

She Composes!

*A Celebration of
Female Composers*



**Atlanta
Symphony
Orchestra**

Stephen Mulligan
Assistant Conductor

The
Atlanta Symphony Orchestra
pays tribute to women who
made outstanding contributions
to orchestral music in the
19th and 20th centuries.



Despite the dominant presence of male composers in the field, these women forged ground-breaking recognition in their day and created enduring works of significance. Their contribution continues to stir audiences and to inspire the female composers of today.

The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra welcomes you to this celebration of female composers in its Concert for Young People — “She Composes!”



Women of the Orchestra

Great women composers have always been among us, even if their work is often less represented in orchestral concerts. In past centuries, orchestral music was seen as a man's game. Women who pursued musical careers were more likely to find success as singers or instrumental soloists. Women were not encouraged to pursue careers as composers.

Nevertheless, women composed! Some were content to write music for private concerts in their homes and only received public appreciation when their work received wider distribution after their deaths. Others received substantial recognition during their lifetimes with awards and honors — and had their work premiered by major orchestras. In recent years, these works have been “re-discovered” as the public has been awakened to the contribution of early women composers.



“I once believed that I possessed creative talent, but I have given up this idea; a woman must not desire to compose — there has never yet been one able to do it. Should I expect to be the one?”

Composer Clara Schumann

Clara Schumann: All for the Family

German composer **Clara Schumann (1819-1896)** is remembered as the wife of celebrated German composer Robert Schumann. In her day, however, she was known as “Europe’s Queen of the Piano” among pianists of 19th Century and set a new standard among pianists by performing her repertoire from memory.

As a girl, Clara was raised as a musical prodigy. She was performing concert tours at age 11, and had composed her first concerto at age 14.

Clara’s father was a recognized piano teacher — and rented a room in their home to his student, Robert Schumann, an aspiring composer. Clara’s childhood infatuation with him grew into romance as she came of age. Robert Schumann became one of the great composers of the Romantic Era — and his muse was his wife Clara, mother of their six children and a concert pianist with her own touring schedule.

When Robert Schumann fell ill, Clara took on the demands of supporting the entire family through her touring career — which forced her to set aside her interest as a composer. At the end of her life, however, Clara’s compositions were rediscovered and met with high praise.

Scholars speculate the work offers only a glimpse of what Clara might have achieved had she been allowed to grow and flourish as a composer.



Clara Schumann; Piano Concerto

Clara Schumann’s Piano Concerto was written when she was 14 years old — and might have been supported in its orchestration by Robert Schumann. Even so, the work provides a snapshot of the skills, talent, and surprising ingenuity that Clara possessed at such a young age.



Guest Artist: Choo Choo Hu

Clara Schumann’s Piano Concerto will be performed by pianist Choo Choo Hu. Born in China and raised in St. Louis, Missouri. Choo Choo began piano lessons at age

five and made her concert debut at 12 with the Washington University



Symphony Orchestra. At 16, she was winning top prizes at competitions across the country, as well as scholarships and fellowships to study at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore.

Today, Choo Choo resides in Atlanta and performs around the world.

“I have been a fan of Clara Schumann since I first learned about her as a young piano student,” says Choo Choo. “In an age that afforded women so few opportunities to be heard, the fact that Clara was not only a formidable pianist but also exercised extraordinary editorial control over her husband’s music is a testament to her immense talent and strength of will. In the past I have had the pleasure of performing several of her chamber music and vocal works, and her compositional gifts definitely deserve to be discovered by a wider audience. That’s why I’m so thrilled to be a part of this concert, and I hope everyone will admire and appreciate this piano concerto and the woman who wrote it as much as I do.”

Fanny: The Missing Mendelssohn



German composer **Fanny Mendelssohn (1805-1847)** was born into a famous musical family that provided a superior musical education to its children. Fanny's younger brother, Felix Mendelssohn, grew to be a world-class composer. When Fanny was 15, however, her father cautioned that society set young women on a path to marriage - and not musical careers. "Music will perhaps become your brother's profession," he wrote, "while for you it can and must be only an ornament."



Felix Mendelssohn

Amy Beach: "One of the Boys"

American composer **Amy Beach (1867-1944)** was born Amy Marcy Cheney in a small town in New Hampshire. She proved to be a child prodigy and made her professional piano debut at 16 and debuted with the Boston Symphony Orchestra when she was only 18. All the while, Beach was equally gifted in composition.

At that time, American composers typically traveled to Europe to receive private instruction and to experience live performances by the world's finest orchestras. Women composers were not encouraged to do so but Beach was not discouraged. Instead, she chose to immerse herself in the Boston Symphony Library, studying scores and comparing them to live performances. Her passion was so intense that she copied entire symphonic scores by hand and memorized them by heart.

In 1896, when Beach was 29, her Symphony in E-minor (the "Gaelic" symphony) premiered with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. At the time, critics dubbed Beach "one of the boys," as though only men could write a symphony.

Amy Beach, Symphony in E minor (1896)

Beach's symphony taps into traditional Irish-Gaelic melodies. She intended the work to address the sufferings and struggles of the Irish people, "their laments...their romance, and their dreams." The work received wide acclaim and established Beach as an empowering role model for women's rights.



To please her father, Fanny put aside her musical ambitions and settled into an arranged marriage. Fortunately, however, Fanny's new husband encouraged her to fulfill her longing to be a composer. During their marriage, she composed more than 460 works that were only heard at private salons with her family and guests.

