

# **Clara Wieck Schumann: Pianist, Pedagogue, Composer, Legend**

Diane M. Selmon, *Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University*

## **Introduction**

Clara Wieck Schumann was one of the most illustrious musicians of the past two centuries. For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the story of her long engagement and eventual marriage to Robert Schumann had become the main focus of her fame. The increasing interest in all aspects of her life and work over recent decades, and the realisation of the extent of her achievements as a woman in the male-dominated society of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, has led to her present iconic status.

The Paper is divided into two parts; the first giving an overview of her performing, teaching and composing careers, and the second offering the author's comments on works suitable for teaching. At the end of the Paper are the informal comments on Wieck-Schumann's piano works handed out to Conference participants.

## **Part 1: Clara Wieck Schumann's career paths**

### *Career as a concert pianist*

Clara Wieck Schumann followed a number of career paths simultaneously for many years. The first, her stellar career as a concert pianist, began in the Gewandhaus Hall in Leipzig at the age of nine (Reich, 2001, p. 22) and continued for over six decades. Few women instrumentalists before her had remained touring concert artists beyond their child prodigy years. One was the Polish virtuosa and composer Maria Szymanowska, whose F major Etude published in 1820 was taken by Chopin as the model for his F major Etude Op 10/8, and who died in 1831 when Clara was almost twelve. Szymanowska was appointed Court pianist to the Russian Czar in 1822, while Clara Wieck later became Austria's Royal and Imperial Chamber Virtuosa, "a distinction without precedent for an eighteen-year-old who was, moreover, a Protestant, a foreigner, and a female" (Reich, 2001, p. 3). This honour reflected her ranking as one of the four greatest pianists of the time along with Liszt, Thalberg and Henselt. Decades later when the latter three had ceased playing public concerts, the American pianist Amy Fay reported Clara Schumann's inclusion in the new quartet of the greatest pianists of the age, with Anton Rubinstein, Bülow and Tausig (cited in Chissell, 1983, p. 168). Clara Schumann played more solo concerts in the Gewandhaus (74 times) than any other pianist, male or female (Reich and Burton, 1984, p. 334). Surprisingly, she often performed in an advanced stage of pregnancy, although women were expected to be invisible at such times. Her manifest gifts, total commitment to music and natural dignity overcame many such obstacles and earned her the appellation of 'priestess' of music, used by many including Liszt (Reich, 2001, p. 195). When on tour, it was nonetheless necessary for her to be accompanied always by another person, since even married women could not travel alone and retain respectability.

To Robert Schumann, her playing in 1838 "seemed to me, however, as though it were the most perfect playing one could imagine" (Reich, 2001, p. 285). In 1869, Amy Fay's opinion was "Such noble playing I have never heard" (p. 132). Her legacy

of educating the public by programming music she considered the best of her time – such as Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, Chopin, Mendelssohn and Brahms – was carried over as a recital format until the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (p. 256).

### *Career as a teacher*

Clara Schumann taught throughout her life. Because her teacher father believed that every artist should be able to teach, he began paying Clara a few pennies for giving music lessons to her brother when she was aged twelve (Reich, 2001, p. 289). At age 59, she took up an appointment as a principal teacher at Frankfurt's Hoch Conservatory, once again overturning conventions regarding age and gender. One of the very few precedents in the world had been the appointment in 1842 of the composer-pianist Louise Farrenc to the Paris Conservatoire as a piano professor, the only woman to hold a permanent position of this ranking at the Conservatoire in the whole of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Friedland, 1980, p. 408). Joachim Raff, the director of Frankfurt Conservatory, rationalised Clara Schumann's appointment in this way: "With the exception of Madame Schumann there is no woman and there will not be any woman employed in the Conservatory. As for Madame Schumann, I count her as a man" (Reich, 2001, pp. 284-5). Certainly, when I enrolled at Berlin Musikhochschule nearly a century later in 1971, all twelve piano professors were male, as was customary across Germany. Her excellence as a teacher was attested to in the reminiscences and recordings by her pupils from around the world who flocked to her door. Among them were the American composer Edward MacDowell and future luminaries of British concert and college life such as Fanny Davies and Franklin Taylor.

### *Career as a composer*

A third artistic endeavour of Clara Schumann's life was her composing. Here the discriminatory attitudes of 19<sup>th</sup> century life caused her still greater difficulty. An occasional critic would not review her work in detail because it was "the work of a lady" (Chissell, 1983, p. 47). Many critics gave back-handed compliments about how manly (synonym for excellent) her compositions were: "one has to marvel approvingly at the masculinity of the spirit that pervades it," wrote a Vienna critic of her Piano Concerto Op 7 (Reich, 2001, p. 299). As a composer, she suffered from the lack of self-confidence often found in those who are legally and socially second-class citizens, which European women were until recent times. Aaron Copland expressed a typical view in writing about his composition master-teacher Nadia Boulanger: "But had she become a composer, she would of biological necessity have joined the automatically inferior ranks of the 'woman composer'" (Smith, 1994, p. 92).

