

Louise Dulcken

Birth name: Louise Marie Louise David

Variants: Louise David, Louise Dulken, Louise Marie Louise Dulcken, Louise Marie Louise Dulken, Louisa Dulcken, Louisa David, Louisa Dulken, Louisa Marie Louisa Dulcken, Louisa Marie Louisa David, Louisa Marie Louisa Dulken, Luise Dulcken, Luise David, Luise Dulken, Luise Marie Luise Dulcken, Luise Marie Luise David, Luise Marie Luise Dulken

* 20 March 1811 in Hamburg,

† 12 April 1850 in London,

“Madame Dulcken’s Concert. This concert, which is always one of the great affairs of the season, took place Monday morning, when the Opera Concert-room was crowded in every part by a most fashionable audience. The programme was one of more than usual bulk [...]. The executants were, however, all of first-rate order, and the selection was extremely judicious, comprising almost entirely comparative novelty. Of the performances of Madame Dulcken the most striking were the concerto in E flat of Weber, and the duet of Mozart for two pianos, of which one was played by Mendelssohn. The latter was perhaps the greatest treat of the concert, both pianists vying with each other in giving the most exquisite softness and elegance of expression to the graceful inspirations of Mozart.“

(“The Times“, 12th June 1844, p. 7)

Profile

The pianist and music teacher Louise Dulcken gave regular performances even as a child, sometimes with her brother, the violinist Ferdinand David. At the young age of 17 she married Theobald Augustus Dulcken and settled with her husband in London. In the first half of the 19th century, Louise Dulcken ranked among the most distinguished international pianists. She often performed as a soloist at the London Philharmonic Concerts, and in addition to the classical and romantic repertoire including the works of Ludwig van Beethoven and Carl Maria von Weber she also introduced piano concertos unknown before then to the public, including Frédéric Chopin’s piano concerto in F minor op. 21, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy’s Piano Concerto in D Minor op. 40 as well as a piano concerto from Elias Parish Alvars (performed from the manuscript for the first time in 1846). Louise Dulcken also gave her own annual concerts in London which

soon ranked among the main musical events of the year. The “stars” of the Italian opera such as Giuletta Grisi, Giovanni Battista Rubini, Antonio Tamburini and Luigi Lablache took part in them, along with well-known European musicians: the pianists Leopold de Meyer, Alexander Dreyschock and – also as pianist – Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, the harpists Aline Bertrand, Robert Nicholas-Charles Bochs, Théodore Labarre and Elias Parish Alvars, the concertina player Giuligo Regondi, the violinists Charles de Bérot, Camillo Sivori, Leopold Ganz and Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst as well as the violoncellists Max Bohrer, Moritz Ganz and Jacques Offenbach. Louise Dulcken went on a number of concert tours through, among other places, Germany, Russia and Latvia, and frequently took part in the concerts of her colleagues in England as well. In addition to her performances and appearances as pianist, Louise Dulcken was simultaneously a sought-after music teacher. She instructed the future Queen Victoria, among others, and by the early 1840s was leading her own “Academy for Young Pianoforte Players” in London along with several assistants.

At the start of the 1830s Louise Dulcken was named “Pianist of the Duchess of Kent”; with the coronation of Queen Victoria she was granted the title “Pianist of Her Majesty“.

Cities and countries

Louise Dulcken was born in Hamburg. After her marriage at a young age in 1828 she settled with her husband in London. She went on concert tours through Germany, Russia and Latvia, among other places.

Biography

Louise Dulcken was born Marie Louise David on 29th March 1811 into a Jewish mercantile family in Hamburg and received thorough musical instruction in piano playing and probably also in composition. Among her instructors was Friedrich Wilhelm Grund, who founded the Hamburg “Singakademie” (Singing Academy) in 1819. In addition, she received instruction from the Hamburg musician family Schwencke. In later years, emphasis was placed on her language skills (German, French, Italian and English) (see Grove 1879). Louise Dulcken was the younger sister of the violinist Ferdinand David and older sister of the pianist Therese Meyer.

