

**Fanny Hensel's** piano cycle *Das Jahr* (The Year) is a musical diary of her travels in Italy throughout 1839-40. With 12 works to represent the 12 months, such a concept was entirely novel in 1841 (Tchaikovsky's *The Seasons* came later in 1876). The 1841 version of 'June' is a warm serenade imitating the gentle strums of a guitar – '*imitando la chitarra*' – before blossoming into glittering virtuosity. The facsimiles of the final version bear great visual appeal; her artist husband Wilhelm had supplied vignettes for each 'month'. Like most of her works, *Das Jahr* was published posthumously (1989). The Mendelssohn family had reservations about upper-class women working in a public sphere. The large-scale conception and traces of symphonic thinking in *Das Jahr* are also present within Hensel's sonatas, revealing a composer whose talent and ambitions transcended the space she was allowed to access.

Song and poetry were at the core of American composer **Amy Beach's** style. Each of her Four Sketches, Op. 15 (1892), is headed by a quotation from a French poet. With beautifully long lines, luscious harmonies, and great passion, '**Dreaming**' quotes Victor Hugo – *Tu me parles du fond d'un rêve* (you speak to me from the depths of a dream). As a teenager, Beach enjoyed a successful concert career in Boston. During her marriage, at her husband's request, she limited public performances to annual recitals for charity. Despite regarding herself as 'a pianist first and foremost', she turned her focus to composition and taught herself fugue and orchestration. She is best known for her "Gaelic" Symphony Op. 32 (1896) and her towering Piano Concerto in C-sharp minor Op. 45 (1899).

One of the most distinguished pianists of the Romantic era, **Clara Schumann's** career spanned six decades where she exerted her influence through her concertising pedagogy, and editorial work. Her **Sonata** (1841-42) represents a turning point. Throughout its genesis, she experienced emancipation from her controlling father, an acclaimed transition from child prodigy to mature artist, and the joys and imbalances in her marriage to Robert Schumann. Its style reflects the Schumanns' changing views on virtuosity and their joint studies of Bach's counterpoint, Mozart's and Beethoven's symphonies and chamber works, songs and literature. In the *Allegro*, Clara Schumann quoted her own theme from 'Er ist gekommen in Sturm und Regen' (He Came in Storm and Rain), a *lieder* she contributed to the Schumanns' collective *Liebesfrühling* (1840). The *Adagio* features a quotation of Robert Schumann's *Schlummerlied* (Lullaby), his gift for her upon the birth of their first child, Marie. The concluding *Rondo* shares a melodic contour with 'Sie liebten sich beide' (They Loved Each Other) from her *Sechs Lieder* Op. 13 No. 2 (1844). The Sonata was only published in 1991. Eclipsed for 150 years, the Sonata is now reborn into the 21st century, offering us a window into imagining her world.

Finnish composer **Kaija Saariaho** often seeks inspiration from literature, visual and natural phenomena. With her background in spectralism, timbre plays a central role in her expression of images and emotions. Her **Prelude** (2007) is based upon 'Longing' from her *Quatre-Instants* (2002), which drew upon text by Amin Maslouf. Maslouf's text presents the first snapshot of a torrid romance: "I am the boat adrift / My lover is beyond the rift / and the sea is so vast." Evocative and intense, the Prelude draws us into a mysterious atmosphere of time and space.

Based in Atlanta, Georgia, Singaporean composer **Emily Koh** (b.1986) reimagines everyday experiences by sonically expounding tiny oft-forgotten details. Her music is characterised by the intricacies of sound. She also explores binary states such as extremes x boundaries, distinguished x ignored, and activity x stagnation, through her unique Teochew and Peranakan Singaporean lens. **reitarior'** (2017/2019) is an inward reflection of the acts of repetition, reiteration, reprise and re-enactment. Each time a new story is produced, an old one is remembered and cherished.

**Florence Price** composed over 300 works: four symphonies, four concertos, as well as choral works, art songs, and music for chamber and solo instruments. In 2009, a substantial collection of her works and papers was found in an abandoned house on the outskirts of St. Anne, Illinois, which Price had used as a summer home. Her **Fantasia nègre No. 2** (1932) was only published in 2020. As the hybrid title suggests, Price had created a genre that integrated African-American spirituals and plantation songs with the virtuosic European piano fantasy. Born in Little Rock, Arkansas into a mixed-race family, her father was the only African-American dentist in the city, and her mother was a music teacher who guided her early musical training. She moved to Chicago to escape the increasingly racist South. She became part of the Chicago Black Renaissance, and her compositional career flourished in the industrial city.