Fanny Hensel, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, and the Formation of the Mendelssohnian Style

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Department of Music in the Graduate School of Duke University

2013
ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Fanny Hensel wrote much of Felix Mendelssohn’s music. Or so goes the popular misconception. It is true that Felix did publish six of his sister’s Lieder under his own name, in his Op. 8 and Op. 9, but there is no evidence that anything else he published was actually by Fanny. The perpetuation of this idea is by no means new to our century; even during her lifetime, Fanny received letters alluding to the possibility that some of her music was masquerading as Felix’s. But how could this supposition even be possible?

Complicating our reception of Hensel’s works and our knowledge of her influence over him, and perpetuating our misconception (and perhaps hopes) that some of Felix’s music was by Fanny was the unavailability of her music to the general public. For most of the twentieth century, she was known mostly by her eleven published opera (five of which were released posthumously). Before she was able to plan and accomplish any sort of systematic publication of her works, she died suddenly, at the age of 41, leaving behind upwards of 450 unrevised, unpublished works.

Clearly, we need to reconsider the term “Mendelssohnian,” and bring Hensel to the foreground as an equal partner in forming the Mendelssohns’ common style. I examine the roots of the “Mendelssohnian” style in their parallel musical educations, their shared enthusiasm for the music of Bach, and their simultaneous collision with Beethoven’s music (and the diverse ways each responded to his influence). I explore in detail the relationship between Fanny, Felix, and her fiancé Wilhelm Hensel through the methodology of kinship studies, to contextualize what some have viewed as a quasi-incestuous sibling relationship within the norms for sibling communication in the nineteenth century. Finally, I discuss how deeply their separation after 1829 affected...
both Fanny and Felix, and how Fanny negotiated her changing life roles and ambitions as a composer and performer.

One work that Fanny never released, and, indeed, one work that has remained a mystery, is the Ostersonate (Easter Sonata). Believed lost since it was first mentioned in correspondence in 1829, the sonata resurfaced in the twentieth century, when it was recorded and attributed to Felix, and then disappeared again without a trace. In the absence of any identifiable manuscript, it had been impossible to definitively challenge this attribution. My research represents a major breakthrough: I traced the manuscript to a private owner and positively identified it as the work of Fanny Mendelssohn.

Lurking behind the popular misconception is a broader truth: Fanny Hensel can be heard in much of Felix Mendelssohn’s music. In other words, what audiences have recognized as Felix Mendelssohn’s music for nearly two hundred years would not have existed as such without the influence of Fanny Hensel. This idea in itself is hardly new, but by revising this line of reasoning, we see that it is equally possible that much of Fanny Hensel can be heard in Felix Mendelssohn’s music. In the end, neither composer could have existed as we know them today without the other, and their shared musical style stands as a lasting testament to their shared identity as Mendelssohns.
To my family
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D-B MA Ms. 39

D-B MA Ms. 46

D-B MA Ms. 51

D-B MA Ms. 163

GB-Ob Green Books I Ms. M. Deneneke Mendelssohn b. 4

Juilliard Manuscript Collection, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Liederbuch für Cécile, Weihnachten 1845

Ostersonate, private collection

Sigla:

D-B Deutschland, Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz

GB-Ob Great Britain, Oxford, Bodleian

MA Mendelssohn-Archiv
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of our celebration; special thanks to Claremont Trio pianist, Andrea Lam, who performed the premiere of the *Easter Sonata* as a work of Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel.