Even as a child, Louise Dulcken gave regular performances. At the age of 10 she played Johann Nepomuk Hum-

mel's piano concerto in A minor op. 85 for a Hamburg audience, and beginning in 1823 she gave concerts in, among other places, Leipzig, Kassel and Berlin, sometimes with her brother Ferdinand David, a student of Louis Spohr (see Grove 1879ff.). In June of 1824 Louise Dulcken gave two concerts in Kassel in which she played the Hummel piano concerto already mentioned, one of the piano concertos of Carl Czerny, a "potpourri" for violin and piano by Louis Spohr (together with her brother Ferdinand David) as well as further piano pieces by Ignaz Moscheles and Ferdinand Ries. The "Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung" wrote of the 13 year-old pianist: "Rare skill, precision and the correct accentuation are the qualities which place Dem. David in the ranks of the best pianists." ("Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung", 22nd July 1824, col. 484f.) On 13th February 1826 Louise Dulcken participated in a Berlin concert by the music director Carl Möser, and played the "Fantaisie et Variations sur l'air favori: Au clair de la lune" in A major op. 50 for piano and orchestra by Ignaz Moscheles under his conductorship, and three days later, on 16th February 1826, she gave her own concert, together with her brother in the hall of the royal theatre. The piano concerto in G minor op. 60 by Ignaz Moscheles, variations on Swedish folksongs by Ferdinand Ries and the "Grand Potpourri Concertant pour Pianoforte et Violin" op. 59 by Ignaz Moscheles and Charles Philippe Lafont were on the programme. A reviewer for the "Allgemeine musikalischen Zeitung" wrote of Louise Dulcken: "[...] she played with great skill and much taste, and also retained these throughout the concerts that she gave with her younger brother Ferdinand on the 16th [...] and demonstrated here as well her great fluency and the light and brilliant execution of her play." (Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung, 22nd March 1826, col. 201f.)

In Munich in 1828, Louise Dulcken married Theobald Augustus Dulcken (1800-1882), a son of the pianist Sophie Lebrun, and converted from the Jewish to the Protestant faith. The couple subsequently settled in London. The marriage produced a number of children, including Henry William Dulcken (1832-1894), the concertina player and violinist Edward Dulcken (1834-1855) and the future pianist and composer Ferdinand Quentin Dulcken (1837-1901).

In London Louise Dulcken first gave her own concert in July of 1829 in the Argyll Rooms, in which she played Ignaz Moscheles' "Souvenirs d'Irlande" op. 69, a Concertan-

te for violoncello and piano by Jan Hüge Worzichek (possibly the Rondo op. 2) together with the violoncellist Max Bohrer, and took on the piano part in a sextet (possibly one of the septets) by Johann Nepomuk Hummel. "The Times" reported: "Madame Dulcken, a lady who has not, as far as we are aware, before appeared in public in this country, had a concert at the above rooms yesterday morning. Madame Dulcken is a pianoforte player of great ability. She has evidently studied in the very best school, namely, that of Hummel and other contemporary German pianists. She performed in a very finished style Moscheles' 'Recollections of Ireland', and, with Mr. Bohrer, a fine concertante for the pianoforte and violoncello, the composition of Worzichek. She also took part in a beautiful sextuor by Hummel." ("The Times", 9th July 1829, p. 2).

