

sealed into his work with magic power may be called into active life, shining in a thousand colors, and that they may surround mankind in luminous sparkling circles and, enkindling its imagination, its innermost soul, may bear it in rapid flight into the faraway spirit realm of sound.⁵⁹

These programmatic declarations by absolutist writers are challenging, certainly, and perhaps “impossibly broad.” But they cannot be excluded from the programmatic equation. It might be added that the period music movement has to do not only with correct orchestration and authentic instruments, with original tone and tempo, but with a period’s state of mind as well. This means that in the nineteenth century program was not limited to Liszt and Berlioz. Neither need it be now.

Royal Brown observes that a distinction between “film” and “serious” music “reflects a prejudice, common in the musical community, against programme music.”⁶⁰ He goes on to suggest, as I have done, that even the most apparently absolute of pieces can hide some kind of program.

In the first instance program music was subservient to the external subject. However, as we have seen, all music can be said to have a program or some essential external consideration, whether relating to the circumstances of composition, or of apprehension. A way around the decried subordination of music to text is the alternative possibility that music, though it need not be secondary to externals, cannot be completely understood without them. Romantic and post-Romantic writers applied a kind of after-the-fact poetic program to music. Even more important is the application of history, and historical awareness.

Newcomb explains.

The sources of meaning brought to this interpretation [of Schumann’s 2nd Symphony] would scarcely seem distant or daring to our colleagues in literary or art criticism. Yet we tend still to stay away from them in contemporary music criticism. Ludwig Fincher recently deplored . . . the habit, even in current musicological practice, of avoiding the interpretation of content by falling back on mere description of form, with a concomitant relegation of questions of content to the realm of the ineffable. Although the widespread timidity before the task of bringing into words the transmusical content of large, structurally demanding works is all