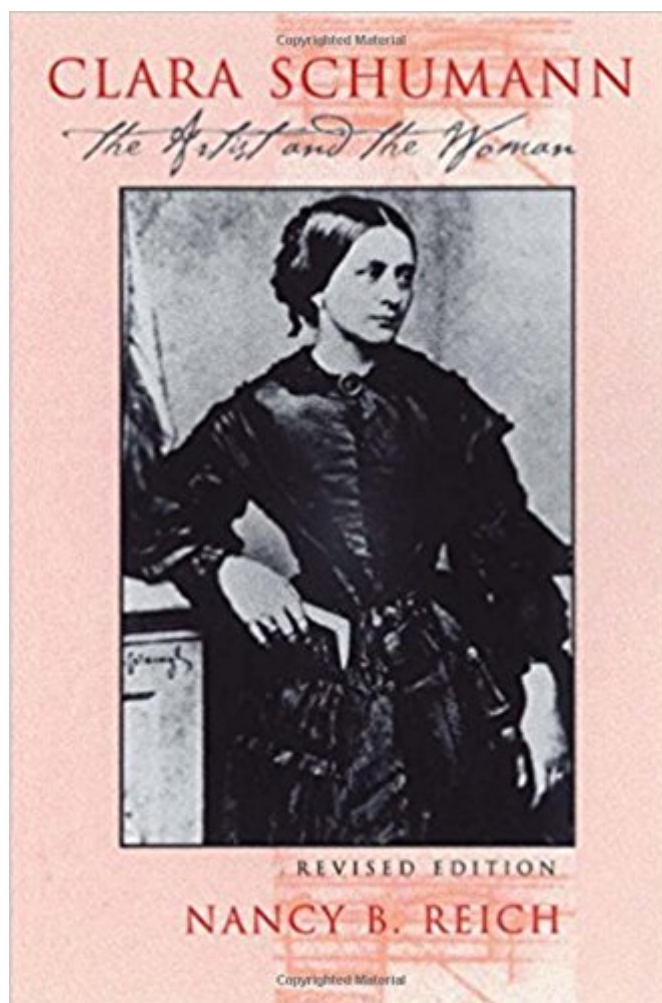


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Clara Schumann: The Artist And The Woman



Synopsis

This absorbing and award-winning biography tells the story of the tragedies and triumphs of Clara Wieck Schumann (1819–1896), a musician of remarkable achievements. At once artist, composer, editor, teacher, wife, and mother of eight children, she was an important force in the musical world of her time. To show how Schumann surmounted the obstacles facing female artists in the nineteenth century, Nancy B. Reich has drawn on previously unexplored primary sources: unpublished diaries, letters, and family papers, as well as concert programs. Going beyond the familiar legends of the Schumann literature, she applies the tools of musicological scholarship and the insights of psychology to provide a new, full-scale portrait. The book is divided into two parts. In Part One, Reich follows Clara Schumann's life from her early years as a child prodigy through her marriage to Robert Schumann and into the forty years after his death, when she established and maintained an extraordinary European career while supporting and supervising a household and seven children. Part Two covers four major themes in Schumann's life: her relationship with Johannes Brahms and other friends and contemporaries; her creative work; her life on the concert stage; and her success as a teacher. Throughout, excerpts from diaries and letters in Reich's own translations clear up misconceptions about her life and achievements and her partnership with Robert Schumann. Highlighting aspects of Clara Schumann's personality and character that have been neglected by earlier biographers, this candid and eminently readable account adds appreciably to our understanding of a fascinating artist and woman. For this revised edition, Reich has added several photographs and updated the text to include recent discoveries. She has also prepared a Catalogue of Works that includes all of Clara Schumann's known published and unpublished compositions and works she edited, as well as descriptions of the autographs, the first editions, the modern editions, and recent literature on each piece. The Catalogue also notes Schumann's performances of her own music and provides pertinent quotations from letters, diaries, and contemporary reviews.

