

Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *A General History of Music*, Volume I

Section 3.

Although tone—or rather, as it must be called at this juncture, sound—is only the means by which music is made perceptible, in primitive, uncultivated nations it is generally taken for the thing itself. Indeed they consider every individual sound to be music. Consider pure sound in its various modifications: loud, soft, sharp and rough, gentle, dark, muffled, thick, thin, and so on. Furthermore, consider how in these various modifications sound is capable of affecting the hearing, and therefore the feelings of human beings. Then there is little reason to be surprised that the pleasure sound can already stimulate in itself may come to be considered a pleasure that arises from actual music. In his primal condition man is a passive creature; his soul has not yet been put into action. Sense impressions are thus still the only impressions that he can receive; he is not yet capable of other impressions, in which his intellect first must make a comparison, and derive from the observation of a proportion or a symmetry a feeling of pleasure. These sense impressions must be all the more intense and stirring the less the intellect is cultivated, and capable itself of being engaged.

This explains why we find in all wild and uncivilized nations such great pleasure taken in the clamor of noisy instruments—in drums, for example, and rattles, in blaring trumpets, and extremely loud, ferocious shrieks. Nature has established a wholly unmediated union between the heart and the hearing of human beings; all passions are communicated through their proper tones, which stir in the heart of the hearer the very passionate sensation from which they resulted. This relation of unmediated perception between tone, hearing, and the heart is the same in all peoples, the most savage as well as the most civilized, with this one difference: the more savage the people, the more it remains merely sensuous and poor in mental representations, the more powerful are its sensations and its organs of sense. Thus in the primal state the pure tone, taken for itself alone as an expression of the passions, must be crude and vigorous, and entirely in keeping with the power of these sense organs.

Clara Wieck, letter to Robert Schumann (1837-38)

Yet, art is a beautiful gift. What, indeed, is more beautiful than to clothe one's feelings in sound, what a comfort in sad hours, what a pleasure, what a wonderful feeling, to provide an hour of happiness to others. And what a sublime feeling to pursue art so that one gives one's life for it.

Clara Schumann, diary entry (December 1841)

As a performer, however, his [Franz Liszt's] concert on the 13th absolutely astounded me, especially his *Don Juan* Fantasy, which he played overpoweringly... the bravado, the pleasure with which he played was unique... Of Liszt there was not much to be seen, since two women had attached themselves to him. I am convinced that the reason Liszt displays such arrogance at times is really the fault of the women, because they pay court to him everywhere in a way that is intolerable to me and that I also find highly improper. I venerate him too, but even veneration must have a limit... On the 16th... Liszt came to the soiree [at the Schumann house], as always, late. He seems to enjoy making people wait for him, which is something I don't like. He strikes

me as a spoiled child, good-natured, tyrannical, amiable, arrogant, noble, and generous, often hard on others—a strange mix of characters. Yet we have become very fond of him and he has always treated us in the friendliest way.

Review of Clara Schumann in *The Musical Times* (London, 1 April 1884)

We think we are correct in saying that no pianist ever before retained so powerful a hold upon the public mind for so long a period ... Madame Schumann's character, intellect and training saved her from becoming a mere partisan: though for years she has been acknowledged unequal as an exponent of Schumann's music, yet one always hears of her wonderful interpretations of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven. By her modesty, prudence and talents she has gradually achieved a veritable triumph.

Clara Schumann, letter (1894)

My father had to put up with being called a tyrant; however, I still thank him for it every day; I have *him* to thank for the freshness that has remained with me in my old age (at least in my art). It was also a blessing for me that he was exceedingly strict, that he reprimanded me when I deserved it and in so doing, prevented me from becoming arrogant from the praise the world showered on me. At times the rebuke was bitter, but it was still good for me!