

HEY KIDS, MEET LILI BOULANGER

French Impressionist Era Composer (1893-1918)



Lili Boulanger (Boo-lawn-jay) was born in Paris, France on August 21, 1893. She was born into a musical family and privileged Parisian musical world. Her dad, Ernest, was a pianist, Paris Conservatory teacher, and winner of the Prix de Rome, a French scholarship for students of the arts. Her mother, Raissa, was an amateur singer.

At the age of two years old, Lili's talent for music was apparent when composer and family friend, Gabriel Fauré, observed that Lili had perfect pitch. It was also at this age that Lili contracted bronchial pneumonia, which weakened her immune system for the rest of her life.

Lili's dad died when she was three years old. Even so, her life continued to revolve around music. Lili's mother taught her and her older sister, Nadia, the basics of musical harmony. They both learned to read, play, and compose music at an early age.

Because Lili's health was poor and she wasn't able to attend school regularly, her mother and Nadia devoted themselves to Lili's education. By the age of 16 Lili entered the Paris Conservatory to study composition. She quickly discovered her musical voice and soon proved herself to be an extremely gifted composer.

Lili composed constantly despite her struggles with her health. She earned top marks from her teachers at the Paris Conservatory and she was awarded the Prix Lepaulle. The public performances of her works that followed caused Paris to take notice of her remarkable talent.

In 1912 she entered the Prix de Rome competition, which her father had won in 1835, but she collapsed from illness during her performance. Determined to succeed she entered again in 1913 and submitted her cantata, *Faust et Hélène*. Her composition not only impressed the audience, it won over the jury. An overwhelming thirty-one out of thirty-six Académie des Beaux-Arts members voted to award Lili the Prix de Rome, making her the first woman to receive the award.

Lili Boulanger died in 1918, at the age of 24. Her sister Nadia honored her sister by instituting a prize in composition which continues to this day as The Lili Boulanger Memorial Fund.

