Clara Wieck, Lithographie von Andreas Staub, Wien 1838

Clara Schumann

Birth name: Clara Josephine Wieck
Variants: Clara Wieck, Clara Wieck Schumann, Clara Schumann Wieck, Clara Josephine Schumann, Clara Josephine Wieck Schumann, Clara Josephine Schumann Wieck

* 13 September 1819 in Leipzig, Deutschland
† 20 May 1896 in Frankfurt am Main, Deutschland

"The practice of art is indeed a large part of my being; to me, it is the air that I breathe."

(Clara Schumann to Johannes Brahms, in a letter dated 15 October 1868)

Profile

Clara Wieck Schumann appeared in public at the age of nine and she remained in the public eye for the rest of her life. With her activities spanning over sixty years, she had a considerable influence on the piano scene as an international star, piano pedagogue and, finally, as a professor in 1878 at the newly founded Hoch’s Conservatory in Frankfurt am Main.

The possibilities of music-making were not exhausted for her in piano-playing alone, but also included theoretical and practical knowledge about music. Thus singing and violin-playing were just as much a part of her education as was composing. Her early compositions were conceived as extensions of her own repertoire, and she emphasised the range of her musical profile as a virtuoso. In the 1840s, the confrontation with the requirements of various musical genres came increasingly to the fore. Nonetheless, the compositions written during her marriage were also intended for performance on the concert stage. Already as a young virtuoso, she was noted for playing music in all “styles”, not merely her own pieces.

She initially distinguished herself by being the first virtuoso, alongside Franz Liszt, to perform Beethoven sonatas in the concert hall beginning in 1837. Besides her renown as a Beethoven interpreter, she then became primarily known as an "authentic" representative of the so-called "Romantic School", i.e. the music of Chopin, Henselt, Mendelssohn Bartholdy and Robert Schumann. She later expanded her repertoire to include the piano works of Brahms. She controlled the reception of Robert Schumann’s music not only through her performance policies, but also through her edition of his works in various forms, as well as the edition of her husband’s biographical material.

Beyond that, through her performance style, she first of all shaped a definite repertoire selection focussed on a canon of works from Bach and Scarlatti to Brahms. Secondly, she influenced her pupils through a certain attitude towards interpretation that was already designated in the 19th century as "faithfulness to the original". She was noted for exactitude of the text and an intensive preoccupation with the composer’s intentions. Through her international tours, she especially made the works of Robert Schumann and Johannes Brahms known abroad.

From the end of the 1870s onwards, a triad was formed by Clara Schumann in Frankfurt am Main, Johannes Brahms in Vienna and Joseph Joachim in Berlin. These three musicians were so powerful in their effect that their names, long after their deaths, remained synonymous for an attitude of conservative values - steadfast in its orientation towards the "masterwork" and up in arms against the avant-garde of the early twentieth century. In contrast to this, the piano technique she taught seems to have been received as progressive, well into the twentieth century, by virtue of its expressive variety.
Cities an countries

Clara Wieck initially concertised primarily in German-speaking countries. Her first major tour took her to Paris in 1831/32. In the winter of 1837/38 she began a series with concerts in Prague and Vienna that signified her international breakthrough. As Clara Schumann, she undertook a successful tour in 1842 to Denmark, then to Russia, again to Austria, Holland and Belgium. In the year of Robert Schumann’s death, 1856, she concertised for the first time in England, Scotland and Ireland. England became one of her principal destinations thereafter. She undertook tours to Austria, Bohemia, France, Belgium, Holland, the Baltic countries, Russia and Switzerland until the late 1880s.

