

Obituary

Dr. med. Gisela Schäfer

Dr. med Gisela Schäfer, one of the founders of our Robert Schumann Society, passed away on 23 March 2021 at the age of 97.

There are probably only a handful of her early companions and colleagues from the days of her dedicated work remaining who can recall the foundation of our Robert Schumann Society. Such is the unfortunate way of the world, since not many are fortunate enough to reach such a great age as Mrs. Schäfer did. We were all the more grateful that Dr. Schäfer continued until the end to watch over the fortunes of our association with great interest and as sharp a mind as ever.

Dr. Gisela Schäfer can be credited with numerous achievements on behalf of Clara and Robert Schumann in Düsseldorf. To create a living monument to Robert Schumann, the great composer of German Romanticism whose music had always fascinated her: that was Mrs. Schäfer's goal, as she had stated many times herself.

In March 1979 she founded our Robert Schumann Association in Düsseldorf, which has by now existed for 42 years. In 1981 she created the International Schumann Festival Düsseldorf, which was held for the 15th time in 2019. Dr. Schäfer made such musical luminaries as Claudio Arrau, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Wolfgang Sawallisch, who have long since passed away, honorary members of our Robert Schumann Society. Since 1994, Dr. Schäfer has overseen the overwhelmingly successful piano competition »Clara-Schumann-Concours« in Düsseldorf three times; several renowned artists, such as Anna Gouragi and Lev Vinocour, have emerged from these contests. In memory of our first honorary member, the unforgettable pianist Claudio Arrau, she created the »Arrau-Medaille«, which has been awarded to pianists like Martha Argerich, Murray Perahia and Adrás Schiff.

Through her initiative and tireless work, Dr. Schäfer made possible the foundation of our Düsseldorf Robert Schumann Research Institute in 1986, tasked with the development of the *Robert Schumann: New Edition of the Complete Works*, a major musicological and editorial undertaking. Last but certainly not least, she chaired our Robert Schumann Society as executive board member with diligence, care and dedication for 22 years until 2001, thus personally contributing immensely to its success.

Words can barely express how much we owe to Dr. Schäfer's commitment and her ideas. Without her, the Schumanns would never have become such an integral part of cultural life in Düsseldorf. To this day we still benefit greatly from everything she has achieved and created over the years. Since the end of her chairmanship we have strived to continue her work in a changing societal and cultural landscape, with the goal of maintaining and developing the memory of Robert and Clara Schumann – especially in Düsseldorf – in a way befitting the significance of these great figures of musical history in the 19th century.

We regard it as the result of Dr. Schäfer's initiative, that the Bilker Straße was able to culturally grow together into the »Street of Romanticism and

Revolution«. The wonderful triad of the Schumannhaus (soon to be Schumann Museum), Palais Wittgenstein and Heinrich Heine Institute will become even more visible as a vibrant cultural center of the Carlstadt, with its impact reaching beyond the borders of the city of Düsseldorf.

We will always honor the memory of this pioneer and originator of the first golden age of Schumann remembrance in our city.

Düsseldorf, April 2021