On 1st March 1830 Louise Dulcken performed as a soloist for the first time during the Philharmonic Concerts in London's King's Theatre under the conductorship of Charles Wicksel. In this concert, she played a piano concerto by Henri Herz, probably the first piano concerto op. 34, "with great spirit and taste," as "The Times" observed; see "The Times", 3rd March 1830 p. 4). In the following years Louise Dulcken performed as soloist in more than ten concerts during the Philharmonic Concerts and was considered one of the most distinguished pianists of London, who, in addition to the classical and romantic repertoire also introduced a number of newer works to the concert series. For example, on 1st March 1841 she played one of the two piano concertos by Carl Maria von Weber under the conductorship of Sir George Smart, and "The Times" reviewed: "Madame Dulcken was the leading artist of the evening, playing her concerto with exquisite delicacy and the most finished execution." ("The Times", 2nd March 1841, p. 6). At the start of April 1843 she gave the English premiere of Frédéric Chopin's piano concerto F minor op. 21 at the same setting under the conductorship of Cipriani Potter; the work was not, however, initially greeted with enthusiasm: "The novelty of the evening was Chopin's concerto. [...] To Madame Dulcken's playing it would be almost impossible to give too high praise, the brilliancy of the player compensating in a great measure for the comparative inefficiency of the composition, and the applause that was bestowed being certainly awarded to the pianiste rather than to the composer." ("The Times", 4th April 1843, p. 4.) In June 1846 Louise Dulcken gave the premiere – again, at the Philharmonic Concerts – of a piano concerto by Elias Pa-

rish Alvares from the manuscript (see "The Times" from 16th June 1846, p. 8), and in April 1848, at the same place, she played Ludwig van Beethoven's piano concerto in C minor op. 27: "Madame Dulcken, a brilliant and showy pianist, full of energy and enthusiasm, always win laurels when her task is to interpret the compositions of the great masters, and last night added one more to her many successes as an expositor of classical music. She was warmly applauded throughout, and well deserved the compliment." ("The Times", 11th April 1848, p. 8). In June 1849 she performed Carl Maria von Weber's "Konzertstück" in F minor op. 79 at the same place (see "The Times", 12th June 1849, p. 8).

At the start of the 1830s Louise Dulcken was named "Pianist of the Duchess of Kent". Among her pupils were the Duchess's daughter, the future Queen Victoria, who was crowned Queen in 1837. Louise Dulcken subsequently received the title "Pianist of Her Majesty".

Beginning in 1936 at the latest, Louise Dulcken gave her own annual orchestral concert, usually as "Grand Morning Concert" which in its first years was under the "immediate patronage of their Royal Highnesses the Duchess of Kent and the Princess Victoria". The concerts were soon counted among the year's main musical events, at which Europe's most distinguished musicians performed together. At the beginning of May 1836 the concert took place in the London opera hall. The performers included the violinist Charles de Bériot, the harpist Robert Nicholas-Charles Bochsa and the singers Giulietta Grisi, Clara Novello, Giovanni Battista Rubini, Antonio Tamburini and Luigi Lablache. On the programme was, among other works, Louis Spohr's quintet for piano and wind in C minor op. 52, Carl Maria von Weber's "Konzertstück" in F minor op. 79 and a fantasy for piano and orchestra by Friedrich Kalkbrenner. "The Times" reported: "Madame Dulcken's concert yesterday, at the Opera-room, was decidedly the best that has been given this season. De Bériot's first appearance since his return from the continent, together with various powerful attractions both of performers and performances, drew together a most crowded audience, great numbers of whom were anxiously waiting in the colonnade for some time previous to the opening of the doors. Madame Dulcken's performance on the pianoforte claims the first notice. This lady is unquestionably the first pianist of the day, Moscheles excepted. We know no performer of the other sex who is superior to her in certain qualities. Indeed, her touch and sty-

