

The Works of Robert Schumann

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Learning





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Text Audio

Who was Robert Schumann?

Robert Schumann's story is at heart a love story. He was born in 1810 in Zwickau, which is part of Germany today. He began to compose music when he was seven. At school, music was his best subject.

A portrait of Robert Schumann



Zwickau, the town where Schumann was born





Friedrich Wieck was a good piano teacher.

When he was twenty, Schumann took piano lessons from Friedrich Wieck, a famous piano teacher. Wieck had a daughter, Clara, who was a talented pianist.



Clara Wieck Schumann →

Schumann really wanted to be successful in the music world. To try to speed up the process, he built a strange box. It was meant to support his fingers while practicing, to make them stronger and more able to play.

Some people say that the box seriously injured two fingers on his right hand.

Because of this injury, he could no longer play the piano. Others say that the box did not injure his fingers. He could not move his fingers because of an illness.



↗ A device similar to what Schumann used on his fingers



↗ We don't really know what happened to Schumann's fingers.

Schumann fell in love with Wieck's daughter Clara, but her father said they could not marry. He did not want his daughter to marry a man who had no money! In the end, love won, and they got married in 1840.

Robert and Clara got married in this church in Leipzig.



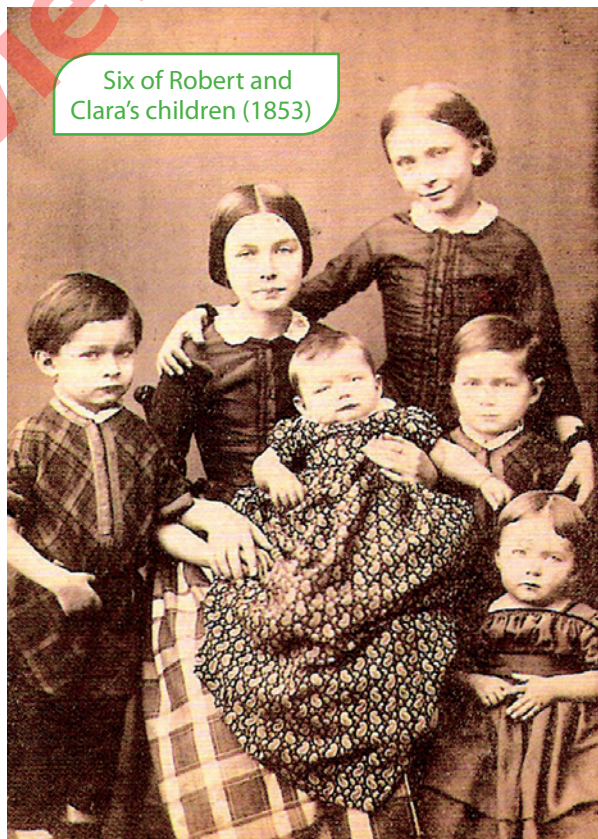
A couple on their wedding day



Things were wonderful for a while. Robert composed, Clara performed, they had children, and they were deeply in love.



Clara later in her life,
after Robert's death



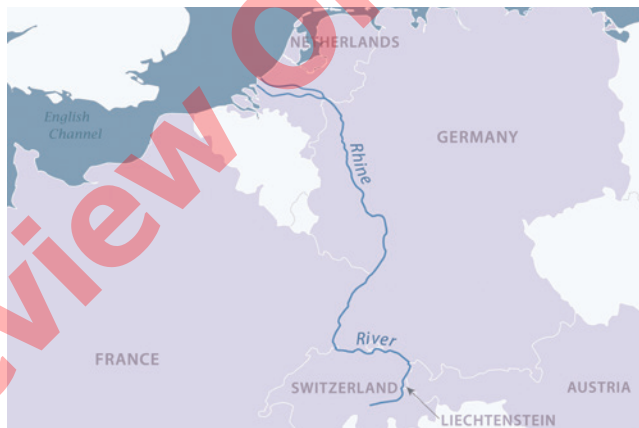
Six of Robert and
Clara's children (1853)



The Rhine River at the time of Schumann's illness



Schumann when he began to suffer from mental illness

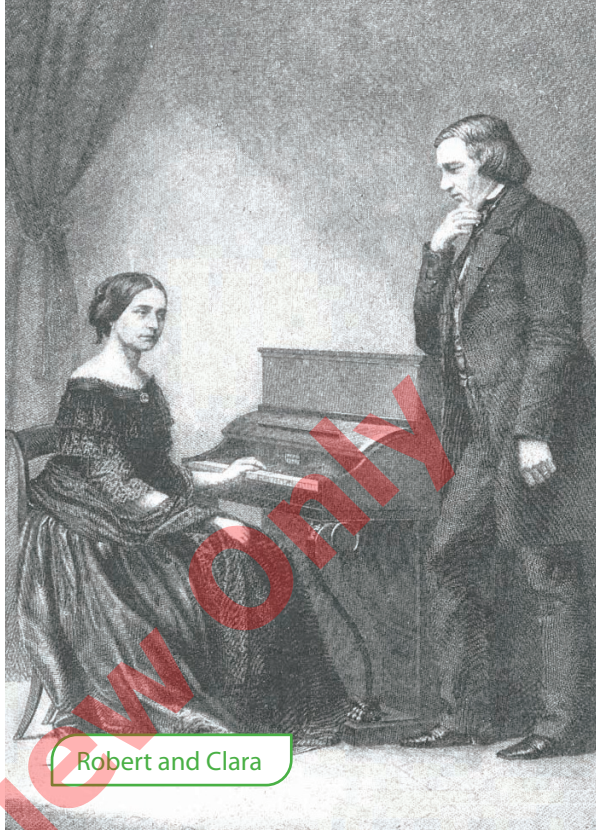


The Rhine River connects north and south Europe.

But in the mid-1840s, Schumann began to show early signs of mental illness. In the following years, his health got worse. He even told Clara he was afraid he might hurt her. In 1854, he threw himself into the Rhine River, but was pulled out. He entered a mental hospital. Clara was not allowed to visit him until two years later.



The grave of Robert and Clara in Germany



Robert and Clara

Two days after Clara went to visit her husband, he died in her arms at the age of just forty-six. Clara Schumann spent most of the rest of her life performing and printing the works of her husband. She is also credited with making Schumann's music popular and giving him the respect he has today.

It is because of Clara, and her love for her husband, that any of us know Robert Schumann's name.