Clara Schumann

Klar-a Shoo-mahn

**Name:** Clara Wieck became Clara Wieck Schumann after her marriage to the composer Robert Schumann.

**Born:** September 13\(^{th}\), 1819, Leipzig, Germany

**Died:** May 20\(^{th}\), 1896, Frankfurt, Germany

**Period of Music:** Romantic Era

“There is nothing greater than the joy of composing something oneself and then listening to it.” – Clara Schumann

**Biography:**

Clara Wieck's father, Friedrich Wieck, was a famous piano teacher and composer in the German city of Leipzig. He encouraged his daughter Clara to pursue a career in music. Clara became one of her father's students, and mentored her in music theory, composition, and counterpoint, in addition to piano, voice, and violin. By age eleven, Clara was a talented pianist, and her father accompanied her on a concert tour of Europe. She had her first compositions, all piano music, published at age thirteen. She was the first to introduce Chopin's music to Germany and the first to play Beethoven's *Appassionata* Sonata in Berlin.

In 1830, Clara's father began teaching a twenty-year-old piano student named Robert Schumann. Seven years later, when Clara was eighteen, Robert asked Clara to marry him. Clara's father was violently opposed to their marriage, and at one point threatened to kill Robert if he continued to see Clara, but eventually they wed in 1840. Clara managed to continue her piano career while bearing 7 children over 16 years. When Robert Schumann died in 1856, Clara moved to Berlin where she lived until 1878. She continued her concert tours with performances in England and Russia.

Clara composed very little after husband Robert's death. Her music was like her husband's music: conservative, straightforward, and melodic. In fact, Robert used several of Clara's melodies in his own compositions. After Robert's death, Clara befriended many fine young composers including Johannes Brahms, and encouraged them in their work. Clara and Brahms fell in love although they never married. She continued to introduce many of Robert Schumann's works to the public, while also editing and promoting his compositions.

When she was 59, Clara settled in Frankfurt, Germany and taught at the Hoch Conservatory of music. In her own concert tours, which continued until 1891, she frequently performed her late husband's music and, on occasion, her own. Throughout her career, Clara was highly regarded as a piano teacher, and she attracted outstanding students from throughout Europe.

During Clara Schumann's lifetime, composing music was considered a job for men. And although Clara had done some composing as a teenager, she cut back on her writing after her marriage to Robert. Still, even though her husband
demanded complete silence in the house when he was composing, Clara managed to complete many successful works during their marriage. She mostly wrote songs and music for piano, while writing a few orchestral and chamber pieces.

Her music is performed more frequently today than it was during her lifetime. She lived during a time when female musicians of her talent were extremely rare and despite being one of the few women in a male-dominated field, she enjoyed a productive career that spanned almost 60 years.

**Quick Facts:**
- In March 1838, she was named a Royal and Imperial Chamber Virtuoso, Austria’s highest musical honor.
- She was a teacher of the piano at the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt. As a music teacher, she contributed greatly to the improvement of modern piano playing technique.
- She was one of the first pianists to play music in her concerts from memory.

**Selected Compositions for Listening:**

**Spotify Playlist URL:** [https://tinyurl.com/schumannlisten](https://tinyurl.com/schumannlisten)

- Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 7: II: Romanze
- Piano Trio in G Minor, Op. 17
  - I. Allegro moderato
  - III. Andante
- 4 Pieces Caracteristiques, Op. 5: No. 1: Impromptu “Le Sabbat”
- 4 Polonaises, Op. 1: No. 1: Polonaise in E-Flat Major
- Voice: Ich Stand in Dunklen Träumen, Op. 13: No. 1

**Other Suggested Listening:**


**Learn More about Clara Schumann:**

- 52 Composers: [Clara Schumann](http://example.com/claraschumann)
- Classical MPR: [Learning to Listen: Clara Wieck Schumann](http://example.com/clarasлушать)