

ABSTRACT OF THE DLA THESIS

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THE ART OF CLARA SCHUMANN

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I.

MOTIVATION FOR CHOOSING THE SUBJECT

My intention in choosing this topic was to introduce the life and the arts of one of the most famous musicians living in the 19th century. Clara Schumann nowadays is known mostly as the wife of the famous composer Robert Schumann, although in their time it was the opposite. The editor of the „Neue Zeitschrift für Musik” Robert Schumann - in the beginning of his career- was mainly viewed as the husband of the famous pianist Clara Schumann.

In the 19th century Clara Schumann was mentioned together with geniuses of the highest rank such as Chopin, Liszt and Brahms. However, there is only one book written in Hungarian about the life and art of Clara Schumann. The title of the book is *A Mystery of the Passion* written by Claude Samuel (2006) and translated into Hungarian in 2009.

In my study I demonstrate not only her brilliant piano career spanning over 60 years, but also her compositions and her pedagogical and editorial works. 23 opus numbers and approximately the same amount without opus numbers were printed. Many of her students became successful musicians, which proved Clara's pedagogical talent. The editorial work of Robert Schumann's music was also Clara's merit.

II.

THE ANTECEDENT OF THE RESEARCH AND THE REVIEW OF THE USED SOURCES

The life of Clara Schumann is well documented because of the extended correspondence and the carefully kept diaries. The Correspondence between *Clara and Robert Schumann* (edited: Eva Weissweiler, New York, 1994.), furthermore between *Clara Schumann and Johannes Brahms* (edited: Berthold Litzmann, Leipzig, 1927.) have fundamental significance. Those letters not only show the personal relationship, but also reflect the close musical influence among them. It is also the sign of Clara's great talent, that she could be the muse and the intellectual partner to such great musicians as Robert Schumann and Johannes Brahms. In Hungarian, only the letters of the young Robert Schumann are available in the translation of Sándor Jemnitz.

The *Ehetagebücher (Marriage diary-* edited by Gerd Nauhaus), that Robert Schumann gave to her wife at the beginning of their marriage, is also a genuine source to get an idea about their musical arts and family life.

The *Haushaltbücher (Household books - Gerd Nauhaus)* has some specific information about their relationship.

The most important and reliable resource for me was the book *Clara Schumann: An Artist's Life* written by Berthold Litzmann (Leipzig, 1913). This summarized biographical three-volumed work is based on material found in diaries and letters. The books have a special merit, because the author Berthold Litzmann knew Clara Schumann personally.

I invoked the reminiscences of the students of Clara such as Adelina de Lara, Mathilde Verne, Fanny Davies, Ilona Eibenschütz and Marie Fromm to explore her teaching method. Adelina de Lara piano playing, recorded between 1949-1951, has a special value. I inserted a copy of one disc in the appendix.

I received the most authentic portrait of Clara as mother of 8 children and famous pianist from the book *Erinnerungen (Reminiscences)* written by her daughter Eugenie Schumann.

The critics of the ancient newspapers such as the „Finale”, the „Iris”, the „AMA” and the „Neue Zeitschrift für Musik” also have a great importance.

III.

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE RESEARCH

My study is divided in two parts. In the first part (I-IV. chapters) I elaborated the most important stages of the life of Clara Schumann, and in the second part (V-VIII. chapters) the musical career of the pianist. In the first chapter beside the biographical data I put an emphasis on how Clara was brought up and the role of her father, whose, as an excellent music teacher, contributed to her successful career. In the second part of my thesis I dealt with the relationship between Clara and her colleagues (V.), with her career as a pianist (VI.), with her teaching method (VII.), and with her compositions and editorial assistance (VIII.).

Clara kept a close friendship with the composers Johannes Brahms and Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. She was one of the best interpreters of the piano works of Frederic Chopin, moreover she worked on the publications of Chopin's collected works. In spite of a good relationship at the beginning with Franz Liszt, they didn't develop a close friendship. Although Clara knew Richard Wagner from her childhood –she considered him as an arrogant and rude person.

In chapter VI. I dealt with the career of Clara Schumann as a pianist, which I divided into three parts. The first part is the young virtuoso years as Clara Wieck until her marriage 1840. The second part discusses the period 1840-1854, when Clara had much less time for giving concerts due to her maternal responsibilities. The third part is between 1854 and 1891. This was the period of the treatment and the death of Robert Schumann. In spite of the numerous afflictions in that time, Clara's career ascended to new heights. Her beautiful piano playing was praised by contemporary critics, and her long, diverse concert tours proved her international career.

The chapter VII.- Clara's pedagogical work -has the most functional benefit. The basics of Clara's teaching method were served by Friedrich Wieck's brilliant pedagogical skills. In the subsections (VII.1-6.) with the help of the recollections of the students of Clara Schumann, I featured her methods and advice about piano playing.

Her musical confession was, that a really good pianist has to know how to teach. Her basic principle was, that keeping the intention of the composer in view, with proper technical skills, one has to simply recreate the compositions. Students came from all over the world to study in Clara Schumann's class.

In the chapter VIII. I analyzed, beside her early and virtuoso compositions, the Piano Concerto in A Minor op.7. and the Sonata in G Minor WoO18. Other than the key, there is no other connection with the Concerto in A Minor op.54 and the Sonata in G Minor op.22. of Robert Schumann. In the third subsection I dealt with the mutual themes, motifs and musical quotations occurring in the works of Clara and Robert Schumann, which show their tight creative relationship. I closed my study with the editorial works of Clara in the compositions of Robert Schumann, which demonstrate her humble and committed attitude toward the life-work of her husband.

The appendix includes, as well as biographical items and sheet music examples, a copy of recordings of one of the most famous students of Clara Schumann; Adelina de Lara.(recorded in 1951, Pavilion Records Ltd.)

Completing my thesis and the research work was set back due to the fact that the sheet music of Clara Schumann, as well as correspondence, diaries, and studies concerning her musical art, are not available in Hungary. To purchase these sources demanded a lot of effort and study trips to foreign countries.

The merit and the novelty of my dissertation is that there is no other detailed work on this subject available in Hungarian. I did not undertake to analyze the whole life-work of Clara Schumann, because that is too vast an area for the DLA thesis. The exploration of the complete piano works and vocal music of Clara Schumann is still to be accomplished.

IV.

THE DOCUMENTATION OF THE AUTHOR'S ACTIVITY CONNECTED WITH THE DOMAIN OF THE DISCOURSE

Lecture:

I gave a lecture-recital on the life and art of Robert and Clara Schumann in the big hall of the Szent István Musichaus on 17th February 2011.