Biography

Clara Wieck was born on 13 September 1819 into a family of musicians. Her father, Friedrich Wieck, a qualified theologian, was a successful music dealer and piano pedagogue; her mother, Marianne Tromlitz, was a highly promising soloist who had performed at the Leipzig Gewandhaus as a pianist and singer in 1817. The marriage ended in divorce in 1824; Clara, the eldest child, and her younger brothers lived with their father. Their mother moved to Berlin with her second husband, the composer Adolf Bargiel (1783-1841). Friedrich Wieck married Clementine Fechner in 1828. Despite the family’s break-up, Clara never lost contact with both parents (although with varying degrees of intensity), her siblings and half-siblings.

Clara Wieck enjoyed an exclusive private education with a reformed pedagogical approach. This included strengthening of personality, performance requirements appropriate for children, encouragement of creativity and physical exercise as a necessary balance. One area of focus was on the comprehensive musical instruction of the virtuoso. Music was taught as a holistic sensory and cognitive experience, with consideration for individual conditions. Wieck’s method is therefore difficult to systematise. Alongside general basic subjects, the instruction included piano technique, improvisation, ensemble playing with partners, analysis, interpretation and repertoire studies, theory instruction including counterpoint and ear-training, violin, voice, French and English. Before this backdrop, Clara wrote the early variations and dance movements mentioned in her youthful diary, but these works have not survived. They must have sounded similarly to the first printed compositions, the "Quatre Polonaises", Op. 1, "Caprices en forme de valse", Op. 2 and "Romance variée", Op. 3, published between 1831 and 1833. There is also an orchestral version, performed in 1834, of the "Valse romantiques" Op. 4 modelled on Weber and Schubert, but the parts to this work are lost today. These waltzes were performed in a popular Leipzig garden restaurant.

Spohr, Weber, Chopin and Mendelssohn Bartholdy were her most important models during these years. An insouciant freshness flows through the early works. The piano writing often contains original ideas and bold harmonies which are, however, relieved by brilliant figures; some of these make a somewhat prefabricated effect. The "Quatre Pièces caractéristiques", Op. 5 and the "Soirées musicales", Op. 6, published in 1836, give evidence of a new musical language. Amongst other things, they are informed by a fascination for ghost stories and fantasies such as those staged by the opera composer Heinrich Marschner. At the same time, the collections also reveal individual encounters with the latest works of Chopin (mazurkas, ballades). The surprisingly poetic adagio movements ("Romance", Op. 5/3; "Notturno", Op. 6/2) disclose the sensitive side of the young virtuoso. The largest compositional project of this period was the Piano Concerto, Op. 7, which received its premiere performance on 9 November 1835 conducted by Mendelssohn Bartholdy at the Leipzig Gewandhaus.

Friedrich Wieck was himself in charge of Clara’s piano instruction; for the other subjects, various other teachers were called in, including Theodor Weinlich, Heinrich Dorn and Siegfried Dehn in theory and composition. In turn, the ten-year-old Clara was already giving piano lessons to her younger siblings. Her father created an open diary for his daughter, kept by himself and her beginning in 1829 and mostly by her alone from 1836 onwards. It served to document her progress as a “wunderkind” and young virtuoso, but was also meant to serve as an incentive and assessment of her achievements.

The systematic development of her career, as conducted by Friedrich Wieck, included the patronage of renowned personalities such as Goethe and Paganini, whose friendly praise appeared in the press. One special characteristic of her education was the early contact with the younger musical “avant-garde” such as Chopin, Mendelssohn Bartholdy and Schumann. Clara Wieck played their pieces at her concerts and exchanged manuscripts with them. Thus, when Chopin travelled to Leipzig in 1835 and paid her a visit, she became acquainted with his Ballade in G minor, Op. 23 from the manuscript, one year prior to its
publication.
Her father organised her performances and concert tours. He was her father, teacher as well as impresario during her youthful years. As a young star, Clara already occupied a position of prominence amongst her younger siblings, for their entire family life was orientated according to the requirements of the development of her career. She was alone with her father on tour several months a year, whilst her stepmother managed the family and the father's business dealings at home.

