

8th June

Memory verse

I am the resurrection and the life;

he that believeth in me,

though he were dead,

yet shall he live. John 11:25

A sad story

The composer Robert Schumann (1810-1856) was born on 8th June into a well-off family; in fact, he eventually inherited quite a bit of money. However, his life was difficult and quite short. His only sister and his father both died when he was young. His early life was spent surrounded by books as his father was a bookseller, author and a well known publisher.

Schumann was sent off to study law but managed to persuade his mother to let him study music instead with Friedrich Wieck, a piano teacher. Friedrich Wieck's young daughter was a brilliant pianist, giving concerts from the age of eleven. Damage to his hands, perhaps by the use of a piece of equipment designed to strengthen the fingers, prevented Schumann from becoming a concert pianist himself.

Schumann was very good at writing about music and together with Wieck and another pianist he established a music magazine that was very influential. By this time Schumann had already composed a number of songs and the first movement of a symphony.

Schumann was fond of giving himself and his friends nicknames. His own nicknames were "Florestan" (when he was feeling heroic) and "Eusebius" (when his mood was gentler and more inward-looking). Wieck he called "Meister Raro" and Wieck's daughter Clara "Zilia" (short for Cecilia, the patron saint of music). In the magazine he wrote of these nickname characters (and others) as the "Brotherhood of David." Undistinguished and trivial music he characterised as "Philistine" and wrote of the "Brotherhood of David" doing battle with Philistine ideas in music.

While Schumann was writing music and writing about music, Clara was growing up. She and Schumann fell in love and wanted to be married but, to their horror, her father Friedrich Wieck would not hear of it. Clara had just begun to be able to earn good money playing the piano after all her father's careful tuition and he did not want her to give up her career and marry Schumann. A long legal battle followed as Schumann and Clara tried to get permission to marry. In the end the courts granted permission just one day before Clara reached the age at which she could marry without her father's consent.

Schumann and Clara had a wonderfully happy marriage and were devoted to each other. Perhaps the years of trouble they had been through helped them to appreciate each other. Schumann's happiness found expression in a great outpouring of music – he wrote a stream of beautiful songs.

Some of these songs were groups with a particular theme or thread to them. These are called *Song Cycles*. One of the best known is a set of eight songs called *Frauenliebe und Leben* which means *A Woman's Life and Love*. In this set of songs a young woman tells of her happiness at her betrothal, and wedding. She tries to explain how wonderful her husband is and where she cannot express herself adequately in words, Schumann's music provides the expression. The cycle includes a song in which the young woman rejoices at the birth of their son and the cycle ends with desperate sadness as she mourns the death of her husband. The whole cycle was a picture of Clara: she and Schumann had a happy family of eight children. There were sad days ahead for both of them however, and the tragic final song was prophetic.

Schumann's life with Clara did not carry on for long in the happy way that it began. After about ten years, poor Schumann became ill. At first he had nightmares and became terrified that he was going mad. His mental symptoms became worse and worse until he had to be taken to an asylum to be cared for. His father had suffered a similar illness and it may have been uneasiness about Schumann's mental health that made Clara's father so determined that they should not marry. His condition gradually worsened although he did have periods when he was able to talk to people and even have visitors. He died in this sad state in 1856 aged just 46 years.

Something to listen to

Find a recording of the *Dauidsbundlertanze* (dance of the Brotherhood of David) opus 6 no. 11.¹ You can hear the brothers energetically and firmly marching out to do battle with the Philistines.

Find a recording of *An Meinem Herzen, an Meiner Brust* from the *A Woman's Life and Love cycle*.² It is the song in which the woman sings of the joy of her new baby.

Something to sing

A short easy song by Schumann ("The Evening Star") for you to learn to sing yourself is in the Optional Resources files for today.³ Do try it yourselves – the tune is simple and the words are lovely.

Map work

In AD793 on 8th June Vikings in long ships from modern-day Norway plundered St Cuthbert's monastery on Lindisfarne Island, off the north east coast of England. It was not their first raid but the location was very significant. Lindisfarne was an important (and wealthy) monastery. From now on the Viking menace was not going to go away. Find the island on a map. How is it reached from the main land. Look at Norway on the map. Which sea did the Vikings cross?



Something to make

If you want to make a longship try <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RzxuuzF2aY>. If you look carefully you will find a model ship in the picture on the next page!

Something to look at

John Everett Millais (1829-1896) was born on 8th June. We looked at his painting *The Blind Girl* on 1st June. Perhaps his most famous painting is *The Boyhood of Raleigh*. On the 18th May we learned about the Armada and how Drake and his sailors were able to protect England from invasion. Sir Walter Raleigh, also one of Queen Elizabeth's "sea dogs", was probably with Drake at this time. He was one of the most colourful and heroic figures of the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras and very popular. The old sailor in the picture is regaling the boys (actually Millais's own sons dressed up!) with tales of the Spanish Main. What exotic item does he have behind him to remind us that he has really been to such places?⁴ We are not told which of the two boys who are so absorbed in the tale is Raleigh himself. Which do you think it is? Millais took great care with this picture and he actually

1 You can hear it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3M1ZseuZzA>.

2 It can be heard here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOMmFtDeIDc>

3 You can hear it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kI2ZGGjpkHQ> sung by a Russian children's choir (rather slowly!)

4 A toucan – presumably stuffed!

went to a spot on the coast near where Raleigh grew up to paint it. Details of plants, birds and marine creatures are all correct. Can you make out the ship on the horizon?



Something to read for older children

The adventure writer John Buchan wrote an excellent biography of Walter Raleigh which you can read. You could request a copy from your local library.⁵

Something to eat!

On 8th June 1786 Mr Hall of New York first advertised ice-cream for sale commercially. A good excuse to have some today or (unlike Mr Hall's customers) you could even make you own – see the lesson for April 7th!

5 This book is no longer in copyright so you may be able to find it on line to read.