Despite Clara Schumann's own doubts regarding her creativity, the best of her contemporaries praised and valued her work. Liszt wrote of the 18 year old Clara: "Her compositions are really very remarkable, especially for a woman. There is a hundred times more ingenuity and true sentiment in them than in all the fantasies, past and present, of Thalberg" (Reich, 2001, p. 195). Many decades later in 1874 Liszt made piano transcriptions of three of her songs.

Musicologist Charles Rosen's opinion was that the neglect or downplaying of Clara Wieck as a composer was "perhaps the chief disaster of the nineteenth century's prejudice against female composers, which has lasted, indeed, until today," and he noted that Robert Schumann was not particularly helpful (1995, pp. 659-60). Robert had commented that the role of wife was above that of an artist (Reich, 2001, p. 215), and his assumption of male privilege, criticised by most present writers, imposed limitations on Clara. One of these was not being able to practice or play the piano at all in the daytime until Robert went to the local public house for a drink at 6pm. The reason given was that it would disturb his composing, yet it was her playing that brought in much of their income, and her compositional talent arguably was of equal worth to his. The Robert Schumann scholar John Daverio assessed Clara's and Robert's songs in the jointly-written project Op 37/Op12 and concluded: "In sheer beauty and immediacy of expression Clara's contributions to the set equal or even surpass, those of her husband" (1997, p. 202).

Clara was influenced by Robert in her compositions, but her reciprocal influence on him in very many ways is still being discovered. To quote a recent opinion: "Nearly every major composition created by Schumann during his courtship of Clara contains references to her work" (Jensen, 2001, p. 155) - in other words from 1835-40, in addition to numerous earlier and later quotations and references. The best-known examples quoting Clara's compositions are found in Robert's Opus numbers 5, 6, 14 and 21. Other writers make the case that Robert was indebted to her for the idea of motivic integration pioneered in her teenage Concerto Op 7, which influenced his later Concerto Op 54 in various ways (Daverio, 1997, pp. 237-241). The important point is the degree of stimulus and cross-fertilisation of ideas generated for both composers in the extraordinary compositional interaction that lasted until each ceased composing.

#### *Clara Wieck Schumann's pianistic training*

What was the training that laid the foundation for these brilliant careers of Clara Schumann? Above all there was the teaching of her father Friedrich Wieck based on his method *Clavier und Gesang* (Piano and Song), whose title reveals the influence of John Field. Wieck's credo was "the finest taste, the most profound sensibility and the most sensitive hearing" (1988, p. 71). The method brought success not only for Clara and her stepsister Marie Wieck, a well-known performer and teacher of piano and singing, but also for Wieck's later-divorced young first wife, Clara's mother, who appeared as a soloist in Gewandhaus concerts.

Clara's music training was begun as she turned five years old. For the first half-year of lessons she was one of a group of three girls. Since Wieck's primary goal was to make the piano sing, his students took singing lessons as well; in Clara's case these included lessons with the teacher of Wilhelmina Schröder-Devrient (Reich, 2001, p. 281). Wieck's method stressed general musicianship and aural training, for example with rote playing of cadences in all keys, and of weekly short pieces which were to be memorised and frequently transposed (Wieck, 1988, pp. 17-18). Playing by ear as a first step helped to lay the foundation of the improvisation skills for which Clara was noted all her life. It was only after at least sixty to eighty lessons (six months to a year

of two or three lessons a week) that the reading of treble notes was taught, and bass notes only after an interval of several more months (p. 17).

The careful consolidation of each step is very evident. Once the bass notes were learned, sight reading - without looking at the hands - was begun. Then came technical training with scales played for 15 minutes a day, separately at first for evenness, with all dynamic and tonal graduations (Chissell, 1983, p. 4). Etudes for thirds, trills, stretches and so on were undertaken as they were required in the pieces being learned; that is, technique was context-based. Wieck considered a liberal but discriminating use of the right (loud) pedal indispensable for lyrical sound, since he criticised Hummel for hardly using the pedal (p. 53). Clara also had lessons in violin and score reading, and was taken regularly to operas and concerts.

In order not to destroy 'the joyousness of youth,' Wieck asked of the six year old Clara 'only' 2 or 3 hours of practice a day, which would be thought today to be sufficient for a child double that age. Already by the age of eight, Clara could write to her mother that she had "sung and played through ever so many operas already, such as *Oberon*...[and] *Die Zauberflöte*, which I have seen in the theatre too" (Chissell, 1983, p. 6). Wieck advised that practice should be broken up and spare minutes used, in line with the following suggestion: "Run to the piano! I have ten minutes to meal time. Two scales, two five-finger exercises, two difficult passages from the piece I'm studying, and a self-invented exercise" (1988, p. 37).