Clara Wieck distinguished herself as an interpreter at a high level when she publicly performed, for the first time, unabridged piano sonatas of Beethoven (F minor, Op. 57, D minor, Op. 31/2, C-sharp minor, Op. 27/2) during the 1837/38 season. In so doing, she set off a controversial debate over the suitability of the sonatas for the concert hall which greatly benefitted her reputation. Franz Grillparzer spontaneously dedicated the poem "Clara Wieck and Beethoven" to her, later even including it in his "Collected Works". For Clara Wieck, these spectacular concerts signified her breakthrough as a top-class virtuoso. She stood at the threshold of an international career, made visible by her being named "k.k. Kammervirtuosin" in Vienna on 4 March 1838, an unusually high honour for the still underage foreigner and Protestant. She showed her gratitude for this with the "Souvenir de Vienne", Op. 9, an impromptu on the Imperial Hymn. She was superior to her competitors because she offered a wide repertoire alongside her own pieces, as well as fashionable hits of the period (by Adolph Henselt and Johann Peter Pixis), still largely unknown treasures of the past (Johann Sebastian Bach, Domenico Scarlatti) and works of the avant-garde. At this time, she primarily offered Beethoven's chamber music and the latest works of Schumann in semi-private soirees. The first biographical article about her also appeared in 1838 in Schilling's "Universal-Lexikon der Tonkunst" and Herloßsohn’s "Conversationslexicon". The virtuoso "Bellini Variations", Op. 8 and the Scherzo, Op. 10 were written for her tours to Vienna and Paris (1837-1840).

Clara Wieck received a solid fundamental grounding from her father in matters pertaining both to art and to the practical concerns of living. He was her major attachment figure during her childhood. It was only with a great expenditure of energy that she succeeded in freeing herself from the double symbiosis of daughter/father and pupil/teacher. She had to fight in court for the right to marry Robert Schumann in 1840, cutting the connection to her family of origin with this lawsuit against her father. She did, it is true, now establish a new relationship to her biological mother in Berlin. But as a whole, the social and legal transitional passage of over a year signified a fundamental crisis for the still underage young woman who still lacked a permanent place of residence. During this period, she repeatedly doubted her artistic abilities. At the same time, she was able to experience being meanwhile sufficiently well known, as a star, to forge a place for herself in the concert scene without male protection. "I shall not give up my art", was one of her fundamental auto-suggestive principles. The public actively partook of the trial against her father, and its collective sympathy was in favour of the engaged couple, to whom all this attention was rather embarrassing. This affair added an emotional component to Clara Wieck's fame as a virtuoso that was ultimately quite beneficial to her image.

The specifically musical discourse with Robert Schumann, at the level of an associate, began quite early on, in 1831 to be exact. It was primarily urged on by Robert Schumann and is revealed in mutual quotations, correspondences and references in Clara Wieck's works Opp. 3, 4, 5, 6 and Robert Schumann's Opp. 5, 9, 11, 14 and 21. Echoes of this period are also heard in Robert Schumann's Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 54 (1841, 1845), which contains a reminiscence from Clara Wieck's Piano Concerto, Op. 7. A new quality of musical communication was shown in Clara Wieck's "Romance" in G minor, Op. 11/2 composed for the "Neue Zeitschrift für Musik" in 1839, with its intensive musical language orientated on Schumann. Clara Wieck and Robert Schumann planned an artists' community according to the early Romantic model, imagining a merging of both individuals in the artistic process. It was intended to withstand prosaic everyday life. If Clara Wieck could not yet imagine what her "housewife" role as idealised by Schumann would look like, she quickly found out. Between 1841 and 1854 she gave birth to eight children, seven of whom reached adulthood. Nonetheless, with the help of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, she mounted her successful comeback as a virtuoso on 31 March 1841 under the name of Clara Schumann. Amongst other works, the world premieres were given at the Leipzig Gewandhaus of her lied "Am Strande", Mendelssohn's four-hand "Allegro brillant" for piano, Op. 92 that he had composed to support Clara Schumann, and Schumann's "Spring Symphony" Op. 38.
The range of her duties grew with her family. Robert Schumann proved to be a precarious travel partner, which resulted in a drastic reduction of the repeatedly envisaged tour plans. If at least a tiny portion of the utopian idea of an artistic community could in fact be saved, it was because they came to grips with the reality of their situation despite turning away from the desired image of their shared life, whilst persistently holding on to at least the idea of their ambitious aim of uniting art and life.

