[image of GdM]

I’m hoping to start making better use of this website, mostly through its blog section, as a way of fleshing out ideas I’m working on and giving a landing place to smaller pieces of writing. The project I’m currently finishing an initial draft of\* is an essay for an upcoming edited collection on the Schumanns, and my contribution covers Clara’s honors and professional affiliations. It’ll come out in the next couple years. I’ve been over-researching it a bit. It’s led me down some interesting alleys, and as the editors said, these sorts of recognitions have little scholarly coverage. Not none, I’ve discovered; it’s just scattered and supports other studies, and there’s no dedicated study that I’ve found. But that over-research has shown me some interesting things, about Clara and about activities she practiced.

During her landmark 1837-38 concert tour/stay in Vienna (you can read about it in every Clara biography), she received her first honorary membership from the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde (GdM)—now renowned, then struggling. As I was looking through an institutional biography of the GdM (a truly hoary genre that the Germans especially loved at the turn of the 20th century) written by Richard von Perger and Robert Hirschfeld (Vienna, 1912), I scanned [the list of honorary members](https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015020307032&view=1up&seq=316&skin=2021). Probably surprising no one, it’s…very male. But not just on the order of *mostly* male, more on the order of *almost entirely male*. I decided it might be interesting to take a closer look at that, and my essay can’t go into too much detail on it (I mostly made that top-level observation).

Of the 135 honorary members that Perger and Hirschfeld list, only 9 were women, a mere 6.7%. That’s pretty startling, though again not surprising. Zooming in a little more, it’s even a bit more startling. The GdM was founded in 1812, had its charter statutes revised in 1814. After the first two women were inducted, it wasn’t until 1871 that another woman was named honorary member when three were. The rest named in the list were all inducted between then and 1898. (Many more have since been named.)

But who were they? Well, Clara Schumann was the second, named in 1838. The first in 1914 was [Maria Paulowna of Russia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duchess_Maria_Pavlovna_of_Russia_(1786%E2%80%931859)), Grand Duchess of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach (Мария Павловна; sorry for the transliteration—this is the version in the Perger/Hirschfeld), who was an amateur musician and early benefactor. The later honorary members include: [make table]

Metternich and Amadei were both patrons—Metternich was the granddaughter of Klemens and a big supporter of Richard Wagner, purportedly the instigator of the notorious Paris *Tannhäuser*. The rest were established and/or widely-known singers of their day. Wilt and Dustmann were especially renowned; Clara Schumann even played with Dustmann [not long before](https://books.google.com/books?id=Lw1DAAAAcAAJ&q=clara+schumann#v=snippet&q=dustmann%20clara&f=false) the latter’s induction as GdM honorary member. [screencap of that ad/link]

Scanning the 126 male honorary members of the GdM up to 1912, it’s a laundry list of textbook-famous composers and performers. There’s more to say about these institutions and honors in terms of their finer functions and roles (I’m going to leave my theorizing on this for publishing projects), but my working argument with these sorts of honors and the institutions is that they are yet another cog in The Canon’s machine. For this particular one, it’s an institution that says that if you were a woman in 19th-century Europe, you could be a vocalist or a patron. Clara, whose [reputation carried legitimacy freighted with masculinity](https://scindeks-clanci.ceon.rs/data/pdf/0354-818X/2015/0354-818X1546023C.pdf), somewhat eschewed this restriction. That’s not to suggest she was not affected by patriarchal structures and practices—she obviously was—but her reputation and legacy are complicated, and I think this particular situation shows some of that.

At this point, we don’t necessarily *need* more data points to confirm what we already know about what kinds of careers women could carry in 19th-century German-speaking lands, but I’m a big believer that having more detailed data always helps make air-tight what we know.

\*I know it’s not the big thesis or most significant work of the book, but one of the things I carry with me from Susan McClary’s *Feminine Endings* is her (overlooked?) suggestion for the efficacy of less stilted language in academic writing. I move between more elevated and less elevated language, and I’m not going to worry that much about it here, using this space to write more freely.

[ANOTHER POST: A GRAPH OF THE GDM HONORARY MEMBER DATES]