

A Study of Clara Schumann's Piano Music Performance, Composition and Teaching under the Feminist Movement

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Abstract. The music of female composers has long been little studied, and the importance attached to female composers is far less than that of male composers. However, there are many excellent female composers in the history of music development, such as Clara Schumann. The 19th century, when Clara lived in the West, was a time of great talent, and poetry, literature, and music all developed tremendously, and some of the great works that have been passed down to the next generation were basically written in that era, and their authors are also remembered. This is another reflection of how difficult it was for a woman to occupy a place under male domination. In contrast, female musicians were somewhat underappreciated, due to the gender inequalities that society had given them, and their talents were buried. Clara's achievements as a multi-tasker, performer, composer, and educator have led the music world to reexamine the role of women in music history.

Keywords: Female Musicians; Male Domination; Clara Schumann; Musical Development.

1. Introduction

From ancient times to the present, the idea of sexism has not been eradicated, and many fields are dominated by male groups. Clara Schumann, as an outstanding female musician, has made a great contribution to the advancement of women in the music industry. In this paper, we hope that by analyzing Clara's identity, we can contribute to the study of female musicians, and also provide a performance aid for future performers of Clara's works.

In recent years, some foreign scholars have studied Clara Schumann from biography to analysis of her works, and then to the recording of her works on CD, and her musical activities have become more and more comprehensive, while the research situation in domestic society is still limited in comparison. It is only as more and more Western scholars seek inspiration in Clara's legacy and bring it to a wider audience that we separate her from Schumann as a separate research entity. The limitations of some researchers in enthusiastically exploring the advanced ideas of contemporary femininity that Clara carries with her, we are still stuck in recognizing Clara's identity and exploring her emotional story when her music is brought to the stage, creating difficulties for the study of Clara and feminist thought. In terms of Clara's piano education, a musicologist from a leading university has shown in his research that Clara was not only a composer and performer, but that she also played an important role in shaping several generations of pianists. As compiled by Clara's students, Clara's method of playing during her teaching has left a valuable legacy for future generations. In short, Clara's musical attainments and piano musicianship are worthy of respect and pursuit.

This paper first analyzes Clara's charm in piano art performance as well as lists some of his works; then examines Clara's three identities as a musician; then explores Clara's three identities in detail from a feminist perspective to understand Clara's contribution to the music world as a female musician, and finally analyzes her value as a role model in a female perspective.

2. The Artistic Achievements of Clara Schumann

2.1 Artistic Charm of Clara Schumann's Piano Variations

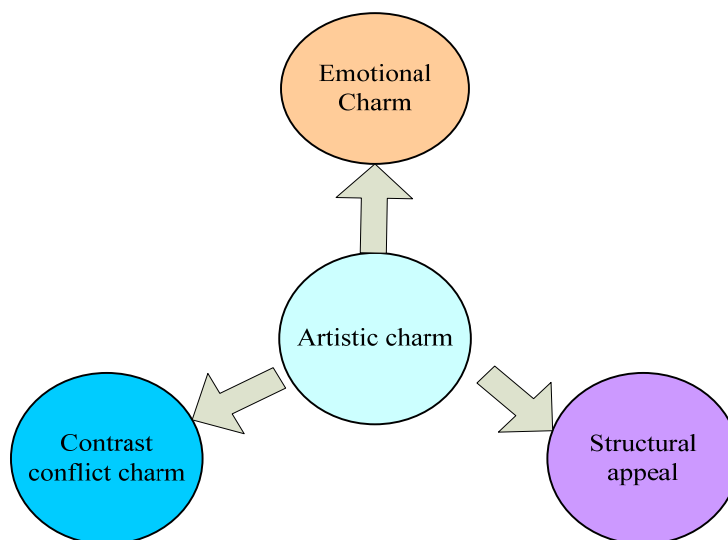


Figure 1. Artistic charisma performance

As shown in Figure 1, Clara's artistic charm of piano performance, which formed the style of Clara's performance and works.

(1) Emotional appeal

Clara's musical works are the autobiography of her life, and the Variations are the best of them. In the composition of the Variations, Clara analyzed her inner self more deeply. The charm of Clara's piano variations is first and foremost emotional. Without this personal outpouring of emotion, the result would be unsatisfactory [4-5]. And Clara believes that the criterion for judging the value of music is whether it has a rich emotional content. In Clara's piano compositions, she strives to weave a gorgeous tone with rich harmonies, pedals and deep descriptions of the inner emotions of the characters, making her piano variations appear more thoughtful .

(2) Charm of contrasting conflicts

The charm of Clara's variations is also evident in the strong contrasting conflicts. Her works seem like a drama in one scene. In order to express the timbre of the variations, Clara deliberately creates intense contradictory dramatic contrasts. In Schumann's works, we can feel Clara's high ideals and hopes, but also the frustration brought by the low social status of women at that time; we can feel Clara's pursuit, but also her escape and doubt and disappointment; we can feel Clara's struggle in the face of reality, but also her hiding in the fantasy she created[7-8].