Wieck was an extraordinary teacher, but not all his methods were enlightened, at least within his family. After witnessing Wieck savagely beating Clara's young brother Alwin to the ground for poor violin playing while 11-year-old Clara smiled and began playing a Weber Piano Sonata, Robert Schumann asked in his diary, "Am I among humans?" (Reich, 2001, p. 34).

It is little wonder that Clara as a child was noted for her "mocking-painful smile" and for the melancholy to which the Duke of Weimar partly attributed her precocious talent (Reich, 2001, p. 29). At the same time, in what reads like an ideal description of a young artist, Robert wrote that Clara at 11 years old had "enormous passion...She talked more cleverly than any of us...whims and fancies, laughter and tears, death and life, mostly in sharp contrasts, change in this girl with the speed of lightning" (Chissell, 1983, p. 20).

### *Clara Wieck Schumann's teaching*

Clara Schumann's own teaching has been described by a number of her famous students including her daughter-assistant Eugenie. Its basic precepts reflected the utmost seriousness with which she took music making. Fidelity to the score came first. Her rules were: "Play what is written; play it *as* it is written," and then: "Every note must be played with love and nothing passed over" (Davies, 1925, p. 215; p. 221).

To achieve such perfection, the student had to imagine tiny details of tone quality, rhythm and phrasing in any voice or part as if it they were being played on separate instruments of an orchestra (Lara, 1945, p. 145). For example, the first of

Robert Schumann's *Kreisleriana* pieces was not to be taken too fast, in order to allow the player time to dream over the 'violas and cellos' in the second subject. Liszt in a famous 1838 article had already written of the piano as an orchestra (Rostand, 1972, pp. 130-1) and used such analogies in his teaching. Madame Schumann found *Pierrot* from *Carnaval* usually was taken too slow for its bright mischievousness, and at each quaver figure she was wont to give the student a playful little dig. In another *Carnaval* piece she said "Mind his boots...he had a very heavy tread like a ploughman." If only de Lara's article mentioned whose character study in *Carnaval* that one was! Surely it was not Chopin's. "'Keine Passagen' (No passage-work), she would cry out in despair if one tried to rattle through any rapid figuration with mere empty virtuosity" (Lara, 1945, p. 146). In the following century Claudio Arrau taught the same thing from the positive viewpoint of "rapid melodies" (Horowitz, 1982, p. 102).

Madame Schumann would not tolerate any affectation or sentimentality. She not only made extensive use of pictorial images in her teaching to bring the music to life, but also expected the pupil to imagine such images while playing (Lara, 1945, p. 145). On the practical side, she advised against more than four hours' practice a day; yet as an 'iron task-master,' what she expected could barely be accomplished in six hours. Practice was to begin with one hour of scales while 'thinking hard and listening to the tone' – no suggestion of the student reading a newspaper at the same time! – followed by studies and large pieces. There were two lessons a week, held in a small class such as Clara had experienced in her father's teaching (Fromm, 1932, p. 615).

The technique taught was a supple and natural way of playing with a finely developed finger technique. Marie Fromm's description was: "The arm must be absolutely loose, not a single muscle in upper or lower arm or wrist strained or forced, the fingers kept loose in the knuckle-joints, all power coming from the back muscles" (p. 615).

Clara Schumann also gave loving advice and practical assistance to all her pupils, frequently going to considerable trouble on their behalf. An amusing example is the motherly letter she wrote to her famous teenage pupil Ilona Eibenschütz who was on a concert tour. The letter suddenly breaks out in capitals: "ARE YOU BEING SENSIBLE AND NOT GOING OUT TO LATE PARTIES?" (Reich, 2001, p. 284).

A review of historic recordings of her students found that they played with drive and elegance, as well as the great clarity which characterised their teacher's mind and music (Anderson, 1986, p. 565).

## **Part 2: Clara Schumann compositions to teach**

The informal annotated list of Clara Schumann's piano works, concertos and chamber music handed out at the Conference lecture appears at the end of this Paper. The following listing gives more details and illustrations of some of her works suitable for teaching. All of her compositions have interesting features or relationships with Robert Schumann's works to share with students. Tracing the

quotations he took from her works and the messages she incorporated for him by quoting his in return brings freshness and immediacy to their life and music.

The early works of the young Clara Wieck are characterised by boldly original harmonies. When teaching the Schubert dances, add her Polonaises Op 1 and Caprices Op 2 as they include contemporary ideas from Weber and Chopin. Op 2 is in the form of a series of waltzes strung together like Liszt's *Soirées de Vienne*. It is unusual to be able to tell 11 and 12 year old students that their pieces were published by someone their age.