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Over the years, many friends have made my path lighter and my days happier. In the Duke University Department of Music, I am especially grateful for the friendship of my graduate colleagues, Sarah Bereza (who also responded to several portions of my dissertation), Janet Jieru Chen, Karen Cook, Sarah Griffin, Makiko Kawamoto, Sarah Elaine Neill, Amy Scurria, Gail O’Brien Stewart, Ken Stewart, Paul Swartzel, Elizabeth Joyner, Dan Ruccia, and Katharina Uhde (whose German baked goods fuelled many good drafts). Many thanks as well to Katharina Uhde for responding quickly and patiently to German translation queries. Just down the road, at UNC-Chapel Hill, I crossed enemy lines to make rewarding friendships with especially Laurie McManus and Matthew Franke. While in residence in Berlin as a DAAD fellow, several friends in particular made my time there easier and happier. Janina Müller welcomed me to the Humboldt-Universität and helped me adjust to life in a new country and new city. My fellow DAAD-scholars Halyna Mishchany, Emily Richmond Pollock, Arina Rotaru, and April Trask shared countless hours of English conversation, ex-pat support, and joint discovery of the joys and challenges of living and researching in a foreign country. These women made my experience in Berlin unforgettable, and they remain dear friends even though we have all returned to our far-apart cities in the USA. The memories we made together in Berlin will always keep us close.

And finally, this dissertation is dedicated to the people who made everything not only possible, but worth doing: my family. All my love to my parents who gave everything to help me achieve my dreams, Alan R. Mace and Linda S. Chapman Mace, my brother,
Garrett R. Mace, sister Gloria R. Mace Szanto (and my brother-in-law Scott Szanto and nieces Emma and Breeanne), and my twin sister, Dr. Abigail R. Mace; my grandparents, Ken Mace (in memoriam, 2012) and Shirley Mace, and Delmar Chapman and Dagmar Christensen Chapman; and my aunts and uncles on both sides, especially my Aunt Julie Mace Kephart, Aunt Valerie Mace Tackett, and Uncle Kevin Mace. My life has been richly blessed in the past three years by the love of my life, my fiancé Bryan W. Christian, who showed me love, support, and patience through especially the last two months of writing. Bryan’s family has given me a warm and loving welcome: Bryan’s parents, John A. Christian, Jr. and Mary Beth Fleming Christian, my soon-to-be brothers-in-law Dr. John A. Christian III (and Dr. Laura Manno Christian), Mark Christian (and Madeline Puzzo), and Daniel Christian; his grandparents, John A. Christian and Mary Christian, and Mary Martin Fleming (in memoriam, 2012); and his aunts and uncles, Ruth Fleming Goldstraw and Ron Goldstraw, Bill Fleming and Laura Lowie Fleming, Linda Christian Thurber and Dr. David Thurber, and Mary Ann Christian Sedberry and Frank Sedberry, among others. All of these people, and many more, have meant so much on my journey to complete this life-long goal, and I am looking forward to the years ahead as we all support and love each other as we set and achieve new goals and enjoy life along the way.

Angela R. Mace
Durham, NC
March 2013
Chapter 1 Reconsidering the “Mendelssohnian” Style

In which we make the acquaintance of the “Mendelssohnian” style – how the term has been used, how it excludes Fanny Hensel – and in which the musical education of Fanny and Felix is examined in some detail, and particular attention paid to the unusual case of their simultaneously developing styles – the touching scene of Felix’s departure for England and the significance for both composers.

Fanny Hensel wrote much of Felix Mendelssohn’s music. Or so goes a belief which has enjoyed some currency. It is true that Felix published six of his sister’s Lieder under his own name, in his Zwölf Gesänge Op. 8 (1826-27) and Zwölf Lieder Op. 9 (1830), but there is no evidence that anything else published as Felix’s was actually by Fanny. This idea is by no means new to our time; in 1847 Fanny received a letter raising the possibility that some of her music was masquerading as Felix’s, which she reported to her brother with great amusement:

I have just recently received a letter from Vienna, which contained basically nothing but the question of whether “On Wings of Song” was by me, and that I should really send a list of things that are running about in the world disguised, it seems that they aren’t clever enough themselves to separate the wheat from the chaff. ¹

By 1896, when Charles Gounod’s memoires were published, the misconception had clearly taken hold quite strongly: “[Hensel] had rare powers of composition, and many of the “Songs without Words,” published among the works and under the name of

her brother, were hers.” ² How could this supposition even have arisen? Lurking behind the stubborn misconception is a broader truth: Fanny Hensel can be heard in much of Felix Mendelssohn’s music.

