



Smithsonian Associates

Women Who Shaped the Musical World: Performers, Patrons, Composers, Muses ... and more

Dr. Rachel Franklin

Monday, January 12 - February 9, 2026 - 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. ET

Throughout the history of Western music, men have claimed most of the spotlight and accolades as performers, composers, teachers, impresarios, patrons, and instrument makers. Less attention has been paid to the scores of brilliant creative women who played these roles—along with many others—and who were relegated to the less brightly lit corners of the musical world.

In these four sessions we place them center stage as we examine their talent, grit, intellect, and drive, without which many of the most celebrated musical figures might have been significantly less successful, and our musical repertoire far less rich.

British-born Franklin has been a featured speaker for organizations including the Library of Congress and NPR, exploring intersections among classical and jazz music, film scores, and the fine arts.

JAN. 12th: Great Composers

Twelfth-century abbess Hildegard of Bingen produced some 70 musical compositions while founding two monasteries and writing countless scientific and theological works which she frequently illustrated herself. Fanny Mendelssohn's lovely works were published under her brother Felix's name to avoid social scandal. Clara Schumann combined maintaining an international performing and composing career with raising seven children and caring for her composer husband Robert, who battled with depression. Franklin explores the great talents of these women, as well as works by composers including Amy Beach, Barbara Strozzi, Florence Price, Margaret Bonds, and Louise Farrenc.

Works explored, media used:

Hildegard von Bingen, 1098-1179:

Kyrieleison (Kyrie Eleison)

- Sequentia, from “Celestial Hierarchy”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98S9spYHtJc>

O vos angeli (Responsory to the Angels) [V fol. 159]

- Sequentia, “Celestial Hierarchy”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q8piailwbCY>

Instrumental piece

- Sequentia, “Canticles of Ecstasy”

O Viridissima Virga, Ave

- Sequentia, “Canticles of Ecstasy”

Barbara Strozzi, 1619-1677:

Amor domiglione, 1651

- Molly Netter, soprano, Avi Stein, harpsichord, Ezra Seltzer, cello
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKldSD565QM>

Le tre Grazie a Venere, 1644

- Pinchgut Opera
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ww1GU9lDUss>

Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel, 1805-1847:

Piano sonata in G minor, 1843

- Heather Schmidt, piano

String Quartet in E Flat Major, H. 277, 1834

- Carmel Quartet
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=js13oXfkIgw>

Clara Wieck Schumann, 1819-1896

Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 7, 1835

- Alice Burla, Schweizer Jugend-Sinfonie-Orchester

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xol1DKul984&list=RDXol1DKul984&start_radio=1

Three Romances, Op. 22, 1853

- Janine Jansen, violin, piano - I. Antonio Pappano II & III. Denis Kozhukhin

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJ20v8U7G_0

Song of Love, movie with Katherine Hepburn and Paul Henreid, 1947

- Pianist, Artur Rubinstein

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_kV9jmooks

Louise Farrenc, 1804-1875

Symphonie no. 3, Op. 36, Adagio – Allegro, 1847

- Insula Orchestra, Laurence Equilbey

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_2EFQ5MRgJo

Clarinet Trio, Op. 44, Adagio, 1856

- Yasmina Spiegelberg, Juliette Herlin, Zachary Deak

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6cH0WYL2gE>

Florence Price, 1887-1953

Symphony no. 3 in C minor, 1938

- The Philadelphia Orchestra, Yannick Nézet-Séguin

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkpzYvggwP0&list=RDxkpzYvggwP0&start_radio=1

My Soul's Been Anchored the Lord, arr. 1937

- Marion Anderson, Franz Rupp

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ehZA-HyUPuk&list=RDehZA-HyUPuk&start_radio=1

Margaret Bonds, 1913-1972

Troubled Water, 1967

- Kyle P. Walker

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPeLOYc3pNA>

Montgomery Variations, 1964

- Minnesota Orchestra, Scott Yoo

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ereaXUDie-A>

Amy Beach, 1867-1944

Hermit Thrush at Eve, Op. 92, No. 1, 1921

- Christopher O'Riley

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNkiywugVmY>

Symphony in E-minor, Op.32 "Gaelic", 1896

- Copenhagen Philharmonic, Thomas Dausgaard

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mboLohFzUg4&list=RDmboLohFzUg4&start_radio=1

A number of you have reached out to me asking about my live concert performances. For my upcoming performance of Beethoven's 4th piano concerto with the Washington Sinfonietta, please click on this link:

<https://washingtonsinfonietta.org/>