

FELIX DRAESEKE

David C F Wright DMus

Felix August Bernhard Draeseke was born in Coburg, Germany on 7 October 1835. He was named Felix in honour of Mendelssohn.

Felix's parents were Theodor and Marie, nee Hanstein. Marie died eight days after Felix's birth from a stroke. Felix was baptised on 25 November.

In 1841 or 1842, he met his grandfather, the theologian Bernhard Draeseke.

The boy entered the prestigious Casimirium for his secondary education where his love for music flourished around 1849. He discovered the works of Ferdinand Hiller and Aloys Schmitt.

For his father's birthday, Felix composed the Overture Niklas Zriny for piano, four hands.



Passing the entrance examinations, he went up to Leipzig Conservatory of Music studying theory and harmony with Benjamin Papperitz and Friedrich Richter, piano with Louis Plady and Moscheles, composition with Julius Rietz and music history with Franz Brendel.

Draeseke made his first visit to Weimar to hear Wagner's Lohengrin. It impressed him.

In Berlin in 1853, he consulted a specialist about an ear infection which eventually led to almost complete deafness later in life. The following year he made his first attempt at a Symphony, the Jugensinfonie, under the direction of Rietz. He also composed a Lustpiel Overture.

He was also a writer and an essay about Wagner the poet and the composer appeared in 1856 the year in which his symphony was premiered on 11 November.

He had the good fortune to meet Liszt on 25 February 1857 and he joined the New German School of Music. Felix was living in Berlin at the time and involved in von Bulow's concerts. In 1858, he began to analyse Liszt's Symphonic Poems.

His own first success was his Piano Sonata quasi a fantasia Op 6 for piano set in C sharp minor in 1862. The first movement is an Introduction and funeral march vastly superior to that by Chopin, a rather trivial Valse-Scherzo and a finale. It is a very fine piece.

He went to live in Yverdon and, apparently, began work on his three part oratorio Christus.

His love for Wagner was enhanced by attending the premiere of Tristan and Isolde in 1865. By 1870, he was appointed as a teacher at the Lausanne School. Here he became engaged to Louise de Teq but this was cancelled due to anti-German feeling due to the Franco-Prussian War. The following year he began work on his Symphony no 2 in F, the first Symphony in G was still on the drawing board but was completed in 1872 and premiered by Rietz that year.

Draeseke's next essay was about the composer Peter Cornelius who had recently died and the following year, 1875, he wrote an essay on modulation.

By 1879, he had completed his opera *Herrat* but had no success in getting it performed. Nonetheless, he began work on his next opera *Gudrun* and wrote an essay on the elimination of the tritone. The following year saw the completion of his *String Quartet in C minor Op 27* and the completion of his *Requiem in B minor Op 22*. From 1882 he was employed at the *Rollfuss Academy for Women* where he met *Frida Nahaus* as a pupil and whom he was later to marry.

The following year, 1883, he was distraught at the death of *Wagner* but in 1884, his opera *Gudrun* was premiered in *Hanover* and was a success. The year 1886 saw the premiere of his fine *Piano Concerto* premiered by its dedicatee *Laura Rappoldu*. He also completed his *String Quartet no 2 in E minor* and met *Liszt* for the last time.

Probably his *Symphony no 3, Sinfonia tragedia*, is his finest orchestral work. It was premiered in *January 1888*. It is a very good symphony, original and unique and the discerning public has said that it is one of the most striking symphonies of the 19th century and, among its many qualities, is the superb orchestration as was the *Clarinet Sonata*. In 1890, *Draeseke* wrote his *Cello Sonata in D Op 51*. The young *Richard Strauss* gave a disastrous premiere of *Draeseke's Symphonic Poem Penthesila*.

Draeseke was now a workaholic. In 1893, he completed his opera *Bertran de Born*. The following year saw the death of *von Bulow* and, on a happier note, *Felix's* marriage to *Frida* and the completion of his *String Quartet no 3 Op 66*. Work resumed on his three oratorios *Christus*. By 1895, his comic opera, *Fischer und Kalif* is finished. In 1897, he became interested in the *violotta*, a sort of tenor viola which he used in his *Quintet in A*. He also wrote a sonata for this instrument and piano.

His last years were hampered by deafness but, in 1912, *Christus* was premiered and he completed his *Symphony no 4* known as *Sinfonia Comica*.

On 26 February 1913 he had a stroke and died. His widow *Frida* died on 14 November 1942.