We all know the music of Felix Mendelssohn. Every year during the Christmas season, we sing the carol “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,” while all through the year couples walk down the aisle to the strains of Mendelssohn’s “Wedding March.” Violinists around the world consider Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64, among the finest representatives of the genre. His five symphonies and two oratorios crown a catalogue of masterpieces, ensuring Mendelssohn’s place in the classical canon for generations to come. Most of these works exhibit one or more features that came to characterize the “Mendelssohnian Style”: ebullient melodies, balanced and colorful orchestration, elfin scherzo movements, driving rhythms, and Bachian counterpoint, to name just a few, combined with moments of intense drama and rendered with fastidious workmanship.

We frequently use the term “Mendelssohnian” to describe works by Mendelssohn, as well as works by composers influenced by Mendelssohn—William Sterndale Bennett, Robert Schumann, Niels Gade, and Johannes Brahms, to name just a few—as well as works by Mendelssohn’s older sister and muse, Fanny Hensel. While in no way diminishing the significance and beauty of Mendelssohn’s music, new evidence has emerged in recent decades to suggest that Felix Mendelssohn was not

without assistance in the formation of the “Mendelssohnian” style. We now know that Fanny Hensel was not just a supportive sister and talented musician, but also a highly accomplished composer of over 450 works, with a great deal of influence over her brother’s musical decisions. Because Hensel’s music has for the most part not yet entered the classical performing canon (her most frequently performed work today is her Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11), few listeners have the familiarity with her music to recognize moments in some of the more well-known works of her brother that she may have inspired or influenced. Indeed, most thought goes the other direction; when one hears a work of Fanny for the first time, the initial instinct is to find what “sounds like Mendelssohn”—i.e., Felix Mendelssohn—because we know the music of Felix. Serious Fanny Hensel scholarship is relatively young, and much less developed in the United States than it is in Germany. There has long been fascination about the special bond between the siblings, but it is now time to take a step back and consider how we may reevaluate the music of both Felix Mendelssohn and Fanny Hensel in light of their intense musical and sibling relationship.

On Friday, April 10, 1829, Fanny Mendelssohn began a new chapter in her life. Her diary entry relates the event in her terse but poignant style:

We got up at 4. Hensel came at 5, and at 5:30 they [Felix, Rebecka, and Abraham] departed. I remained upstairs with Felix as long as I could, and helped him with his dressing and last minute packing. It was cold, we watched them, as they went down the street to the East, until we could see them no longer.³

Even though this is a matter of fact report, Fanny provided enough detail to paint a bleak picture of the departure. Fanny had seen Felix off before, but this was no short visit to Goethe in Weimar, nor a visit to Paris to meet Cherubini—Felix was embarking upon the first of several trips, which constituted his “Grand Tour” lasting almost four years, that rite of passage for wealthy young gentlemen in the nineteenth century. Not just a Bildungsreise, the journey was also intended to introduce Felix into an elite international society, and to help him select where he would establish his career as a musician. Fanny, on the other hand, had no prospects of widening her worldly horizons, but instead turned inward to the domestic sphere as she prepared for her marriage to Wilhelm Hensel, set for October 1829. That spring and summer were especially turbulent for her; she even considered giving up her musical pursuits, fearing that they would impede the proper fulfillment of her expected duties as a wife.

Fanny and Felix had grown up remarkably close, in an era when children of their social status spent much of their time at home with their families, rather than out forming separate interests and circles of friends. Thus it happened that they shared teachers, instruments, and social activities. That the two composers were intimately involved in each other’s compositional projects and privy to the most particular details regarding the genesis and inspiration for their works is evident in several well-known anecdotes. One of the most remarkable concerned a special task set for Felix in 1820: to write a short

Wegpacken geholfen. Es war kalt, wir sahen ihnen nach, wie sie die Straße nach Osten herunter fuhren, bis wir sie nicht mehr sehnen konnten.”