The more demanding and virtuosic *Valses romantiques* Op 4 require a free and rapid octave technique. There are some striking passages, such as the pedal point on G below the return of the first theme in bar 201, and the juxtaposition of F#s (V of b minor whose root note is avoided) with C major, the tonic key.

**Example 1. Clara Wieck. *Valses romantiques* Op 4, bars 197-214.**

Robert Schumann quoted part of her Op 4 in his *Davidsbündlertänze* Op 6/3:

**Example 2. Robert Schumann. *Davidsbündlertänze* Op 6/3, bars 77-80.**

The four pieces comprising Op 5 were published when Clara Wieck was 16 and the six pieces Op 6 just after her 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. The *Romance* Op 5/3 is a work of deep feeling and sensitivity, especially in the minor-mode transformation of the first section on its return at A2.

**Example 3. Clara Wieck. *Romance* Op 3/5, bars 1-10.**

Andante con sentimento

Youthful students of any age with fleet fingers and lively imaginations would enjoy Clara's Op 5/4, the *Scène fantastique: Ballet des revenants* written at the age of 13. The background to the composition would appear to be the ghost stories Robert Schumann told, for which he even dressed up as a ghost, to entertain Clara and her brothers and give them some taste of the more normal childhood that he had enjoyed. Robert's Op 11 Sonata alluded to Clara's Op 5/4 first theme (Klassen, 1990, p. 45).

**Example 4. Clara Wieck. *Scène fantastique: Ballet des revenants*, bars 1-7.**

Allegro ma non troppo

Bars 12-18 (Example 5) have the breathless rhythm that Robert later used in his *Fabel* Op 12/6, probably as a personal musical allusion to her "Ghost ballet." Clara had teased him in a letter about his fables of spirit doubles or *Doppelgänger* (in fact *Chorus of Doppelgänger* was the piece's original title: Reich, 2001, p. 294), and his 'fibbing' about having a pistol on him, all of which she had believed as a child a few years before (1994-, Vol. 2, p. 124).

**Example 5. Clara Wieck. *Scène fantastique: Ballet des revenants*, bars 12-18.**

con moto

Two of Robert Schumann's favourite pieces which he played frequently in the 1830s were Clara's *Toccatina* Op 6/1 and *Nocturne* Op 6/2 (Schumann and Schumann, 1994-, Vol.1, pp.102-3; Vol. 2, p. 417).

The middle section of the *Toccatina* has particular interest because of its 'endless melody,' and the haunting *Nocturne* Op 6/2 because Schumann quoted it in various ways, the best known being the full-theme quote in his *Novelletten* Op 21/8 at "Voice from the distance."

**Example 6. Clara Wieck. *Romance* Op 6/2, bars 1-26.**

The musical score for Clara Wieck's *Romance* Op 6/2, bars 1-26, is presented in five systems. The tempo is marked "Andante con moto". The score is in 6/8 time and features a piano accompaniment and a vocal line. The key signature has one flat (F major or D minor). The score includes various performance instructions such as "sempre legato", "dolce", "sf", "rubato stretto", "cresc.", "pp", "ritenuto è legato", and "il canto marcato e poco a poco morendo". There are also dynamic markings like "p" and "f".

Op 6/5 is the flamboyant concert *Mazurka* in G major on which Robert based his *Davidsbündlertänze*, also Op 6. He quoted the first two bars and followed them with the B major chords from the middle section of her work (Ex. 8).

Example 7. Clara Wieck. *Mazurka* Op 6/5, bars 1-8.

Example 8. Clara Wieck. *Mazurka* Op 6/5, bars 33-41.

A student entering the ABC Young Performers Award who is capable of playing a Chopin Concerto might do well to give consideration to Clara Schumann's Concerto Op 7. Written when she was 13-15 years old and orchestrated at 16 (1833-6), it exhibits all the virtuoso devices pioneered from Clementi's time onwards. Double octave passages, scales in double 3rds, double note passages like Henselt's, filigree runs like Chopin's, big stretches, wide leaps in Paganini *Campanella* style, fast repeated notes, parallel double 4ths in one hand, alternating hands, as in blind octaves and so on, are used with complete familiarity and mastery. As it has been performed with orchestra in Adelaide in recent years, parts should be available, and it would have the advantage of novelty in addition to its élan and charm. The Concerto Op 7 was considered by Daverio a very fine work, "sadly underrated" (1997, note 75, p. 539). Mendelssohn's praise of Clara playing his *Capriccio* Op 22 at a fiery speed "like a little devil" in a performance of 1835 (Stegmann, 2004, p. 61) is recalled by Angela Cheng's fine recording of the Concerto with the Women's Philharmonic.