The everyday artistic life of Clara Schumann now included the organisation of private concerts at which first hearings of new compositions were presented. Clara Schumann was involved in Schumann’s activities through adaptations, preparation of piano reductions and support at choral and orchestral rehearsals. Her financial contribution to their livelihood through her own concerts and teaching was certainly needed. During all this, her own free creative space shrunk dramatically. Simultaneous working hours were out of the question because everything could be heard through the walls where they lived. She lacked the professional basis of the daily study of music. Despite this, they managed to create their first (and only) project under a collective signature, namely the settings of twelve poems from Friedrich Rückert’s cycle “Liebesfrühling” (“Spring of Love”). The lieder were published in 1841, under both names, as Clara Schumann’s Op. 12 and Robert Schumann’s Op. 37, without revealing the authorship of the individual lieder.

In addition, between 1842 and 1844, Clara Schumann wrote “Six Lieder”, Op. 13 to texts of Heine, Geibel and Rückert, her second “Scherzo”, Op. 14 and “Six Fleeting Pieces” (“Sechs flüchtige Stücke”), Op. 15 for piano. As a result of studies in counterpoint undertaken together, she composed the “Three Preludes and Fugues”, Op. 16 in 1845. One year later, Clara Schumann sketched her most ambitious chamber work, the Piano Trio, Op. 17. Here, as already in the “Preludes and Fugues”, Op. 16, she conquered new musical territory. The Trio makes an almost classical effect in its sonic balance, to which the motivic density and linear coupling of the three instruments contribute. This expanded compositional perspective was not continued, although the work triggered off a considerable echo following its premiere on 18 November 1846 in the reports and reviews on the score published in 1847. They also contained ambivalent astonishment that it had been written by a woman. Clara Schumann took it up in her repertoire, still performing it during the 1870s in London with Joachim and Piatti. She contributed the “Three Mixed Choruses” (no opus number) in 1848 for Schumann’s work with the Dresden Choral Society, but a creative break occurred thereafter. Several lieder also remained in a desk drawer, unpublished.

If the artistic equilibrium of power between the publicly celebrated virtuoso (Clara) and the composer known only to specialists (Robert) was still reasonably balanced during the early 1840s, the weight soon shifted unassailably to the side of Robert Schumann. Clara Schumann was subordinated. Her Piano Sonata in G minor of 1841/42 remained unpublished, and only a 179-bar fragment in piano score remains from the draft of the second Piano Concerto in F minor (1846). It is possible that the missing opus numbers 18 and 19 in her catalogue of works were reserved for these pieces. The competition based on partnership did not only have an inspiring effect. The constant comparison was also frustrating because the lack of the opportunity to work continuously was all the more clearly apparent. Clara Schumann’s metaphor for it was “weibisch” (“womanish”).

After years of crises in Leipzig and Dresden - plagued by illnesses, a child’s death, pressure to succeed, financial worries and the Revolution of 1848 - the Schumanns moved to Düsseldorf with new hopes in 1850. The last compositions of Clara Schumann were written in 1853, thanks to a well-insulated new flat with separate music rooms. She wrote the Variations, Op. 20, “Three Romances” for piano, Op. 21, “Three Romances” for violin and piano, Op. 22 and “Six Lieder” from Rollett’s “Jucunde”, Op. 23. Clara Schumann dedicated the “Three Romances”, Op. 21 to Johannes Brahms. Ever since he had been more or less adopted by the Schumanns in October 1853, Brahms had been a part of her life. With his “Variations on a Theme of Robert Schumann”, Op. 9 (1854), a direct response to Clara Schumann’s “Variations on a Theme of Robert Schumann”, Op. 20 (1853), Brahms began to join in the musically intimate partner dialogue between the Schumanns. Brahms’s intention to continue this dialogue with her in the future, meanwhile, did not succeed. Clara Schumann did not allow herself to become engaged in it.