4 The concept of the “Grand Tour” is usually in reference to travels to Italy, but Felix’s extended travel during these years can be considered a part of his “Grand Tour” in the sense that they all contributed to his Bildung.

5 Todd, Mendelssohn (2003), 201.

opera without any adult supervision. While the eleven-year-old was composing his one-act Singspiel, _Die Soldatenliebschaft_, only Fanny was allowed to see the score before it was rehearsed. Little wonder, then, that Fanny felt keenly the importance of her role in the budding career of her little brother, and noted in 1822:

I have watched the progress of [Felix's] talent step by step, and may say I have contributed to his development. I have always been his only musical adviser, and he never writes down a thought before submitting it to my judgment.\(^7\)

Perhaps Fanny overstated the case here somewhat—certainly Felix had other musical advisers, such as Ludwig Berger, Carl Friedrich Zelter, and, a few years later, Adolf Bernhard Marx—but her claim is revealing. First, it tells us that Fanny needed some sort of outside validation that she was unable to receive for her own achievements. Second, Fanny's comment makes us consider how much she must have influenced and participated in Felix's youthful works which so successfully captured the joy, caprice, folly, and fantasy of Shakespeare, Goethe, and their own young lives. If it were not again for Fanny's pen recording Felix's sole confidence in her, we may not know that the "Walpurgis Night's Dream" scene from Goethe's _Faust_, Part I, was the inspiration for the quicksilver scherzo of the _Octet for Strings_, Op. 20 (1825):

[Felix] set to music the stanza from the Walpurgis-night Dream in "Faust":—"The flight of the clouds and the veil of mist / Are lighted from above. / A breeze in the leaves, a wind in the reeds, / And all has vanished." ... To me alone he told this idea.\(^8\)

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\(^8\) Todd, _Mendelssohn_ (2003), 149ff. Er versuchte die Stelle aus dem Wapurgisnachtstraum des Götheschen Faust zu komponiren: "Wolkenflug und Nebelflor / Erhellen sich von oben. / Luft im Laub und Wind im Rohr, / Und Alles ist zerstoben." ... "Mir allein sagte er, was ihm vorgeschwebet." Hensel, _Die Familie Mendelssohn_ I, 150.
To her alone he told that idea, apparently just one example of a deep and complete artistic confidence. Whether or not they shared all of their inspirations verbally, references to each other and their compositional idols in musical terms appeared frequently in both Felix’s and Fanny’s works, and they remained each other’s most severe critics throughout the remainder of their lives. This early compositional proximity at so young an age is certainly rare, perhaps matched only by that of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and his older sister, Nannerl. In that case, unfortunately, Nannerl’s compositions do not survive, but in the case of Fanny and Felix the question becomes clear—if the two were so close, and Fanny functioned as Felix’s earliest and most constant musical advisor, whose “Mendelssohnian” style is it? What exactly is the “Mendelssohnian” style? We have been using the term “Mendelssohnian” for generations, but without a full knowledge of Fanny’s contributions. Now that we do have access to her full catalogue of over 450 works (the majority still in manuscript in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv) as well as publications of Fanny’s correspondence and diaries, we have the ability—and responsibility—to reconsider the fundamental meaning of the term, and the nuances of its implications for our reception of both Fanny and Felix.

Complicating our reception of Fanny’s works and our knowledge of her influence over Felix, and perpetuating our misconception (and perhaps hope) that some of Felix’s music was actually by Fanny was how little of her music had been available to the general public. For most of the twentieth century, Fanny was known most broadly by her published opera (for a complete listing, see Table 1.1). Op. 1 through Op. 7 she
prepared for publication herself, the remaining \textit{opera} (Op. 8 through Op. 11) were most likely prepared by Felix or perhaps even Robert von Keudell.\textsuperscript{9} Of these works—which include solo \textit{Lieder}, choral \textit{Lieder}, and piano pieces—only the last can be said to have entered the performing canon: the Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, a masterful work that takes its place confidently along side the best examples of the genre by Fanny's contemporaries, both male and female.

