Meet the Composer - Fanny Mendelssohn

Born: November 14, 1805
Died: May 14, 1847

Fanny Mendelssohn was a German pianist and composer and the older sister of the well-known composer, Felix Mendelssohn. The two siblings were very close.

She received a quality musical education, first taking piano lessons from her mother and later studying piano and composition with other teachers. Due to social conventions of the time regarding the roles of women, some of her compositions were published under her brother’s name. Fanny’s works were often played alongside those of her brother on the family’s Sunday concert series.

In 1829, Fanny married Wilhelm Hensel. Her husband was supportive and encouraging of her musical work. Before her death she composed more than 460 pieces of music, mostly songs and piano pieces. In 1846, a collection of her songs was published.

Since the 1980s her works have become better known through performances and recordings. In May 2018, the Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn Museum was opened in Hamburg, Germany.

The Piano

The piano was invented by Bartolomeo Cristofori in Italy around 1700. There were several innovations to the instrument during the 1800s. These include a cast iron frame and the use of aliquot strings (unstruck strings that reinforce the tone). These innovations gave the instrument a more powerful sound. During this time the family piano played a similar role to that of the radio in the 19th century. The family would frequently gather around the instrument for an enjoyable musical evening.
Timeline

1805 - Fanny Mendelssohn is born in Hamburg, Germany
1807 - Lord Nelson defeats the combined French and Spanish fleets in the Battle of Trafalgar
1809 - Mary Kies becomes the first woman in the U.S. to receive a patent
1812 - Napoleon’s army invades Russia in June and retreats in winter. US enters war with Britain over freedom of the seas.
1814 - George Stephenson builds first practical steam locomotive.
1823 - U.S. Monroe Doctrine warns Europe not to interfere in Western Hemisphere.
1824 - Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony
1826 - World’s first photograph taken
1831 - Nat Turner leads slave rebellion
1837 - Victoria becomes Queen of Great Britain
1844 - Samuel Morse patents the telegraph
1847 - Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel dies in Berlin

Listen to a song composed by Fanny Mendelssohn - [https://youtu.be/OzDW5l28uq0](https://youtu.be/OzDW5l28uq0)

How does this song make you feel? Does it matter that it is in German and you may not understand the lyrics? Does the music communicate anything to you without understanding the words?

In the early 1800s women generally would stay at home and take care of the home and children. In Germany, this was described as the four K’s - Kinder (children), Kirche (church), Küche (kitchen) and Kleider (clothes). Socially, women were considered weaker and unequal to their husbands. Even single women were scorned! In the 1800s women’s movements gradually began to challenge this traditional role.
Word Search
Find the piano terms
pedal
sound board
keyboard
Aliquot
Hammer
Cristofori
Upright

d e d p u l l f k y a s m h a i n

p e d u p r h i t g t r e y

e o r v y t z o l h t

d s u i q g f r g b w

a k e y b o a r d k z

l p c p t h a m m e r

f m x s n j o v d q m

i b i j a l i q u o t

t g r a n d w u x e p c

C s o u n d b o o a r d