mode of music making that does not dispense with thinking (and writing) practices but incorporates them in the intensive processes of individuation of new materialities. *Dichterliebe*, a *chaosmos* in itself, has to be further opened to its own chaos: its frictions explored, its delays exploded, its internal turbulences amplified. Yet, we could say with Simondon, the solution to the *Dichterliebe*-problem cannot be predetermined: it is always an act of “resolutive invention,” and its solutions are partially indeterminate, even if linked to its starting material—the “multiphased” individual that presents itself to us through the score's systematicity. We cannot provide a system: «Produce a deterritorialized refrain as the final end of music, release it in the Cosmos—that is more important than building a new system» (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 350). One has to open music to its own chaos, to face the continuous risks of music's closures (the closures of *significance*, the closures of *subjectification*), and to bring, beyond love and towards desire, the “love of the poet” towards its own *a-signifying* and *a-subjective*.

⁸ On the relation between creation and critique, especially in the light of Schumann's influence from the Early Romantics, see Perrey 2002.

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