The slow movement is accompanied only by a cello. In Ab major, it has a harmonically original link via chords of Ab and E straight into the a-minor final movement. The middle section transformation of the first theme, using one of her favourite key relationships of tonic to bVI, has harmonies reminiscent of Liszt, and bars 10-12 have a turn of phrase later heard in the third of Liszt's *Liebesträume*, first drafted in 1843.

**Example 9. Clara Wieck. Concerto Op 7, slow movement, bars 20-31.**

The *Romance* Op 11/ 2 is the most dramatic of the Op 11 set. In 1839, during the separation enforced by Clara's father, the two composers simultaneously produced a very similar theme, Clara in her Op 11/2 middle section (notes circled) and Robert in his *Humoreske* Op 20. Robert regarded this as proof of their unity of soul and wrote to Clara: "I see that we have to be man and wife. You complement me as a composer, just as I do you. Each of your ideas comes from my soul, just as I owe all of my music to you" (1994-, Vol. 2, p. 307).

**Example 10. Clara Wieck. *Romance* Op 11/2, bars 51-54.**

**Example 11. Robert Schumann. *Humoreske* Op 20, bars 667-668.**

Number 4 of the *Four Fleeting Pieces* Op 15 is almost the same as the Scherzo movement from her Sonata which was not published until 1991. It is another fine choice for a younger player with a good technique.

**Example 12. Clara Schumann. Sonata in g minor, third movement, bars 1-26.**

Leggieramente

The musical score for Example 12 is presented in five systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The tempo is marked 'Leggieramente' and the dynamics include 'p' (piano) and 'dim.' (diminuendo). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The score shows a variety of textures, including arpeggiated chords and melodic lines.

The *Variations* Op 20 (1853) on Robert's theme of Op 99/4 in f# minor are moving for their intimate tone and the refined beauty of the keyboard figuration. Brahms' *Variations* Op 9 on the same theme quoted nine notes of Clara Schumann's Op 3 *Romance variée* as an inner voice in variation No 10. In Op 20, not only did she write one variation in a strict canon at the fifth and then at the octave below, but she self-quoted a whole line of her Op 3 theme in the inner voices of bars 204-211.

**Example 13. Clara Schumann. *Variations* Op 20, bars 203-211.**

The musical score for Example 13 shows a passage from Clara Schumann's Variations Op 20. It is in 3/4 time and f# minor. The score is marked 'rit.' (ritardando) and 'p' (piano). The texture is dense with many chords and arpeggiated figures in both hands.

Many of the more virtuoso devices in the Concerto Op 7 disappeared from her later compositions. An example is the *Romance* Op 21/1 which Brahms performed and from which he borrowed elements for use in his later piano pieces. The second *Romance* of the same Op 21 set is a most effective short piece, based on a continuous variation of the first ten notes of Robert's *Wiegenliedchen*, Op 124/6.

Example 14. Clara Schumann. *Romance* Op 21/2, bars 1-15.

Clara Schumann's intensely lyrical Prelude and Fugue Op 16/2 is one of her pieces introduced into the 2000 AMEB syllabus, and along with a number of the other works mentioned is available in an inexpensive Dover volume for under US\$8.

For accompanists, the two volumes of Lieder and the piano parts of the *Three Violin Romances* Op 22 are rewarding to play. Number 3 of Op 22 and the song *An einem lichten Morgen* Op 23/2 have extremely fast accompaniments of light arpeggiated figures which require time to prepare adequately. Graham Johnson's tempo in his CD of the song is rather pedestrian. Recording of Clara Wieck-Schumann's piano music which have been favourably reviewed include Konstanze Eickhorst's single disc (available through [www.cduniverse.com](http://www.cduniverse.com)) and the excellent three-disc set of the complete piano works by Jozef De Beenhouwer.

Role-model works by women composers are lacking at the advanced concert level where the gender imbalance is very great. At this standard, Clara Schumann has works such as the sweeping Scherzo Op 10 (requiring a large hand) and the harmonically rich Sonata in g minor. Her *Konzertsatz* (Concerto Movement) in f minor, although left unfinished in 1847 and completed in recent years by De Beenhouwer, is a work of powerful impact worth considering for a competition. About 16 minutes long and less virtuosic than the early Concerto Op 7, it impresses immediately with its expansive spirit and noble beauty. Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University Library holds my two-piano reduction, available on inter-library loan.

## Conclusion

It seems astonishing that Clara Schumann followed many other career paths in addition to those mentioned. These careers included wife; mother of eight children, four of whom predeceased her; unpaid secretary and assistant to Robert Schumann, for example in accompanying for his choir rehearsals in Düsseldorf (Reich, 2001, p. 113); score arranger, producing piano reductions of Robert's orchestral scores, mostly without acknowledgement when they were printed (p. 247); editor, for example of the complete Schumann Edition; concert manager and impresario most of her life; renowned accompanist and chamber music player with associate artists like Jenny Lind and Joseph Joachim; and financial manager, advising and handling Brahms' investments for many years (p. 178).