(816)

Compositions

- Op 1 Helges Treue (1859)
- Op 2 Lieder, (ca. 1860-61):
 - Book I Märzblumen (6 songs)
 - Book II Cypressen (6 songs)
 - Book III Heliotropen (3 songs - see also op 76)
- Op 3 Fantasiestücke in Walzerform: Nr. 1 in B; Nr. 2 in A-flat (1862)
- Op 4 Zwei Konzertwalzer: Nr. 1 in E-flat; Nr. 2 in D-flat (1867)
- Op 5 Zwei Konzertwalzer: Valse-Nocture in E; Valse-Scherzo in c# (1862-7)
- Op 6 Sonata quasi fantasia for Piano in c# (1862-7)
- Op 7 Ballade for Cello and Piano in b (1867)
- Op 8 Fantasie on Themes from Boieldieu's "Weisse Dame" (1866)
- Op 9 Petite Histoire (ca. 1869)
- Op 10 Lacrimosa (1865)
- Op 11 Barcarole for Cello and Piano in a (1872)
- Op 12 Symphony nr. 1 in G (1868-72)
- Op 13 Fata Morgana (1877)

- Op 14 Dämmerungsräume: Five piano pieces (1876-7)
- Op 15 Six Fugues for piano (1876)
- Op 16 Weihestunden. Six songs for baritone (or mezzo-soprano) and piano (1880)
- Op 17 Buch des Frohmuts. Six songs for baritone (or mezzo-soprano) and piano (1880)
- Op 18 Bergidylle, Ballade for baritone (or mezzo-soprano) and piano (1880)
- Op 19 Ritter Olaf. Ballade for baritone (or mezzo-soprano) and piano (1881)
- Op 20 Landschaftsbilder, Six songs for baritone (or mezzo-soprano) and piano (1881)
- Op 21 Was die Schwalbe sang, Five lyric pieces (1883)
- Op 22 Requiem in b (1883)
- Op 23 Miniaturen, Six piano pieces (1883)
- Op 24 Trauer und Trost, Six songs for baritone (or mezzo-soprano) and piano (1880)
- Op 25 Symphony nr. 2 in F (1876)
- Op 26 Vermischte Lieder. Six songs for baritone (or mezzo-soprano) and piano (1881)
- Op 27 String quartet nr. 1 in c (1880)
- Op 28 Three Songs for Male Chorus (1880-5)
- Op 29 Liebeswonne und -weh. Six songs for baritone (or mezzo-soprano) and piano (1880)
- Op 30 Adventlied for Chorus, Soloists, and Orchestra (1871-5)
- Op 31 Adagio for Horn and Piano (1885)
- Op 32 Romanze for Horn and Piano (1885)
- Op 33 Gedenkblätter, Two songs for baritone (or mezzo-soprano) and piano (1880)
- Op 34 Two Ballades for baritone (or mezzo-soprano) and piano (1880)
- Op 35 String quartet nr. 2 in e (1886)
- Op 36 Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in E-flat (1885-6)
- Op 37 Kanons (18) piano four hands (1882-8)
- Op 38 Clarinet Sonata in B-flat
- Op 38 Violin Sonata in B-flat (alternate version of clarinet sonata)
- Op 39 Osterszene nach Goethes Faust (Easter Scene after Goethe's Faust) for baritone, chorus, and orchestra (1887)
- Op 40 Symphony nr. 3 in C "Symphonia Tragica" (1885-6)
- Op 41 Die Heinzelmännchen, for a-capella choir (1887)
- Op 42 Kanonische Rätsel, for piano four hands (1888)
- Op 43 Rückblicke. Five lyric piano pieces (1888)
- Op 44 Scheidende Sonne, Nine piano pieces (1888)
- Op 45 Das Leben ein Traum (after Calderon) (1888)
- Op 46 Dem Deutschen Volke ist Gegeben, for male chorus (1888)
- Op 47 Four Songs for Women's Chorus (1889)
- Op 48 Quintet in B-flat for piano, violin, viola, cello, and horn (1888)
- Op 49 Serenade in D (1888)

- Op 50 Penthesilea (after Kleist) (1888)
- Op 51 Cello Sonata, op. 51 (1890)
- Op 52 Columbus, Cantata for soprano, baritone, male chorus, and orchestra (1890)
- Op 53 Das Schloss am Meer (1897)
- Op 54 Jubiläumsfestmarsch (1886)
- Op 55 Salvum fac regem, for Mixed Chorus (1889)
- Op 56 Psalm 93 (1889)
- Op 57 Four Sacred Songs for Mixed Chorus (1891)
- Op 58 Der Tod kennt den Weg. Ballade for bass and piano (1897)
- Op 59 Psalm 23, for women's or children's chorus (1889)
- Op 60 Grand Mass in f# (1890)
- Op 61 Five Songs (1896)
- Op 62 Four Songs (1896)
- Op 63 Akademische Festouverture (1890) [also identified as op 83]
- Op 64 Der Deutsche Sang (The German Song), for male chorus (1897)
- Op 65 Jubel-ouverture (1898)
- Op 66 String quartet nr. 3 in c# (1895)
- Op 67 Five Songs, for baritone (or mezzo-soprano) and piano (1899)
- Op 68 Three Songs, for baritone (or mezzo-soprano) and piano (1899)
- Op 69 Scene for Violin and Piano (1899)
- Op 70 Christus - Vorspiel: Die Geburt des Herrn, (Prelude: The Birth of the Lord)
- Op 71 Christus - First Oratorio: Christi Weihe (Christ's Consecration)
- Op 72 Christus - Second Oratorio: Christus der Prophet (Christ the Prophet)
- Op 73 Christus - Third Oratorio: Tod und Sieg des Herrn (Death and Victory of the Lord)
- Op 74 Der Mönch von Bonifazio, melodrama after C. F. Meyer
- Op 75 Drei Geistliche Gesänge, for voice and piano (1901)
- Op 76 Heliotropen: Three songs, for voice and piano (1906) [see also op 2: Book 3]
- Op 77 Quintet in F for violins (2), viola, and celli (2) (1901)
- Op 78 Frühlingsgruss, for voice and piano (1906)
- Op 79 Trauermarsch, for large orchestra (1906)
- Op 80 Die Traurige Krönung, ballade for voice and piano after Moerike (1906)
- Op 81 Four Songs, for voice and piano after Moerike (1906)
- Op 82 [Not identified]
- Op 83 Akademische Festouverture (1890) [also identified as Op 63]
- Op 84 [Not identified]
- Op 85 Grand Mass in a (1908-9)
- Op 86 Suite for Two Violins (1911)

