

three CHEERS

ENTERTAINMENT

THURSDAY: PERFORMING ARTS

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Pianist raises prospect of triple threat



**BOB
CLARK**

PERFORMING ARTS NOTEBOOK

It isn't often you can spend an evening in the same space with Clara Schumann, Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel — and Heather Schmidt. The triple-threat prospect in question is the University of Calgary Celebrity Series recital this weekend by Schmidt, a formidably talented composer/pianist who was born and raised in Calgary but now enjoys an illustrious, multi-faceted international career based out of Toronto.

Schmidt's program includes four of her own recent virtuoso works, including Twelve for Ten (2007) — a prelude and fugue based on the musically usable letters (GEGD) of Glenn Gould's name — and Nebula, commissioned for the 2006 Honens International Piano Competition. But it also features works by Robert Schumann's wife, Clara and Felix Mendelssohn's sister, Fanny — both consistently undervalued as pianist-composers.

According to Schmidt, Schumann fared slightly better in her composing career because much of her music, which she performed herself, was already published and therefore available in her own lifetime.

In the case of Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel, however, "a lot of the repertoire I'm playing was not published until the mid-1990s," Schmidt says.

As any classical music lover knows, it can often be the case that if works from the Romantic era aren't well known there's usually a reason.

But not in the case of Fanny M, says Schmidt, pointing out that

family restrictions likely prevented Felix Mendelssohn's gifted sister — who allegedly knew Bach's entire Well Tempered Klavier by heart at 13 — from performing outside the home.

"There's just some fantastic music," Schmidt says.

Indeed, Schmidt's enthusiasm for the composer's pieces has led her to record a soon-to-be-released CD (on the Naxos label) devoted to the musical output of Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel.

"I think Fanny, possibly even more than Clara, had a really unique voice as a composer," Schmidt says.

"The colours and sound and the intensity of the emotions in a lot of her music is spectacular. There's some truly amazing work."

The two concerts, which also offer pieces by Mendelssohn the brother and Schumann the husband for some comparative listening, takes place Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. at the Rozsa Centre. Tickets: \$25, \$18, available by calling 403-220-7202, or at the door.

Heather Schmidt's program includes the works

by Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel and Clara Schumann.