Her familial concept of living collapsed as a result of Schumann’s death in 1856. Aged 37, she had to organise herself anew. Clear preferences were now defined. From this time onwards, she no longer composed (except for a
March written in 1879 without opus number and instrumented by Julius Otto Grimm), although she continued to improvise on the podium and arrange lieder and chamber music for the piano. She concentrated exclusively on her profession as a pianist. In 1856 she embarked upon her first tour to England. She succeeded in establishing herself artistically in London with great effort and clever dramaturgy. Clara Schumann gradually perfected the concept of programming her appearances with just a few but especially “top-class” works. With the Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat major, Op. 73 (1808/09), she made a respectable start as a Beethoven interpreter that set standards in England as well. Because Beethoven’s concerto was considered “masculine” music, her appearances attracted special attention - also assessed as controversial. Moreover, she played (alongside her own “Variations”, Op. 20) music of Mendelssohn and Chopin, who were very popular in London.

She regarded the performances of her husband’s works, however, as her primary mission. His music did not in fact become established until the 1870s. During this time, Schumann advanced to the position of a prototype of German Romanticism in music.

The tours in England were a constituent part of her travels. She celebrated her greatest successes in that country, reaching the most listeners at large venues such as St James’s Hall and the Crystal Palace. Unlike listeners on the European continent, the English public was not so strictly subdivided into connoisseurs and outsiders. She later believed that she could perceive the results of her decade-long concert-pedagogical ambitions in the applause of the “impecunious”, as she called them (in “Letters from and to J. Joachim”, Vol. 2, p. 189) - results with which she was deeply satisfied.

Clarity, rhythmic precision, interpretation faithful to the work, her multi-faceted technique of attack and intimacy, coupled with her thoroughly demanding repertoire - all these factors made her performances genuine public events. Clara Schumann performed in England over the course of thirty years, until 1888. She probably had a considerable influence on the sector of concert life dedicated to art music in that country.

Clara Schumann visited Holland, Belgium, Luxemburg, France, Switzerland, Austria-Hungary and Russia during the ensuing decades. In addition, there were many appearances in Germany, mostly in Leipzig, the city of her birth.

The structures of a soloist’s career, then as now, depend on travelling regardless of season. The course of Clara Schumann’s year was marked by tour plans from autumn until early summer. Concerts in the European music centres formed the backbone of these tours. Sending the children to relatives and boarding schools in order to enable their mother to concertise was a subject of contention even with her close friends such as Rosalie Leser and Brahms. In a pioneering spirit, the Schumanns had sent their children to one of the newly established kindergartens in Dresden (until they were closed for political reasons), taking along their older daughters with them on short concert tours. This was impossible, however, on Clara’s extended tours. The moral pressure on her increased because the collective conceptions of fatherly and motherly love had clearly shifted. Whereas, at the beginning of the century, it was primarily the fathers (like Wieck) who were responsible for the flourishing of their offspring, this task was now found exclusively amongst the duties of the (house-) wife.