In view of her multi-tasking life roles, it is not surprising that her compositions show multi-faceted mastery: expert organisational ability with clear forms and networks of motivic connections within a piece or across movements, in addition to beautiful melody, chromatically advanced harmony, a sense of seamless flow and communication through quotation and allusion.

A few observations drawn from Clara Schumann's life and work might be kept in mind in teaching. One of these is that working and performing with other instrumentalists and singers from childhood years keeps music to the fore rather than mere empty technical skill. Friedrich Wieck strived to inculcate a broad musical focus, and young Clara prepared and publicly performed chamber music and accompaniments with the same care she gave to her solo music.

Leave the door open for imagination in young students by encouraging improvisation as a daily activity, at least in the early years. Improvising develops a useful freedom from the attitude of total literalness towards printed scores. This mental freedom is not always heresy as it has practical benefits, for example for sight-readers who may need to omit notes for continuity, or for accompanists who need to be able to rearrange poor orchestral reductions.

There is no doubt that playing a piece from memory produces some feeling of the freedom of improvisation. In later life Clara Schumann wrote to Brahms about her memory anxieties in concerts, yet still found memory playing worth the risk: "I cannot make the decision to play from the music; it always seems to me that it is almost as if my wings were clipped" (Reich, 2001, p. 272).

As students become older, however, consider Robert's advice to Clara: "*don't improvise too much*; too much is lost that way...Make up your mind to write everything down immediately. That way you collect your ideas, and they become more and more concentrated" (Schumann and Schumann, 1994-, Vol.1, p. 318).

Encourage composing, especially for all female students, and enter students' compositions in a forum where performance and feedback is offered, such as the *Keys* Australian composition competition. That society needs music and composers for the inspiration and solace they give to everyone including themselves was a view expressed many times by Clara Schumann as she coped with a life epitomized by a

biographer as one of ‘musical triumph and personal tragedy’ (Reich, 2006, Grove Online).

While Clara Schumann’s performing career has remained legendary, familiarity with her masterly compositions can be extended still further into the community. Now that almost all her works are in print for the first time, some of the works discussed in the Paper hopefully will be taught to the next generation of musicians.

#### **About the Author.**

Diane Selmon, MMus, DCSM Hons 1, LMusA, AMusA, studied in the USA and Germany with Claudio Arrau. She has performed overseas and in all Australian States, as a soloist and duo pianist with her late husband Charles Glenn, a concerto soloist with various Australian orchestras, a frequent broadcaster and a touring Musica Viva artist. A teacher at Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University since 1981, she has also been on the teaching staff of Sydney Conservatorium and Westchester Conservatory, New York. She has premiered a number of works, including ensemble music with Contemporary group Perihelion while Musician-in-Residence at the University of Queensland.

#### **Contact Details.**

Diane Selmon,  
Keyboard Department,  
Queensland Conservatorium of Music Griffith University,  
South Bank Campus,  
PO Box 3428, South Brisbane, Queensland, 4101.  
Email: d.selmon@griffith.edu.au

#### **References**

- Anderson, R. (1986). Clara’s pupils. *The Musical Times*, 127(1723), 565. Retrieved March 8, 2006 from Jstor database.
- Chissell, J. (1983). *Clara Schumann: A dedicated spirit*. New York: Taplinger.
- Daverio, J. (1997). *Robert Schumann: Herald of a “new poetic age.”* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Davies, F. (1925). On Schumann: And reading between the lines. *Music and Letters*, 6(3), 214-223. Retrieved March 29, 2005, from International Index to Music Periodicals database.
- Friedland, B. (1980). Farrenc, Louise. In S. Sadie (Ed.), *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians* (1995 paperback reprint, Vol. 6, p. 408). London: Grove.
- Horowitz, J. (1982). *Conversations with Arrau*. London: Collins.
- Klassen, J. (1990). *Clara Wieck-Schumann: die Virtuosin als Komponistin: Studien zu ihrem Werk*. Kassel: Bärenreiter.
- Lara, A. de. (1945). Clara Schumann’s teaching. *Music and Letters*, 26(3), 143-147.
- Reich, N. B. & Burton, A. (1984). Clara Schumann: Old sources, new readings. *The Musical Quarterly*, 70(3), 332-354. Retrieved March 15, 2005 from Jstor database.
- Reich, N. B. (2001). *Clara Schumann: The artist and the woman* (rev. ed.). Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2006). *Schumann, Clara*. In L. Macy (Ed.), Grove music online. Retrieved March 20, 2006, from <http://www.grovemusic.com>.

