

# Interview with Pianist Michael Schäfer

## on Schumann's "Träumerei" in the original tempo MM ♩ = 100

### 12 Arguments in favour of the original tempo

1. Quite notably, none of the individual pieces of the "Kinderszenen" op. 15 has tempo instructions, rather simply a title and metronome markings.
2. "Träumerei" is not a slow piece: there is no "Langsam" or "Sehr langsam". On the contrary: Schumann's instructions are MM ♩ = 100.
3. MM ♩ = 100 is the upper limit, Clara Schumann advises MM ♩ = 80, which leans more toward medium fast play.
4. If one plays the "Träumerei" as a part of the complete cycle the fluent tempo doesn't at all seem difficult. But as soon as it is played as an additional – sentimental – encore, the pianist automatically tends towards slowness.
5. At MM ♩ = 100 the piece evolves to something entirely new. It is not laden with portentous meaning. Rather it becomes something made of gossamer, delicate and beautiful.
6. It is much easier to maintain the musical tension when you play the intended fast tempo. And you can highlight the middle and lower parts much better.
7. Children are never "slow", at the most they are fast or calm.
8. The faster tempo lets you breathe more naturally. Breathing out is a longer action than breathing in, exactly as the musical setting of the „Träumerei“. If you play the piece too slowly you can no longer breathe in and out properly.
9. If you play the "Träumerei" extremely slowly you cannot play the three ritardandi in a way that fits. Especially the third, last ritardando lets me slip from reverie to dreaming, but only when it originates from the more fluent tempo.
10. Very many famous pianists have played the piece very slowly and beautifully. It affords courage to stand against this wrong tradition of playing the piece slowly.
11. Pianists should really try to play the "Träumerei" the way Schumann intended, at least just once. After all, Schumann certainly did not mean to annoy us with his MM ♩ = 100, he simply intended the more fluent tempo.
12. You have to bravely push tradition aside and play fresh from the sources. Traditions change, the original persists.