Already by the late 1850s, Clara Schumann succeeded in becoming financially independent. Between travels, she tried to create at least short family reunions at Christmas and during the summer holidays. With the purchase of a house in Baden-Baden in 1862, the family obtained a local centre. For ten years, this became the centre of attraction for relatives, friends and transient artists. The children were grown up by the time Clara Schumann offered her property for sale in 1873. Elise Schumann (1843-1928) was the first to make herself independent in 1863. Daughter Julie (1845-1872), who had already died of tuberculosis, left two children. Ludwig (1848-1899) had been in the Colditz Insane Asylum since 1871, whilst Ferdinand (1849-1891) married during that same year. Eugenie (1851-1938) studied music in Berlin and Felix (1854-1879), like his father, began studies in law in Heidelberg. Marie (1841-1929), on the other hand, remained her mother’s artistic supervisor and also organised her everyday life. She was reliably present in all critical family situations to which Clara no longer wished to expose herself: in illness and death.

Despite the intensive, lifelong friendship with Brahms that had begun in the autumn of 1853, and despite a love relationship with Theodor Kirchner during the early 1860s, she apparently did not consider marrying again. Having been brought up in a progressive way, she later insisted that her daughters and granddaughters prepare for gainful employment.

Clara Schumann’s decision to accept a position at Hoch’s
Conservatory in Frankfurt am Main in 1878 was made before the backdrop of health problems. Rheumatic complaints impaired her health. In addition, she suffered increased hearing loss as she became older. Stage fright often robbed her of the joyful anticipation of her presentations, although she was dependent on the public and could not imagine a life without piano-playing or teaching. Conditions in Frankfurt allowed enough free time for concert tours and for the possibility of teaching at home. In 1878 she celebrated her golden (50th) stage anniversary with great public interest and, ten years later, her diamond (60th) stage anniversary as well.

In January 1896 she organised a final recital at home. In March she suffered a first stroke and, six weeks later, a second one from the consequences of which she never recovered. Clara Schumann died on 20 May 1896 in Frankfurt am Main. She was buried next to her husband in Bonn. A plain gravestone with her name was leaned on the pedestal of his monument.

**Appreciation**

Clara Wieck Schumann succeeded where many women artists, including her mother, failed: in establishing herself on the stage beyond the period of her youth whilst managing to combine family and profession. Beyond being an inspiring muse, she remained the most important musical partner and comrade-in-arms of Robert Schumann. Tours within Germany, to Denmark (1842), Russia (1844), Austria (1846/7), Holland and Belgium (1853/54), some of which were undertaken alone, contributed to the continuity of her public presence. She remained a topic of conversation with a variety of performances, including the world premiere of Robert Schumann's Piano Concerto, Op. 54 (4 December 1845 in Dresden and 1 January 1846 in Leipzig) and as the soloist in diverse special and subscription concerts. The "Wiener Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung" praised her in 1846 as the "premier woman pianist of our times" (12 December 1846). During the final phase of Robert's illness, with whose return she reckoned until 1855, she increased her performing activities not only out of financial need, but also in order to take her life into her own hands. She understood her musical competence to be her capital and her public performances as part of a calling. If, during the 1830s and -40s, Clara Schumann had embodied the type of Queen Louise of Prussia, a model for many generations of women - with her natural appearance of virtuosity and modest amiability - the role that now corresponded to her was that of Queen Victoria, a woman sorely afflicted by life and suffering who only wished to dedicate herself to what was "essential". This public image was compiled from pictures, her special manner of interpretation and the projections triggered by these.

Clara Schumann's unprecedented success was made possible by an interaction of several factors. She used her stage presence to captivate her audience. Her wave of high spirits also carried with it compositions that were not directly accessible to the general public. Eduard Hanslick suspected that the collective enthusiasm for Beethoven's piano sonatas that suddenly broke out in Vienna in 1838 was inseparably linked with the rapturous reception of the ingenious young virtuoso ("Concertwesen", p. 333). From observations of her competitors, she noted that the cult of the star alone did not last.

Alongside excellent preparation, her performance strategy included a very clever programme structure. Already during the 1830s, each programme followed a dramaturgy that was tailor-made for the given occasion. The selection of pieces, first of all, depended on expectations. These were not disappointed. In addition, it was important to incorporate the attention curve. Demanding pieces were heard during the first part of the concert, lighter and more popular ones in the second part. In order to lend each recital a special rhythm, the duration, character, comprehensibility, tempi and keys of the pieces were coordinated. Her strategies set an example that still applies today.