- Rosen, C. (1995). *The romantic generation*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Rostand, C. (1972). *Liszt*. London: Calder and Boyars.
- Schumann, C and Schumann, R. (1994-). *The Complete correspondence of Clara and Robert Schumann*. Weissweiler, E. (Ed.). (Translated and with an Introduction by H. Fritsch, and R. L. Crawford.) New York: Peter Lang.
- Smith, C. P. (1994). "A distinguishing virility": Feminism and modernism in American art music. In S. C. Cool and J. S. Tsou (Eds.), *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music* (pp. 90-106). Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Steegmann, M. (2004). *Clara Schumann*. London: Life & Times Haus Publishing.
- Wieck, F. (1988). *Piano and song (didactic and polemical)* (H. Pleasants, Trans. and Ed.). Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press. (Original work published 1853).

### **Diane Selmon's annotated list of Clara Schumann's piano works, concertos, and chamber music.**

- [Some heard free on [www.classicalarchives.com](http://www.classicalarchives.com). First publication date in brackets.]
- Op 1 Four Polonaises, E<sup>b</sup>, C, D, C, 1829–30 (1831). Each is several pages long; *da capo* form; lively, effective concert piece for young pianists; moderate difficulty 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> grade. Free download of Nos 1 and 4 available from [www.noten-klavier.de](http://www.noten-klavier.de)
- Op 2 *Caprices en forme de valse* [Caprices in the form of a waltz], 1831–2 (1832). Major keys ranging from C to D<sup>b</sup>. Nine varied waltzes which could be separated; Schubertian dance feel but with added piquant harmonies. The shortest is four lines. Difficulty 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Op 3 *Romance variée*, C [Romance], 1831–3 (1833). Theme and variations; less successful (eg than Liszt's Eight Variations in A<sup>b</sup> written at the same age) because harmonically rather unvaried. Theme used for R. Schumann's Op 5. Difficulty AMus.
- Op 4 *Valses romantiques*, C, [Romantic Waltzes], 1835 (1835). Interlinked waltzes; colourful and brilliant concert piece. Recurring idea (especially the form in bars 141-144) quoted in R. Schumann's Op 6/2 and 3. Difficulty AMus +.
- Op 5 *Quatre pièces caractéristiques* [Four characteristic pieces], 1833–6 (1836).  
 1. *Impromptu, Le sabbat* [The witches' sabbath] also called *Hexentanz* [Witch Dance]. A minor; *Allegro furioso* with sharp grace notes and leaping block chords setting the scene. Rather youthful; no stretch greater than an octave; more like an etude as it is based on one idea. 7<sup>th</sup>.  
 2. *Caprice à la boleros* [Caprice in bolero style]. Presto concert piece in e minor. The bolero style provides opportunity for cross rhythms throughout. A more sophisticated piece than No 1; the middle section in E has long melodies rising above arpeggiations in both hands. 8<sup>th</sup> +.  
 3. *Romance*. B major. Exceptionally lovely; rich and surprising harmonies, deep feeling, a soaringly lyrical middle section. 8<sup>th</sup>.  
 4. *Scène fantastique; Ballet des revenants* [Fantastic scene; Ballet of the ghosts]. B minor. Imaginative challenge for technically agile younger students; rapid repeated chords; a few large stretches can be re-arranged. AMus.
- Op 6 *Soirées musicales*, 1834–6 (1836).

