



# Ethel Smyth

Composer of the Week

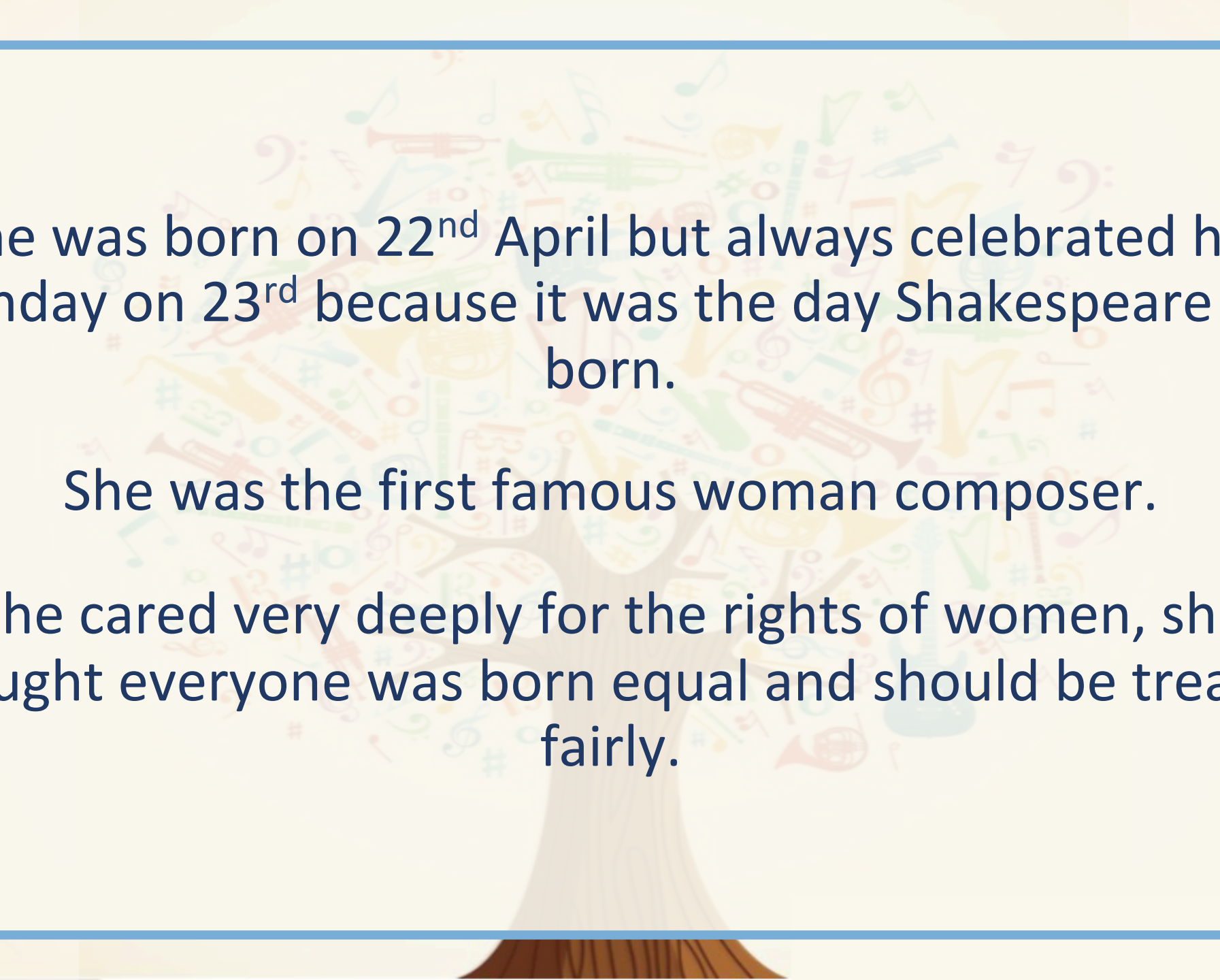




Born in Sidcup, Kent in the UK  
on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1858

Died in Woking, Surrey in the  
UK on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1944





She was born on 22<sup>nd</sup> April but always celebrated her birthday on 23<sup>rd</sup> because it was the day Shakespeare was born.

She was the first famous woman composer.

She cared very deeply for the rights of women, she thought everyone was born equal and should be treated fairly.



Her father didn't think being a composer was a suitable job for a woman but despite this, when she was 19, Ethel left for Germany, where she studied at the Leipzig Conservatoire.