The fact that she connected the pieces into a unity by improvising interludes between them probably contributed to the singular experience. At major events such as those at the Burgtheater in Vienna, the Crystal Palace in London or at the Popular Concerts, she had to reckon with a socially mixed public, whereas there were experienced listeners at the London Philharmonic Society or at well-known music salons to whom one could offer more experimental programmes. Such strategies were motivated by the late-enlightenment conviction that one could aesthetically educate the public. Good music, in the proper dosage and "offered with devotion", as Joseph Joachim affirmed in the letter to Clara Schumann (Letters from and to J. Joachim, 1911-1913, Vol. 2, p. 190), was first intended to make its effect on the performers, who could then pass on the art all the more convincingly - a premise that also regulated instruction.

From the time of her first appearance as Clara Schumann, she primarily focussed her repertoire on sophisti-
Schumann, Clara
cated artificial music. With this, she established a new quality brand. Meanwhile, this development did not only correspond to her contemporary situation, but was part of the general trend of the times. Of her competitors from the 1830s and -40s, she alone remained in the public eye after 1850 as the only representative of the then so-called "Romantic School". The stylisation into a "priestess" of art was already true of Clara Wieck. The fact that she masked her private psycho-physical state as soon as she was on stage contributed to the severity of her public image. This ability to disregard her own sensitivities encouraged her empathy with the corresponding musical persona which, in turn, intensified listeners' impression of being offered an interpretation true to the work. But at the same time, her ability to withdraw completely into the music - which she already possessed as a child - was puzzling even to her friends when it appeared in private situations. The artist occasionally made a cold, detached effect, precisely when emotional demands were being made on her. At the same time, she was also described as compassionate, warm-hearted and, to some, even maudlin.

Although she often performed chamber music, Clara Schumann was especially remembered as a soloist. During the 1830s she concertised extensively with the violinist Carl Müller. From the 1850s onwards she preferred to appear with the violinist Joseph Joachim, the cellist Alfredo C. Piatti, and the vocal soloists Julius Stockhausen and Amalie Joachim. Her central chamber-music repertoire included Robert's Piano Quintet in E-flat major, Op. 44 and Piano Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 47, but works of Mendelssohn, Beethoven, Haydn, Schubert and Brahms were also on her programmes. Pure "Clara Schumann recitals" were also quite unusual during the second half of the nineteenth century. She meanwhile enjoyed so much prestige that she could freely choose what repertoire she performed, and with whom.

Precision was the credo of her instruction. The exact observation of all the signs contained in the musical text formed the basis of each interpretation. For this reason, Clara Schumann worked on a German Chopin edition beginning in 1847, and this exactitude would also regulate the work begun in 1879 on the complete edition of all of Robert's works. In order to enable her pupils to gain performing experience, she regularly organised recitals at which she herself also performed, evaluating her own attainments just as she did those of her pupils. Their repertoire - works of Schumann, Chopin, Mendelssohn, Beethoven, Bach and Brahms - became the valid canon of piano literature.

Reception

When Clara Schumann died in 1896, her artistic authority and musical merits were still present. She was ranked amongst the great, exemplary female figures of her century. By the 1920s, her musical competences had been forgotten. It was only in the 1960s that the artist and especially the composer were rediscovered by women's research. Since then, her compositions have been gradually made generally accessible in new editions, some of these first editions. Today she is at least present in the public awareness. Starting in 1986, the Deutsche Bundespost (Federal Post Office) and then the Deutsche Bundesbank (German Rail) honoured the artist Clara Schumann by issuing an 80-pfennig stamp (= standard letter) and a hundred mark note with her portrait within the context of "Women in German History".