le altogether resemble those of Moscheles in spirit and energy. She played yesterday morning three most difficult pieces – viz. a quintet, by Spohr, for pianoforte, flute, clarinet, horn, and bassoon; Weber's concert Stuck, and a fantasia, with orchestral accompaniments, by Kalkbrenner. Spohr's quintet was a splendid composition, containing every difficulty which the most elaborate writer for the instrument could conceive. But these difficulties vanished under the hands of Madame Dulcken, whose power, especially in the left hand, enabled her to impart surprising brilliancy to the obligato passages." ("The Times", 3rd May 1836, p. 5). One year later, besides first-rate singers including Henriette Schröder-Devrient, the concertina player Giulio Regondi, the harpist and composer Théodore Labarre, the violinist Leopold Ganz and the violoncellist Moritz Ganz took part; the concert was conducted by Sir Michael Costa, and Louise Dulcken played, among other things, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's piano concerto in G minor op. 25 (see "The Times", 23rd May 1837, p. 5). In June 1842 the concert took place in "Her Majesty's Theatre" and included performances by the pianist Alexander Dreyschock and the singers from the Italian opera. Louise Dulcken once more presented Frédéric Chopin's piano concerto in F minor op. 21 which she had played just a few weeks before in the Philharmonic Concerts: "Madame Dulcken's first performance was Chopin's grand concerto in F minor, which she executed in a delightful manner, giving the soft, gliding harmony, melting, as it were, into a sustained melody, which forms one of the characteristic beauties of the composer, with admirable smoothness and expression, and showing off the original and difficult combinations with which the piece abounds with perfect facility and truthful accentuation. In the 'Serenade Venitienne,' composed by Czerny, on the theme of 'O pescator dell'onde', for two pianofortes, with parts of soprano, tenor, and bass voices, Madame Dulcken and Dreyschock combined their qualities most happily; the energy and power of the one, with the softness and less violent brilliancy of the other, producing a charming effect. [...] The room was crowded with a distinguished and fashionable audience." ("The Times", 6th June 1843, p. 5). In the following year, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy as pianist, the violinists Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst and Camillo Sivori, the harpist Elias Parish Alvares and the violoncellist Jacques Offenbach were counted among the guest performers. Louise Dulcken played the piano concerto in E-flat major op. 32 by Carl Maria von Weber and – together with Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy – a duo for two pianos by Wolfgang

Amadeus Mozart: “Madame Dulcken’s Concert. This concert, which is always one of the great affairs of the season, took place Monday morning, when the Opera Concert-room was crowded in every part by a most fashionable audience. The programme was one of more than usual bulk [...]. The executants were, however, all of first-rate order, and the selection was extremely judicious, comprising almost entirely comparative novelty. Of the performances of Madame Dulcken the most striking were the concerto in E flat of Weber, and the duet of Mozart for two pianos, of which one was played by Mendelssohn. The latter was perhaps the greatest treat of the concert, both pianists vying with each other in giving the most exquisite softness and elegance of expression to the graceful inspirations of Mozart.” (“The Times“, 12th June 1844, p. 7). A review in “The Musical World” of the annual concert from 1845, under the conductorship of Julius Benedict, especially emphasized the great significance of Louise Dulcken’s public concerts: “Madame Dulcken’s Concert, which emulating its accustomed splendour, combined all the attractions, instrumental and vocal, of the season. Grisi, Brambilla, Castellan, Lablache, Mario, Fornasari, Moriani, Corelli, Brizzi, F. Lablache, and all the stars of the Italian opera. [...] And then, ‘the instrumental’ was equally overpowering – Camillo Sivori, with his magical bow, and his violin with a soul in it – Leopold de Meyer, ‘the lion,’ with his ‘hundred fingers,’ so nobly apostrophized by our eloquent contributor, Charles Rosenberg – Edouard Meyer and Lazarus with their mellifluous clarionets – the Distins with their clanging saxhorns – and though last not by any means least, the charming, the amiable, the accomplished, the brilliant Madame Dulcken – Louise Dulcken – the fair concert-giver herself – made a galaxy of instrumental brightness, rarely equalled, impossible to outshine. [...] We must, however, offer our warm praise to madame Dulcken, first for introducing, second for playing so superbly, the magnificent sonata appassionata in F minor of the mighty Beethoven. Madame Dulcken is one of the few who, surrounded by an audience of aristocrats and fashionables, dare to regale them with a sonata – and such a sonata! Honor and glory to our charming pianist, whose soul is full to the brim of music, and who takes every occasion to uphold it in her career of artist! [...] The conductor of this dazzling concert, which took place on Friday Morning, June 6, was the gifted and amiable Benedict.” (“The Musical World”, 10th July 1845, p. 327f.)

