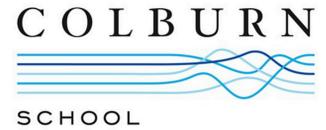




# Female Composers of the Romantic Era



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## Abstract

This research project explores the impact and role of female composers during the Romantic Period. Even though many women composed during this era, their contributions are often overlooked. This project first explores the climate of the Romantic era, examining how society felt about women composing during this time and how women were limited as composers. Then, the project discusses three prominent female composers, Clara Schumann, Cecile Chaminade, and Fanny Mendelssohn, as case studies, justifying through compositional analysis that women that could achieve Romantic Genius.

## Characteristics of Romantic Music

- Less structure in the form of the piece
- More personal and emotional; playing with tempo in order to reflect emotional intensity
- Chromatic harmonies
- More dramatic dynamics
- Recurring themes in the music
- Imitating nature

## Compositional Analysis

### Opening of Trio Op. 11 in D minor

The aggressive energy that this piece carries is relevant from even the opening of this piece. Fanny Mendelssohn does this by avoiding a contrasting lyrical theme. Furthermore, she cultivates an aggressive tone by repeating the theme and passing it through the many different voices of instruments.

## Historical Context: Romantic Era

- Dates: 1850-1900
- The creativity and genius of the individual composer were emphasized and celebrated
- Artists no longer bound by making compositions for patrons
- New innovations perfected and enhanced the capability, availability and reliability of musical instruments
- Instruments were now found in homes, allowing more people to become composers
- Women were slowly being allowed outside of the domestic sphere, although they were still expected above all to wives and mothers, supporting their male relations' endeavors
- Rise of the middle class led to expanded opportunities for musicians as audiences, amateurs and professionals



## Case Studies



### Clara Schumann

Married to the famous Romantic composer Robert Schumann. Much of what is discussed and known about Clara is due to her relationship with Robert. Her most famous pieces are due to their ties to Robert, whether it be her pieces dedicated to him or the lieder they composed together.



### Cecile Chaminade

Although her father begged her to stop composing, she produced great works for pianists as well as huge orchestras. While serious psychological problems led her to withdraw from composing, Cecile will always be known as "the living room composer" for producing huge bodies of work from the comfort of her living room.



### Fanny Mendelssohn

Although her brother Felix is discussed in mainstream music history sources, Fanny composed over 400 works of music in her short 41-year life. Her Piano Trio Op. 11 is often used to refute the idea that only men could integrate certain "male" qualities in their music as it contained many characteristics deemed aggressive.



## References

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