Of her compositions, her lieder are probably performed the most frequently. Extensive research into and publication of biographical documents of Clara Wieck Schuman, her families of origin and friends, began during recent years and still continues. The working-out of her systematic pianistic work has also begun. Expertise research is concerned with the question of her attainment of competence and the role of music during the course of her life. Finally, more recent studies are also tackling the question of this artist's influence on the performance tradition and reception of German "romantic" music in Germany and England and the role she played in the musical public of the 19th century.

Clara Wieck Schumann taught during her entire life; her pupils included several of her siblings, her children as well as her grandchildren Julie and Ferdinand Schumann. A number of her pupils enjoyed careers as pianists and pedagogues. From the published sources of Brunner, Cahn, De Vries, R. Hofmann, Litzmann, Lossewa, Eugenie, Ferdinand and Julie Schumann, Verne and Wurm, a list can be made of the following pupils: Julie von Asten, Miss E. Barnett, Miss Blaybrough, Leonard Borwick, Emma Brandes, Nelly Clark, Klara Davidson, Fanny Davies, Alice Dessauer, Karoline Dupré, John Dykes St Oswald, Heinrich Ehrlich, Ilona Ebenshütz, Ernst Engesser, Nannette Falk, Miss Fletcher, Carl Friedberg, Marie Fromm, Caroline Geisler-Schubert, Lily Goldschmidt, Amina Goodwin, Nelli Goring, Clement Harris,
Miss Henesy, Miss Hodson, E. Hofmann, Edith Hoyle, Bertha Hufer, Nathalie Janotha, Miss Johnson, Miss Kortegan, Adelina de Lara, Louise Adolphe Le Beau, Marie von Lindemann, Katie Macdonald, Miss Malbrough, Blanche Master, Edith Meadows, Theodor Müller-Reuter, Olga Neruda, Leonard Oberstadt, Marie Olson, Frau Moritz Oppenheim, Josephine Parson, Gertrud Pepys, Miss Pierson, Miss Rhodes, Henriette Reichmann, Adine Rücker, Ernst Rudorff, Marfa Sabinina, Emma Schmidt, Agnes Schönsteredt, Ferdinand Schumann, Julie Schumann, Fräulein Sewell (= Tochter von Marie Sewell?), Mimi Shakespeare, Frida Simonson, Emile Steffens, Margarete Stern, Therese Stümecke, Franklin Taylor, Käthe Then, Lazzaro Uzielli, Mathilde Verne, Miss Weston, Holdom White, Miss Wigram, Kath. Wilson, Mary Wurm.

Research

An edition of the most important correspondence between Clara and Robert Schumann is presently being prepared under the title "Briefwechsel Robert und Clara Schumanns mit Freunden und Künstlerkollegen" (Correspondence of Robert and Clara Schumann with Friends and Artist Colleagues), edited by Prof. Dr. Michael Heinemann (Dresden) in cooperation with the Robert Schumann House in Zwickau. From these publications, we can expect to learn further details about Clara Schumann's artistic work also after her husband's death, as well as about the everyday life of an artist couple.

Need for Research

Since new correspondence materials continue to turn up, our image of the probably best-known artist couple in music history is becoming ever more differentiated. In particular, the newly published letters to Clara Schumann's mother, Mariane Bargiel, a woman who had to earn a living teaching piano for her husband and four children, still await evaluation. In addition, there is a lack of detailed studies on Clara Schumann's many activities, e.g. in Leipzig, Dresden and Düsseldorf, on her relationships to artist colleagues and to certain individual pupils.

Ever since the arrival of the new film "Geliebte Clara" ("Beloved Clara" - Helma Sanders-Brahms) in the cinemas in 2008, a study on the subject of Clara Schumann as a novel and film heroine would continue to be of current interest.

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Author(s)

<br><br>Forschungsbedarf und Forschungsinformation: Beatrix Borchard, Januar 2009.

Editing status

Editorial staff: Regina Back
First edit 10/04/2006
Last edit 10/03/2019

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