- Op 87 Kleine Suite for English Horn (or Oboe) and Piano (1911)
Works without opus number [Go to op 46-87] [Go to op 1-45]
Symphony in C “Jugendsinfonie” (performed in 1856; subsequently destroyed)
- WoO 1 Overture to “Niklas Zriny”, piano four hands, WoO 1 (1849)
- WoO 2 König Sigurd - Opera in 3 Acts after Emanuel Geibel’s Sigurd (1853-7)
- WoO 3a Germania an ihre Kinder, after Kleist, for soprano, male chorus, and orchestra (1859)
- WoO 3b Germania-Kantate, after Strachwitz, for male chorus and orchestra (1859)
- WoO 3c Germania-Marsch for Orchestra (1861)
- WoO 4 Die Hermannsschlacht, Music for Kleist’s Play, (1860)
- WoO 5 Frage und Antwort (Question and Answer) after Moerike for baritone (or mezzo-soprano) and piano (1861)
- WoO 6 Julius Caesar, Symphonic Poem (1860, revised 1865)
- WoO 7 Frithjof, Symphonic Poem (1865)
- WoO 8 Overture for the Namesday of Princess Constantin of Constantin Hohenzollern-Hechingen (1862)
- WoO 9 Der Schwur im Rutli (The Oath in Rutli), Cantata for soprano, and male chorus, (1862-3 version for wind orchestra; 1868 version for full orchestra)
- WoO 10 Polonaise in D (1864)
- WoO 11 Symphonic Andante for Cello and Orchestra in e (1876)
- WoO 12 Dietrich von Bern - Opera in 3 Acts (1877; revised by Otto zur Nedden, 1925)
- WoO 13 Herrat - Opera in 3 Acts (1877-9, revised 1885)
- WoO 14 Gudrun - Opera in 3 Acts (1879-84)
- WoO 15 Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in e (1881)
- WoO 16 An den Mond, for baritone (or mezzo-soprano) and piano (1881)
- WoO 17 Der Waldschatzhauser (1882)
- WoO 18 Meleagerchor for 6 soloists and mixed chorus, (1888)
- WoO 19 Neun Albumblätter, for piano (1888)
- WoO 20 Gesang zur Fahnenweihe, for a-capella chorus (1890)
- WoO 21 Sonata for Viola alta and Piano No. 1 in c minor (1892)
- WoO 22 Bertran de Born - Opera in 3 Acts (1892-4)
- WoO 23 Sachsen-Hymne, for male chorus and orchestra (1893)
- WoO 24 Fischer und Kalif - Comic Opera in one Act (1894-5)
- WoO 25 Quintet in A ‘Stelzner-Quintett’ for 2 violins,viola, violotta, and cello (1897)
- WoO 26 Sonata for Viola Alta and Piano No. 2 in F-major (1902)
- WoO 27 Der Thunersee, Symphonic Poem (1903)
- WoO 28 Getrennte wege, for four-part women’s chorus (1903)
- WoO 29 Der Traum ein Leben (Symphonic Prelude after Grillparzer) (1904)
- WoO 30 Merlin - Opera in 3 Acts, after K .L. Immermann (1903-5)

- WoO 31 Psalm 57 for baritone, chorus, and orchestra (1907)
- WoO 32 Faust in Schlaf Gesungen, for chorus and orchestra (1907)
- WoO 33 Parzengesand, after Goethe's Iphigenie, for alto and orchestra (1907)
- WoO 34 Wunder, for baritone (or mezzo-soprano) and piano (ca 1908)
- WoO 35 Requiem in e, for five-part a-capella chorus (1909-10)
- WoO 36 Feenzauber, Konzertstück for harp and orchestra (1910)
- WoO 37 Fugen, for four voices (1910-1)
- WoO 38 Symphony nr. 4 in e "Symphonia Comica" (1912)
- WoO 39 Four Songs, after Grete Ihle (1912)
- WoO 40 March in C-major, for piano
- WoO 41 Dämmerung, after Weitbrecht, for male chorus
- WoO 42 Auflösung on Brahms' Canon "Töne lindernder Klang"

© COPYRIGHT David C F Wright 2008 – This article or any part of it, however small, must not be copied, quoted, reproduced, downloaded or altered in any way whatsoever nor stored in any retrieval system. Failure to comply is in breach of International Copyright Law and will render any offender liable to action at law.