(3) The structural charm of the variations

Melody is used in Clara's variations to reflect the objective environment. In the nineteenth-century German frenzy literature, this abnormal "enthusiasm" is transformed into a frustrated mood in Clara's case, because many good progressive people are not treated well in this society. Since Clara cannot struggle with the social reality, her other escapism takes her away from the real world and into her personal piano world, where she creates an illusory realm out of her own imagination [9-10]. In this realm, there is only beauty and happiness. Clara can flexibly use different variations, and with her imagination, she can integrate this "schizophrenic" character, and greatly express the layers of emotional changes in the variations extended by the theme .

2.2 Presentation of Clara Schumann's Works

There are eight types of Clara's piano works classified according to genres, including dances (Polish dances and waltzes, etc.), romances, individual miniatures, concertos, variations,

improvisations, harmonies, preludes and fugues [12-13]. The titles of some of Clara's numbered works are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Numbered works

Opus Number	Track Name
Op.1	Four Polish Dance Songs
Op.2	Waltz-like Rhapsody
Op.3	Romantic Variations
Op.4	Romantic waltz
Op.5	Four titles
Op.6	Musical Evening
Op.11	Three Romantic Songs
Op.14	Harmony
Op.15	Four miniatures
Op.16	Three Preludes and Fugue

3. Clara Schumann's Multiple Identities

3.1 Piano Player

At the age of 18, Clara became a pianist who could rival many of the pianist greats, even though they were about ten years older than her. Critics of the time generally considered Clara's technique to be comprehensive, capable of both smooth, rounded legato and complete technical detail in each section, in contrast to the single, Viennese style of playing that focused on flamboyant technique at the expense of the essence of the music. Her music is not only skillful but also full of musicality, which is why she is called a "musical pianist".

3.2 Composer

From the early days of her piano studies, Clara's creative activity was integrated into her daily practice routine. A large part of Clara's piano work was composed before her marriage, when she was still confident in her work, as can be seen in the repertoire of her early concerts, where her compositions often appeared in the repertoire list, and at the age of 19, when she traveled to France to perform, she found that her harmonicas were very well received. The piano works that Clara composed after her marriage were mainly miniatures, perhaps due to the change in status that forced her to weaken in her compositions, but also partly because she could appear unsure of herself in the presence of her husband.

3.3 Piano Teacher

Clara had her own unique perspective as a teacher. She advocated that piano practice should not be too long, even if it was only half an hour, but that every minute should be dedicated; that piano instruction should ideally begin at the age of six, and that proper practice habits should be developed. Although she lacks the humor required of a teacher, Clara has a wealth of experience in performing on stage, which provides her with much inspiration for teaching her students. She was very interested in the careers of her students, and was saddened by the criticism they received from the music industry, but also delighted by their successes.

4. Clara Schumann's Performance, Composition and Teaching of Piano Music Under the Feminist Movement

4.1 Analysis of Clara Schumann's Identity as a Pianist From a Feminist Perspective

Clara introduced the recital format, which changed the traditional mode of playing music and led to a more refined arrangement of the concert repertoire. She advocated this model, and by the end of

the 19th century the tradition of using assisting artists, as well as some cabaret performances, had almost disappeared from the program of the most important European pianists, and the depth of Clara's influence can be seen in the fact that many pianists still follow this model for their concert repertoire selection to this day.

4.2 Analysis Of Clara Schumann's Identity As a Composer From a Feminist Perspective

The music industry is dominated by men, and most of their musical works are brilliant, passionate and powerful, while the gentle characteristics in Clara's works would be regarded as shortcomings infinitely magnified. Clara was not very confident in her own compositions, and she believed that women should not hope for compositions, which is a sign of arrogance. This was also a common view in European music circles and did not change for a long time. In fact, even though the social pressures of the time caused her frustration and influenced her compositions throughout her life, Clara's father and husband were very supportive of her compositions, encouraging her to listen carefully to her inner voice, and she did have a number of works of above-average standard.