In addition to the large public concerts, Louise Dulcken

also regularly hosted smaller evening concerts in her private rooms and opened them to other musicians as well. Thus, in July of 1834 a concert by the harpist Aline Bertrand took place in Louise Dulcken’s house in Edward Street in London, as “The Times“ reported: “Mademoiselle Bertrand’s Soiree Musicale. – Yesterday evening a soiree musicale was given by mademoiselle Bertrand at the house of Madame Dulcken, in Edward-street, Portman-square. [...] The room in which the concert was given was completely crowded, and the performances were of a character to repay their attendance and attention. A fantasia on the pianoforte by Madame Dulcken was given with great power of execution, and called forth the reiterated applause of the audience. This was followed by a fantasia on the harp, in which Mademoiselle Bertrand displayed that surprising rapidity and accuracy of execution of which she is so justly celebrated on this instrument.” (“The Times“, 15th July 1834, p. 2). Starting in 1844 Louise Dulcken also organized larger soirees in her home—which was meanwhile in London’s Harley Street—whose programmes were primarily dedicated to works of chamber music from the classical-romantic repertoire. In November 1844 “The Times“ wrote about a series of soirees that encompassed three evenings: “The first of a series of three musical soirées, to be held at the residence of Madame Dulcken, in harley-street, and to consist chiefly of quartets and pianoforte compositions, was given last night.” (“The Times“, 21st November 1844, p. 5). On the programme for this evening was Joseph Haydn’s string quartet in G major op. 77 no. 1 and Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy’s string quintet in A major op. 18, as well as Ludwig van Beethoven’s piano sonata in C major op. 2 no.3, Johann Nepomuk Hummel’s piano trio in E major op. 12, a fantasy on Swedish folksongs for piano and strings by Ferdinand Ries, and a nocturne and the Tarantella op. 43 by Frédéric Chopin. The programme for the second soiree in December included Ludwig van Beethoven’s piano sonata in F minor op. 57 (“Appassionata”), one of the string quartets by Ferdinand Ries, Ludwig van Beethoven’s piano quintet for piano and wind in E-flat major op. 16 as well as one of the piano quartets by Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (see “The Times“, 20th December 1844, p. 4; see also “The Times“, 28th February 1845, p. 6). In the winter of 1846/47 Louise Dulcken continued her chamber music soirees (see, i.a., “The Times“, 26th February 1847, p. 3).

Even after her marriage, Louise Dulcken undertook numerous concert tours through, among other places, Ger-

many, Latvia and Russia. She gave concerts in Bremen in September 1833, where she played the piano concertos by Johann Nepomuk Hummel (A-flat major op. 113) and Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (G minor op. 25) as well as variations by Friedrich Kalkbrenner on themes from Bellini's opera "Les Pirates": "On the 28th of September we in Bremen had the pleasure of listening to the famous Madame Louise Dulcken, Pianist of the Duchess of Kent at a concert in three pieces put on for her on her while en route from London to Petersburg [...] This felicitous artist, regarding whom one knows not what to admire most, her mastery of the greatest difficulties or the perfect skill of her elegant performance, played as always and everywhere she is heard with captivating beauty. Each note can be clearly perceived, no matter how rapidly her fingers commanded the keys; we are here reminded of Schiller's 'Laura,' but also of the whirling passages of Moscheles, although we must grant Madame Dulcken the pride of place, as her play combines feminine tenderness with masculine strength. The reputation which preceded the amiable instructor of Great Britain's young heiress to the throne filled the large concert hall so excessively that many had to be content with standing room in the corridor." ("Allgemeine musikalischer Anzeiger", 7th November 1833, p. 178) In the winter of 1833/34 Louise Dulcken gave concerts in Russia in, among other places, St. Petersburg as the "Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung" reported. "Petersburg. [...] Madame Louise Dulcken, well-known pianoforte virtuoso, gave a concert here to great applause and was awarded precious diamonds by her Majesty the Empress." ("Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung", March 1834, col. 193). On the 24th and 27th of February 1834 she performed with her brother Ferdinand David in Riga's "Schwarzhäupter", as well as in the local theatre (see Rudolph 1890) and travelled on to Berlin where from the end of March to the beginning April she visited Fanny and Wilhelm Hensel and, for a private audience there, played, among other things, Carl Maria von Weber's "Konzertstück" in F minor op. 79 and Felix Mendelssohn's piano concerto in G minor op. 25 (see Fanny Hensel's diary entry from 9 April 1834, in: Hensel 2002 p. 53f.). On October 4, 1846 Louise Dulcken appeared at the "Abonnement-Konzerte" (subscriber concerts) of the Leipzig "Gewandhaus" under the conductorship of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy and performed his piano concerto in D minor op. 40, which she had presented in 1838 in London shortly after its premiere (see Hellmundt 2004, p. XXI). In February 1847 she played the concert in Dublin. The reviews to this performance all refer to a cadenza

that Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy is said to have composed expressly for Louise Dulcken, as "The Musical Times" reports: "We understand that Madam Dulcken has just received a new Cadenza, full of new and beautiful passages, for Dr. Mendelssohn's Second Concerto in D minor, written expressly for her by the Author, and which will be performed for the first time at the Philharmonic Concert, in Dublin." ("The Musical Times", 1st March 1847, p. 79; see also Hellmundt 2004, p. XXI). The cadenza is considered lost (see Hellmundt 2004, p. XXI).

By the beginning of the 1840s at the latest, and until her death, Louise Dulcken led her own "Academy for Young Pianoforte Players" in her house in the Somerset Street, Portman Square. Instruction took place Tuesdays and Fridays in the afternoon, as can be gleaned from two advertisements in the "The Times" from January 1843 and January 1850, and were supported by a number of assistants. In the year 1843 her younger sister Therese David (after marriage in 1845: Therese Meyer) as well as Caroline Orger, the future composer and pianist Caroline Reingale, assisted her: "Madame Dulcken, pianiste to Her Majesty, begs to inform the nobility and gentry that her Academy for young pianoforte players has recommenced, and will be held on Tuesdays and Fridays, at 2 o'clock, at Madame Dulcken's residence. Madame Dulcken will be assisted by her sister, Mdlle. David, the Misses Pooley, Orger, &c. [...] Madame Dulcken's, 8, Somerset-street, Portman-square." ("The Times", 18th January 1843, p. 3). In January 1850—Louise Dulcken meanwhile lived at 80 Harley Street—the pianists and composers Kate Loder and Louise Bendixen were among the teachers at the Academy (see "The Times", 10th January 1850, p. 10).

In the British Library two prints with compositions by Louise Dulcken have been preserved: a "Second Set of Six Waltzes and Trios for the Piano Forte" (London: Mori and Lavenue, ca. 1830), the "First Set" of which has been lost, and also "Valse de la Cour for the Piano Forte" (London: Chas. Ollivier, ca. 1838). It can be assumed that Louise Dulcken composed many more pieces for, among other things, her own concerts.

Louise Dulcken died on 12th April 1850 at 39 years of age in London from complications resulting from an abscess.

Due to her Jewish heritage, Louise Dulcken was posthumously defamed in the anti-Semitic “Semi-Kürschner” from 1917 as well as in the two anti-Semitic encyclopaedias during the national socialistic period (“Semi-Kürschner” 1917; Brückner/Rock 1938; Stengel/Gerigk 1940).

Appreciation

As pianist and music teacher, Louise Dulcken contributed significantly to shaping international music culture in the first half of the 19th century. Along with the pianist Lucy Anderson (1897–1878) she is still today considered the musician who as a role model paves the way for numerous women to pursue a career in music.

Research

No further research information is available on Louise Dulcken.

Need for Research

The need for research on Louise Dulcken covers her biography, her activities, her circle of students and her many artistic and private contacts.

Authority control

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