

ROBERT SCHUMANN:
Herald of a 'New Poetic Age.'

By John Daverio. Oxford University Press.
624 pp. \$45

Although he gave us such indisputably great works as his *Piano Quintet* (1842) and *Cello Concerto* (1850), few composers have been subject to as many unfounded charges as has Robert Schumann (1810–56). Scholars claim that he was unable to orchestrate, that he couldn't handle larger musical forms, and that his later pieces, composed when he was suffering from mental illness, are gloomy failures devoid of the freshness and lyricism found in his earlier work.

The shade of the German romanticist may now rest more easily, thanks to this authoritative new biography. To defend Schumann's skill in orchestration, Daverio, a musicologist at Boston University, shows how the rich programmatic content of such works as *Scenes from Goethe's Faust* (1844–53) is conveyed through inventive instrumental combinations. And to demonstrate that the composer could handle longer forms, Daverio points to the highly logical architecture of *Paradise and the Peri* (1843).

By far, though, Daverio is best at reevaluating Schumann's final works. To be sure, Schumann did descend into psychosis. On February 26, 1854, after several years of depression and two weeks of hearing voices (angelic and demonic), he plunged from a bridge into the icy waters of the Rhine. Rescued by fishermen and carried home amid a crowd of jeering Carnival revelers, he was

taken that same day to an asylum, where he died two years later. Eccentric, dark, and often repetitive, the compositions dating from this period have been dismissed as the products of a decaying intelligence. But Daverio finds in them "a heightened intensity of expression" and an inventiveness presaging the music of Anton Bruckner, Max Reger, and Arnold Schönberg. Daverio insists that the economical use of thematic material and masterful handling of form in pieces such as the *Fourth Symphony* (1851), the *Faust* overture, and the *Violin Concerto* (1853) could have come only from an artist "in full command of his or her rational powers."

What Daverio fails to note is that performers, too, have misread these later works. Take the underplayed *Violin Concerto*. From its first interpreter, Georg Kulenkampff, violinists have disfigured the polonaise finale by speeding it up, reaching for the sort of pyrotechnic display associated with concerto finales. A recent recording by Latvian violinist Gidon Kremer is a more faithful account. Perhaps Daverio's inspired scholarship will encourage other more authentic interpretations. If so, Schumann's neglected gems will receive the performances they deserve.

—Sudip K. Bose



Science & Technology

MONAD TO MAN:
*The Concept of Progress in
Evolutionary Biology.*

By Michael Ruse. Harvard University
Press. 640 pp. \$49.95

Evolutionary biology is seductively metaphorical. Its evidence points in so many suggestive directions that its practitioners are naturally tempted to make global speculations. Charles Darwin understood this very well, and knew moreover that it could lead to unfounded ideas as well as innovative ones. Concerned to establish his new theory as serious science, Darwin laid out a rigorous formula for evolutionary discourse, explicitly rejecting—for him-

self and his followers—the more speculative style of early evolutionists such as Jean Lamarck and Darwin's own grandfather Erasmus.

Over the long term, however, such restraint was a lot to ask. Beginning with T. H. Huxley, evolutionary biologists arrived at a two-track solution to the problem: they published one set of books and articles to establish professional credentials, and a distinct but parallel set to appeal to popular audiences and to serve as an outlet for speculation. This strategy has not been lost on mainstream biologists, many of whom see evolutionary biology as a field tainted by the imposition of cultural values. They pay lip service to it but in practice regard it as a