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Hello, and welcome to Busy Kids Love Music, a podcast that helps you discover the stories behind classical music, one composer at a time. I'm Carly Seifert, creator of Busy Kids Do Piano, and I'm so glad you're joining me today.

March is Women's History Month, and in recent episodes we've been learning about remarkable women like Margaret Bonds. But today, instead of focusing on just one composer, we're asking a bigger question: Why were so many women composers forgotten?

Because here's something surprising: Women have been composing music for hundreds of years. So why don't we hear their names as often as Bach, Beethoven, or Mozart?

Let's explore that question — and keep our ears focused on the music itself.

It's easy to assume that women didn't compose much in the past. But that's not true!

Women were writing piano pieces, chamber music and even symphonies. For example, Fanny Mendelssohn, the composer whose music you are hearing now, wrote over 400 works. Many were lyrical piano pieces and art songs full of expressive melodies and rich harmonies.

Let's listen to a little bit more of her Piano Trio in D Minor...

Her music sounds very much like the Romantic composers you already know, don't you think? And yet — many of her pieces were published under her brother Felix Mendelssohn's name. The music existed and yet her name did not.

Another reason many women composers were forgotten has to do with musical opportunity. In the 1700s and 1800s, composing a symphony required: Orchestra connections, wealthy patrons and access to professional musicians and public performance venues.

Most women were discouraged — or even forbidden — from conducting or performing in orchestras or holding court positions, the way composers such as Vivaldi or Haydn did. So what did women compose instead? Often things such as piano miniatures, character pieces or songs (called Lieder in German tradition). Those genres were considered “appropriate” for women.

For example, Clara Schumann wrote deeply expressive piano works and art songs. Her Piano Concerto in A Minor that you hear now — written when she was a teenager — shows dramatic orchestral writing and bold structure.

Listen carefully for a moment: Does her melody feel timid? Do her harmonies seem simple? How would you describe this music?

One word that I thought of when I listened to this piece is STRONG.

Yet Clara became more famous as a performer than as a composer. History remembered her as “Robert Schumann’s wife” — even though she was a major musical force herself. Women were certainly capable of writing large orchestral works, but they weren’t given positions and means that allowed them to do so.

Here’s something else we don’t always think about: Music survives when it is published, performed and taught. If a piece isn’t printed, it’s hard to share. If it isn’t performed, audiences don’t know it. If teachers don’t assign it, students don’t study it.

For many women composers, manuscripts sat in drawers.

For example, music by **Florence Price, the composer whose music you’re hearing now**, was rediscovered in 2009 in a house that had once belonged to her. Boxes of unpublished orchestral music were found — decades after she had died.

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I've linked to all the pieces in today's episode in the show notes at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/172, and I've also linked many previous episodes of Busy Kids Love Music that focus on female composers. This week, I want to challenge you to pick a composer on the list who might be new to you – perhaps someone whose name you don't recognize or maybe someone whom you know very little about – and listen to either that podcast episode to learn more about her, or a piece of music by that composer. I've created a free printable for you to use to go deeper as you listen to her music that you can find in the show notes at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/172 if you'd like.

Women have always composed. Some were overlooked. Some were unpublished. Some were remembered more for their relationships than their music.

But the compositions themselves – the melodies, harmonies, rhythms, and structures – tell a powerful story. And as we continue exploring music history, we're not just discovering forgotten names, we're expanding our understanding of what music really is.

Thanks for listening to Busy Kids Love Music, and I'll see you next time as we continue discovering the stories – and the sounds – behind classical music.

Bye for now!