One of the people she studied with there was Brahms. While she was there she also met Tchaikovsky, Grieg, Clara Schumann, and Dvořák.

Her opera **Der Wald** (The Forest), first performed in Berlin, was then performed at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. This opera made the most amount of money that year and Ethel was the first woman ever to have an opera performed there.

It was very difficult being a female composer at that time.

People said her strong rhythmic pieces didn't sound like a woman's compositions should.

When she composed quieter more tuneful pieces they said she wasn't able to compose like a man.



This is the **overture** to Ethel Smyth's most famous work, her opera, **The Wreckers**.

An **overture** is a piece of music for orchestra alone, which is played at the beginning of an opera, it sets the scene for the drama that is to come. Sometimes it uses themes (tunes) that will be heard later and sometimes it is just atmospheric.

The story is about a Cornish fishing village where, on stormy nights, the inhabitants lure passing sailing ships onto the rugged Atlantic rocks so that the cargoes can be plundered.

Can you hear the sound of the sea and the crashing waves in this music?







Ethel joined the fight for women to be given the vote and she became close friends with Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst. She wrote a song, The March of the Women, which became the anthem of the Suffragettes.

## The March of the Women

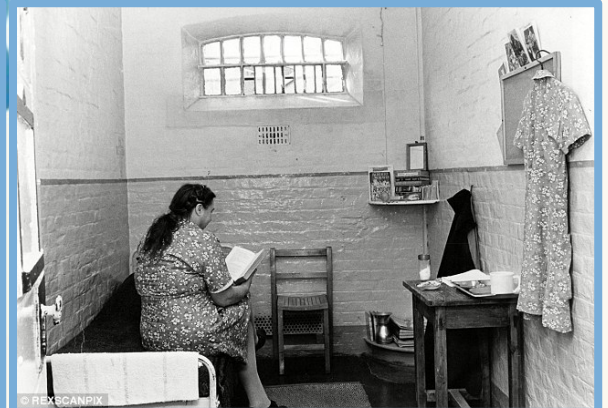
Shout, shout, up with your song!  
Cry with the wind for the dawn is breaking.  
March, march, sing you along,  
Wide blows our banner and hope is waking.  
Song with its story, dreams with their glory,  
Lo! They call and glad is their word.  
Forward! Hark how it swells  
Thunder of freedom, the voice of the Lord.





In 1912 she was arrested during a suffragette demonstration and spent two months in Holloway prison with another 100 women.

When one of her friends went to the prison to visit her, he found the women marching around the yard singing, while Ethel was leaning out of her cell window conducting them with a toothbrush.





Helena H. & Rae

English Museum

Luigi De Amico

Helena de Ruy

My Cousin  
Madison Roberts

Louis Haygood  
Maxwell W. Haygood

८५

Conclusions I Collect

Chloe and Anthony Long

Young Lydell Hewitt

from *Copy*

1000

do a great Magnum

*Filina*

Olivia Jeffcoat

Usabulke Paten.

Dean Allen

Yona Weisbach

My Ref.

Mary A. Aldham.

Alouatta Palliata T. & G.

24. 25. 26.

Erna Chuppel

Young Allan

Fanny Pease

Kashmiri Pathy

Margaret Howlett

Karl &amp; Susan Capps

John H. H. H.

David J. Forsberg

Frances Parker

29 Quinine

Lilla Lundberg

Mathew Bardsley

Loraine Lilling

Julia Burkner

Francis Williams

E K Marshall

Bentura 3 Jocke

Votes for Women

Holloway Prison

MARCH 1912

MARY HILLARD

৫২৭

Cassius M. Smith -  
Sunderland -  
Condover Craig -  
Highgate -  
Lancaster -

Miss Stewart Mrs. Edith Downing

[illegible]



In 1922 Ethel Smyth was made a Dame – the first woman composer ever to receive this honour.





When she was 75 years old her work was celebrated by a Festival. The final concert was at the Royal Albert Hall in the presence of the Queen. But, at this moment of long-overdue recognition, Ethel could hear neither her own music nor the applause of the crowds, because she was completely deaf.



Who else do we know that this happened to?





I feel I must fight for [my music],  
because I want women to turn their  
minds to big and difficult jobs; not  
just to go on hugging the shore,  
afraid to put out to sea.

— *Ethel Smyth* —

AZ QUOTES