In 1846, Fanny was emboldened to publish a sampling of her own work. In a letter to her family, Fanny wrote, "I'm beginning to publish...and if I've done it of my own free will and cannot blame anyone in my family if aggravation results from it... I hope I shall not disgrace you all, for I am not a free woman."

Unfortunately, Fanny died suddenly of a stroke the next year. One can only wonder what Fanny might have accomplished if she had not been held back by family, marriage, and society's expectations.



Hensel Overture in C Major

Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel's C-major Overture is her only known orchestral work. Despite the majestic size and extravagant invention, the work retains the delicate tone of Fanny's other compositions. The work is particularly remarkable in that it is effectively orchestrated — despite the fact that Fanny never got to hear an orchestra play it.



Florence Price: Made in America



Florence Beatrice Price (1887-1953) was born Florence Smith in Little Rock, Arkansas. Another child prodigy, Florence gave her first piano performance at the age of 4 and published her first musical composition at 11. She studied at the New England Conservatory of Music where her mother encouraged her to pass as Mexican American in order to navigate challenges faced by African-American students. Even so, Florence befriended other black composers.

In the 1930's, Florence found herself in Chicago, recently divorced, and the single mother of two children. To support her daughters, Florence composed tunes for radio ads and played the organ at silent film screenings. Then, in 1932, Price's "Symphony in E Minor" won the coveted Wanamaker Prize and was premiered by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Price became the first African American woman to be recognized as a symphonic composer and to have her work performed by a major orchestra.



Ultimately, Price created more than 300 compositions, and was inducted into the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers in 1940. In addition to

orchestral work, Price wrote pieces that were performed by Marian Anderson and Leontyne Price. After her death in 1953, some works have been lost, others remain unpublished – but thankfully, some of her piano and vocal music is still heard in concert halls.

Inducted into **ascap** in 1940

G. Schirmer Acquires Florence Price Catalog

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Thursday, November 15, 2018

G. Schirmer, Inc., part of The Music Sales Group, announces it has acquired the worldwide publishing rights to classical composer Florence Price's catalog.

Read the *New York Times* exclusive:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/15/arts/music/florence-price-music-publisher-schirmer.html>

Price's Symphony No. 1 in E minor (Juba Dance)

Price drew inspiration for her Symphony No. 1 in E minor from the African-American tradition of the "juba dance" that involves stomping the feet and patting the arms, legs, and chest. Although initial critical response was positive, the symphony fell into relative obscurity until it was recently rediscovered in 2012.



Price's *Violin Concerto No. 2*, its score rediscovered in 2009, had its full premiere on February 17, 2018 in Arkansas.

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Lili Boulanger: A Maiden of France

French composer **Lili Boulanger (1893-1918)** was the daughter of a Paris Conservatory voice instructor and a Russian princess. Although a child prodigy with perfect pitch, she also struggled with health concerns that made her frail, shy, and withdrawn.

Lili's father died while she was still a child. At age 17, it became apparent that Lili was unlikely to marry due to her health concerns – and yet she must support herself. Lili set on an ambitious path – to study composition and win the prestigious Grand Prix de Rome. The prize was hugely competitive but it came with the guarantee of a professional career.

Two years later, Lili became the youngest and the first woman to win the Prix de Rome for her composition, "Faust et Hélène." The award provided security, stability, and a public spotlight. Over the next five years, Lili surged with creativity between episodes of declining health. Then, tragically, she died when she was only 24.

Her fame was so great at the time that an asteroid was named "1181 Lilith" in her honor.



Boulanger's "D'Un Matin de Printemps"

Boulanger's "D'un Matin de Printemps" (Of a spring morning) was composed on her return to Paris from Rome. The work is notable for its light, dancing energy and the way musical phrases are interwoven with contrasting moods and colors.

Nadia Boulanger: The Sister Who Lived On

Lili's older sister – **Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979)** – was a formidable teacher of composition who had a profound impact on a generation of composers, ranging from classical composers Aaron Copland and Leonard Bernstein to record producer Quincy Jones, Argentine tango composer Astor Piazzolla, jazz trumpeter Donald Byrd, and experimental composer Philip Glass.

A stern, aristocratic Frenchwoman, Nadia was described by students as "the most influential teacher since Socrates." She was also the first woman to conduct London's Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, and the Philadelphia Orchestra, among others.



Women in the Here and Now ♀



American composer **Du Yun**, won the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for her opera “Angel’s Bone,” in which an American couple finds angels in their backyard.

Pulitzer Prize-winner **Jennifer Higdon** is one of America’s most acclaimed and most frequently performed living composers. Her orchestral work *Blue Cathedral* is one of the most performed contemporary orchestral compositions by a living American with more than 500 performances worldwide since its premiere in 2000.



American composer **Caroline Shaw** won the 2013 Pulitzer Prize in 2013 for her “Partita for 8 Voices,” a series of riffs on Baroque dance forms with unusual vocal effects.

American composer **Tania León**, born in Cuba, co-created “Little Rock Nine,” an opera based on the African-American students who forged high school integration in 1957. After a prestigious career, León was awarded the New York Governor’s Lifetime Achievement Award.



American composer **Nkeiru Okoye** [“in-KEAR-roo oh-KOY-yeh”] received a National Endowment for the Arts grant for her opera, “HARRIET TUBMAN: When I Crossed that Line to Freedom.”

Venezuelan composer **Gabriela Montero** composed her concerto “Ex Patria” (2011) to protest thousands of homicide victims in Venezuela that year.





Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

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