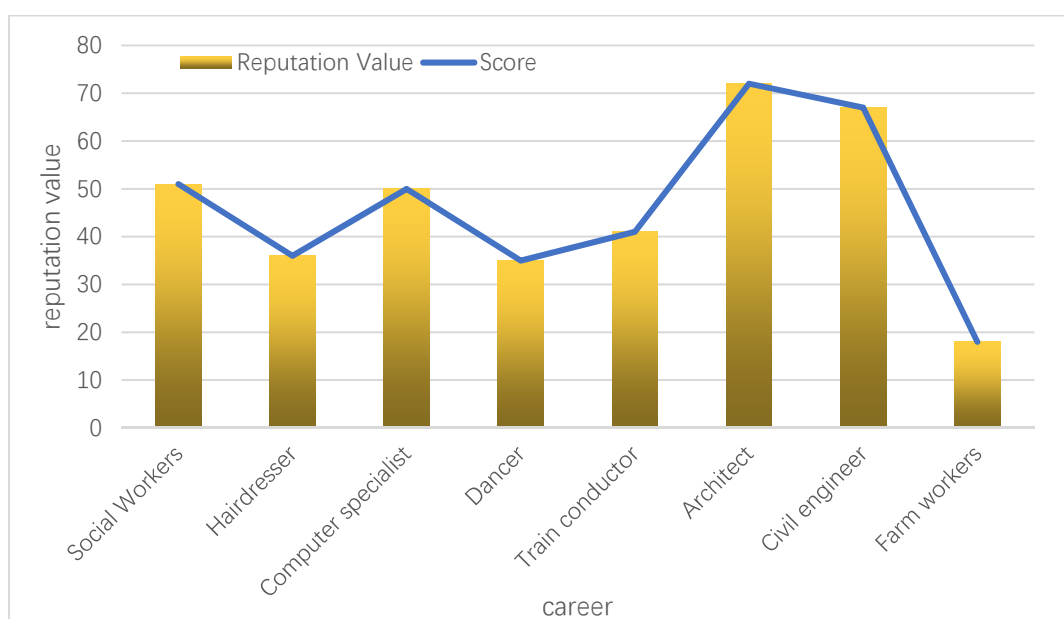


Figure 2. Social prestige value of each profession

As shown in Figure 2, some of the professions are divided into prestige levels. Clara lived in a predominantly male-dominated era, and her gender difference was a great obstacle to her piano career, especially since she had to make great sacrifices to establish her position in the music industry as a woman.

$$N = \{n1, n2, \dots, ni\} \tag{1}$$

$$AVERAGE = AVERAGE(num1, num2, \dots) \tag{2}$$

Eq. (1) N represents the total number of people in the society, and Eq. (2) the average prestige value AVERAGE obtained according to the professional prestige evaluated by different individuals n.

4.3 Analysis of Clara Schumann's Identity as a Piano Teacher From a Feminist Perspective

As a piano teacher, Clara's teaching method mainly comes from a large number of performance practices, which, through her father's teaching philosophy and ideas, therefore, Clara is more influenced by her father's teaching and, as a woman, she is creatively limited as a composer and teacher, which to a certain extent limits the individual development of her teaching. Although many excellent students came to her, most of them were due to her status as a distinguished pianist, as the public at the time was keen to study with young pianists, and Clara's influence came as a result of her

reputation as a distinguished pianist. As a result, the piano education aspect of her education suffered from the limitations of individual development.

In terms of teaching methods, she inherited her father's teaching methods and applied them to her own teaching. For example, her father placed great emphasis on some basic exercises that should be completed before the necessary and appropriate playing and reading of music, i.e. the student must first learn to play with a solid touch of the keys to create a dynamic sound and build a good technical foundation. This is something that Clara practiced throughout her future teaching, including such basic exercises as scales, arpeggios in each of her lessons.

Although she does not require every student to understand the essence of songfulness through vocal studies, as her father did, she does require students to "touch" or "lightly touch" the piano to play singing, beautiful, vibrant music, even in the loudest passages, where the music The use of the wrist rather than the elbow when playing chords, the emphasis on the limitations of the piano as an instrument and the need to use various strategies and fingerwork to keep it firmly under control during performance are the most characteristic features of Clara's teaching.

4.4 Reconceptualizing Clara Schumann - Setting Female Role Models(RM)

The traditional classical repertoire shows a serious lack of female composers and a widespread prejudice against female musicians, which is reflected female RM for students to learn from, as these prominent female figures can better provide an emotional connection for female students, and aspiring female performers are likely to need to find historical and contemporary role models to inspire them. When there is a research movement on Clara and some success is achieved, these findings can give women more confidence. In other professional fields, women are increasingly being heard and represented. The presence of female science professors has been shown to provide positive RM for women and reduce stereotypes of women. The presence of RM also helps to dispel negative stereotypes of musicians. Female musicians like Clara, who have made a huge impact in the field of music, both in film and television and in the classroom, create a connection with their female students, a connection that encourages them to step confidently into the performance arena and to fulfill their professional aspirations while taking on the responsibilities of marriage and family.

5. Conclusion

Clara Schumann is a representative of female musicians, able to be among the many male performers in a male-dominated society. Her compositions and performance forms have advanced the feminist movement. However, due to the unequal social status and gender of men and women, Clara's compositions are still limited to a certain extent, yet her excellence in music composition and performance cannot be ignored, and she is also a piano educator with a unique music teaching method that has trained a large number of piano talents. This paper analyzes Clara's three identities from a feminist perspective, in the hope that more piano learners will understand Clara's love and dedication to piano music in her time.

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