

Carl Heinrich Hübler (1822-1893) lived during the period of development of the fully chromatic valved horn. Prior to this, horns were limited to the notes of the harmonic series, requiring their players to utilize the upper harmonics and carry a set of crooks with them to allow changes of key. While it was possible to use the right hand to partially close the bell to fill in the gaps between harmonics, the notes sounded thereby were not equal in tone. It took much of the 19th century for the potential of the valved horn to be recognized, perhaps because the valves were not particularly reliable and as late as the turn of the 20th century the horn tutor Oscar Franz was still recommending that players learn hand stopping technique - in case the valves malfunctioned in a concert. It was during this period of development that the two concert pieces for four horns by Schumann and Hübler were written.



In October 1849, Schumann's concert piece for four horns was first performed in private with piano accompaniment in the apartment of Johann Rudolph Lewy in Dresden in the presence of the composer. One of the players was Carl Heinrich Hübler, then a member of the Dresden court orchestra. Hübler was a horn virtuoso of the period and Schumann's work inspired him to write his own concert piece for four horns. Schumann's work would have been nearly impossible to play on the valved horns of the period (it remains notoriously difficult on today's instruments), but Hübler, with his intimate knowledge of the horn, was able to make his concert piece far more accessible, although it remains less well known.

Hübler's concert piece, like Schumann's, is in three contrasting movements, *Allegro Maestoso*, *Andante* and *Vivace*. The horns enter with a three chord statement that Hübler soon varies with a modulation into minor key. Like Schumann, he gives the horns complex harmonies and revels in the possibility of faster chromatic passages. The slow movement commences with a lyrical theme, modulating into a minor key to provide a little romantic *sturm* and *drang* before relaxing back into the lyrical first theme. The final movement allows the horns to return to their joyful hunting horn origins, even calling for hand stopping during a slower passage where the solo first horn is joined by the other three. The first three chords return to conclude the piece.