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Customer Reviews

"Clara Schumann was one of the remarkable women of the nineteenth century, and she deserves this well-documented biography. . . . This is the best modern study of Clara Schumann available in English." [New York Times Book Review](#) "The marvelous originality of Reich's book lies in the way she places the marriage and the celebrated friendship with Brahms in perspective among other critical factors in Clara's life. Reich's painstaking, scholarly detail and feminist insight recover not merely the events in the life, dramatic as they were, but its major themes, movements and connecting threads." [Women's Review of Books](#) "Reich's first edition contributed to the increase in interest in Clara Schumann and in the performances and recordings of her music. The publication of this revised edition will continue to stir interest with the availability of new documents, letters and the extensive list of newly published music; further, this new edition offers a much more detailed look at Clara Schumann's life and music." [Journal of the International Association of Women in Music](#) "In addition to telling us the story of Clara Schumann's life, Nancy B. Reich . . . includes chapters on Clara Schumann's children, her work as editor, performing artist, and teacher, and her relationships with Brahms, Joachim, Liszt, and other major figures of the era. . . . There is also a list and analysis of Clara Schumann's compositions. . . . Reich has written an eminently readable, well-researched, and thoughtful book that gives historical and psychological insights into one of the major artists of the nineteenth century." [Classical Music Guide Forums](#) "Foremost among the strengths of this book is the delineation of Schumann's character. While pointing out the overwhelming challenges and devastating losses that dogged her entire life, Reich makes no attempt to paint her as a saint or hero. . . . The first edition of this book has gained acceptance as a standard resource on Clara Schumann. This revised edition preserves the strengths of the first edition while adding additional information and a fine-tuning of the presentation, assuring that Reich's work will remain central to the subject for the foreseeable future." [Notes: Journal of the Music Library Association](#)

Nancy B. Reich received her Ph.D. from New York University and has served on the faculties of Queens College, New York University, Manhattanville College, and was a Visiting Professor of Music at Bard College and Williams College. In 1996, she was awarded the Robert Schumann Prize of the City of Zwickau, Germany.

This engrossing biography deserves the highest praise for style and substance as well as organization. Not a page caused me to lose interest. In fact, I cannot imagine a superior biography of the remarkable Clara Schumann. Her existence was closely touched by many of the greatest composers and performers of her time and the author weaves it all together clearly and vividly. First and foremost, naturally, the tragic story of Robert Schumann. Then there was Brahms. His youth and, in a way, his entire life were so large a part of Clara's existence that his admirers will find much to interest them here. The author presents the great composer's devotion to her as a truly chivalrous attachment persisting through the decades. That is all we will ever know, though the author surmises that Clara may have come to love him as more than a friend and he in his youth perhaps had loved her as deeply. I was greatly impressed on learning the full extent of Clara's concert career, which spanned decades, brought triumphs and honors across Europe from England to Russia, and maintained her always in the very highest ranks of pianists. They were years of hardship, sacrifice and tragedy, but music was not just the means of existence for herself and her children: she was guided and strengthened by the unalterable conviction that music stands alone at the pinnacle of human endeavor. I encourage any lover of music or of human drama to read this wonderful account of this great woman's life.

Clara Schumann spent much of her life trying to fulfill the wishes and ambitions of the men in her life---her father who had decided that Clara would become a virtuoso musician, and her husband Robert Schumann who wanted her to choose taking care of him and their children as her major priority. Trying to live up to these expectations was difficult and Nancy Reich in this well-balanced biography shows us how hard Clara worked all her life. She needed the outlet of her music, which may have led her to be somewhat harsh and humorless, but she lived under incredible pressure. Reich's biography provides an excellent introduction to the personal and professional life of a great 19th century musician.

This is an impressive and highly readable work of scholarship from which emerges a woman of towering stature, warts and all. It is the story of a woman who worked in pursuit of a passion that

she would not allow to take second place to the traditional role ascribed to a woman in her day, and of one who worked in the face of enormous adversity to support a family through a professional career at a time when women were not supposed to have one. She deserves to be remembered as a pianist who was second to none in the impact she had on her art and the legacy she left. One is tempted also to see her as a triumph over the gender stereotypes of her time. In many respects she was, except for the sad fact that she lost confidence in her (very considerable) gifts as a composer.

All lovers of classical music will be fascinated by the sorrowful yet ultimately triumphant life of Clara Schumann. Nancy B. Reich eloquently, and in absorbing detail, chronicles not only Clara's life but also the musical background of her times. Sure her life was tragic in many ways, a lot of lives are, but imagine having her talent, spending over sixty years of creating beautiful music, and to count among your friends Liszt, Brahms, and Chopin. You finish the book with enormous admiration not only for Clara's art but also for her spirit. Thank you, Ms. Reich.

I found this to be very compelling reading as well as informative on a woman I knew little about beforehand. I've read two biographies of Robert Schumann and neither offered much information about Clara. It's certainly well past time that she move out from under his shadow and be recognized as the brilliant artist she was in her own right. Being the families most reliable bread winner, being Europe's most celebrated concert pianist, composing, caring for an increasingly disturbed husband, all while bearing and raising seven children? Who needs a fictional "Wonder Woman"?

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