1. Toccata. A minor. First section Presto, with flashing chordal leaps; Robert Schumann loved the slower expressive B section with its 'endless melody.' 8<sup>th</sup>.
  2. Nocturne. F major. Robert's favourite, quoted by him in various compositions; character of deeply melancholy introspection. 8<sup>th</sup>.
  3. Mazurka. G minor. Chopin influence, but a strong and individual composition with a wealth of ingenious piano figurations. 8<sup>th</sup>
  4. Ballade. D minor. Elegiac and expansive spirit, well contrasted. 7<sup>th</sup>.
  5. Mazurka. G major. Quoted as the motto of R. Schumann's Op 6. Strikingly flamboyant and free. AMus.
  6. Polonaise. A minor. Chopin influence but with its own strong character. 7<sup>th</sup>.
- Op 7 Piano Concerto, a minor 1833–6 (1837). Excellent critiques; original form and ideas. By turns spirited and graceful, lyrical and virtuosic which makes it difficult to play with sufficient fire and flair. LMus +.
- Op 8 *Variations de concert sur la cavatine du Pirate de Bellini* [Concert variations on Bellini's *Pirate*], C, 1837 (1837). Inventive figuration and harmonies transform the plain Bellini theme in four variations. LMus.
- Op 9 *Souvenir de Vienne*, Impromptu, G, 1838 (1838). A fantasy based on the Austrian national anthem. Not in print; free download if [www.imslp.org](http://www.imslp.org) resumes operation. LMus.
- Op 10 Scherzo, d, 1838 (1838). Vivid and exciting for performer and audience alike; frequent changes of harmony and figuration. Large stretches, rapid leaps in both hands; dramatic discord clashes against pedal notes; fast lyrical interludes. LMus+.
- Op 11 *Trois romances* [Three Romances] 1838–9 (1840). Admired by R. Schumann.
1. Eb minor. Undercurrent of continuous 16<sup>th</sup> notes throughout; many pedal points. Dark first section; middle section dreamier with evocative chromaticism. AMus.
  2. G minor. Ballad style; outer sections brooding, dramatic and passionate; main melody in LH; rapid middle section. For large hands only. LMus.
  3. A major. A captivating and nostalgic waltz; a little Chopin influence in middle section with unexpected enharmonic changes. 8<sup>th</sup>.
- Op 14 *Deuxième scherzo* [Second Scherzo], c, after 1841 (1845). Forceful, sweeping, effective concert piece that sounds harder than it really is. AMus+.
- Op 15 *Quatre pièces fugitives* [Four fleeting pieces], 1841–44 (1845).
1. F major. Nocturne mood; finely crafted from motifs in the opening theme. 8<sup>th</sup>.
  2. A minor. Scherzo-like fleeting and shadowed phantom visions. 8<sup>th</sup>.
  3. D. Brahms may have been inspired by the many-voiced chord writing and Lied-like first section. Delicate nuances in flowing middle section. 8<sup>th</sup>.
  4. G. Almost the same as the Sonata's Scherzo (Sonata unpublished until 1991), but Sonata ending is more effective as an encore. Immediately appealing. 8<sup>th</sup> +.
- Sonata, g, 1841–2 (1991): Allegro, Adagio, Scherzo, Rondo [orig. two movements titled Sonatine]. A work with cyclic features and motivic interlinking. Rhapsodic qualities make it exacting to shape the interpretation; deeply felt slow movement; final Rondo spirals into a short fast and furious ending. LMus+.
- Op 16 *Drei Präludien und Fugen* [Three Preludes and Fugues], 1845 (1845).

1. G minor. Prelude has a rather feverishly sighing mood because of the constant pull between main beats and off-set 8<sup>th</sup> note patterns. The fugue is a pianistic and headlong toccata-Allegro. AMus.
  2. Bb. The ideal romantic example of the genre with expressive harmonies and perfect proportions. Prelude is a serenade with LH *portamento* staccato accompaniment. Fugue is vocal. Outstanding in every way. 8<sup>th</sup>+
  3. D minor. Both P and F in four parts; organ-like sound, solemn character. 8<sup>th</sup>.
- Op 17 Piano Trio, g, 1846 (1847). Clara Schumann's most famous work; serious, cultured and elegant; readily available score and recordings. LMus overall.
- Piano Concerto, f, 1847, completed and orchestrated as *Konzertsatz* by J. De Beenhouwer (1994). Revised two-piano arrangement by Diane Selmon held at Queensland Conservatorium GU Library. Masterly work balanced between noble breadth, sombre grandeur and beauty. LMus.
- Op 20 *Variationen über ein Thema von Robert Schumann* [Variations on a theme of Robert Schumann], f, 1853 (1854). Moving and intimate tone of wistful refined beauty. Contrapuntal ingenuity in bars 204-211 where the tenor voice has her Op 3 theme; Variation VI is a canon at 5<sup>th</sup> and octave; meltingly mellifluous piano figurations in the last Variation. LMus.
- *Romanze*, a minor, 1853 (1891). Originally intended as the first piece of Op 21; shorter than its replacement, but a work of haunting depth. 7<sup>th</sup>.
- Op 21 *Drei Romanzen* [Three Romances], 1853–5 (1855).
1. A minor. Tragic and haunted mood; middle section more consolatory. Written on a day Brahms visited Schumann in the asylum (doctors told Clara not to visit). Influenced Brahms, who performed the work, in his later pieces. AMus.
  2. F. Enchanting short piece or encore, based on a quotation and continuous variation of the theme of R. Schumann's *Wiegenliedchen*, Op 124/6. 7th-8th.
  3. G minor. A *perpetuum mobile*; the constant driving 16ths become 8<sup>ths</sup> in the middle section; first section has a feel of Chopin's *Fantasy-Impromptu*, with greater chromaticism. AMus.
- Op 22 *Drei Romanzen* [Three Romances], violin and piano, 1853 (1855). Favourites of the Hanoverian King.
1. Db. Lied-like, chromatically inflected, soulful and personal tone. 8<sup>th</sup>.
  2. G minor. Like the Trio Op 17 in more than key. 8<sup>th</sup>.
  3. Bb. Delightful but difficult; extremely fast light arpeggiated figures. LMus.
- *Romanze*, b, 1856 (1976). Written shortly after Schumann's death; one of the great expressions of grief in music. 8th.
- *Marsch* [March], piano duet, 1879 (1996). Ideal for a celebratory occasion, since that was its original purpose. 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>.