

# **Unraveling the Threads of Madness: Henry Russell's "The Maniac"**

**by TJ Laws-Nicola  
Texas State University**

tl1130@txstate.edu

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## **Poster Abstract**

Henry Russell was best known as a composer of more than 300 songs. Many of his compositions were popular for both their sentimental texts, as in "The Old Armchair," as well as those of a more political nature, such as "Woodsman, Spare That Tree!" Indeed, Russell had written such songs of advocacy as those associated with abolition ("The Slave Ship") and environmentalism ("Woodsman, Spare that Tree!"). "The Maniac" is his only composition addressing the issue of institutionalization. The text is borrowed and adapted from the monodrama "The Captive" by M.G. "Monk" Lewis. Through an analysis of form, harmony, melody, text, and thematic development and interactions between text and music we can approach a clearer understanding of "The Maniac". Select periodicals, such as *The London Times*, provide contemporary critical review for "The Maniac." Additional nineteenth century songs whose texts focus on madness and/or institutionalization will assist in building a stylistic and cultural context for "The Maniac."