The idea that some of Felix's music could be Fanny's in disguise is startling, if we examine it a bit more closely. Granted, there have been misattributions for centuries, especially for medieval and Renaissance composers for which far less reliable documentation exists. However, once we start to consider the special case of the Mendelssohns, we see how problematic becomes the task of “separating the wheat from the chaff.” Let us return to Fanny's \textit{Lieder} published in Felix's Op. 8 and Op. 9, which sparked this popular misconception, and consider how they illustrate the conundrum of the “Mendelssohnian” style. These two collections of \textit{Lieder} were Felix's first publications in the genre. Table 1.1 shows all of Fanny Hensel's publications, both under her brother's name and under her own name, as well as several smaller publications in albums. Table 1.2 shows the variety of genres in Felix's first eleven \textit{opera}, as well as the significant and very public dedications for four of these early publications.

\textsuperscript{9} Robert von Keudell (1824-1903) became a close friend of Fanny's in May 1846, and joined Wilhelm in encouraging Fanny to publish. He was a pianist, and later became a diplomat. See Todd, \textit{Hensel} (2009), 314-17.
Table 1.1: Fanny Hensel's Publications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opus</th>
<th>Publ.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1826</td>
<td></td>
<td>Das Heimweh</td>
<td>Berlin: Schlesinger In Felix’s Op. 8, No. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Italien</td>
<td>In Felix’s Op. 8, No. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1827</td>
<td></td>
<td>Suleika und Hatem</td>
<td>In Felix’s Op. 8, No. 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sehnsucht</td>
<td>Berlin: Schlesinger In Felix’s Op. 9, No. 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Verlust</td>
<td>In Felix’s Op. 9, No. 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Die Nonne</td>
<td>In Felix’s Op. 9, No. 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td></td>
<td>Die Schiffende</td>
<td>Album (Berlin: Schlesinger)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td></td>
<td>Schloss Liebeneck</td>
<td>Rhein-Sagen und Lieder. Köln and Bonn: J. M. Dunst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 1</td>
<td>1846</td>
<td>Sechs Lieder für eine Stimme mit Begleitung des Pianoforte</td>
<td>Berlin: Bote und Bock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Vier Lieder für das Pianoforte</td>
<td>Berlin: Bote und Bock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 3</td>
<td>1847</td>
<td>“Gartenlieder” – Sechs Lieder für SATB</td>
<td>Berlin: Bote und Bock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Six Mélodies pour le piano (1-3)</td>
<td>Berlin: Schlesinger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Six Mélodies pour le piano (4-6)</td>
<td>Berlin: Schlesinger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Vier Lieder für das Pianoforte</td>
<td>Berlin: Bote und Bock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 7</td>
<td>1848</td>
<td>Sechs Lieder für eine Stimme mit Begleitung des Pianoforte</td>
<td>Berlin: Bote und Bock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 Bagatellen (piano)</td>
<td>Für die Schüler des Schindelmeisserschen Musik-Instituts. Berlin: T. Trautwein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 8</td>
<td>1850</td>
<td>Vier Lieder für das Pianoforte</td>
<td>Leipzig: Breitkopf &amp; Härtel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sechs Lieder mit Begleitung des Pianoforte</td>
<td>Leipzig: Breitkopf &amp; Härtel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1852</td>
<td>Pastorella (piano)</td>
<td>Berlin: Bote und Bock</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1.2: Felix Mendelssohn's Early Publications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opus</th>
<th>Pub. Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Dedication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Op. 1</td>
<td>1823</td>
<td>Piano Quartet in C minor</td>
<td>Berlin: Schlesinger</td>
<td>Count Anton Radziwill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 2</td>
<td>1825</td>
<td>Piano Quartet in F minor</td>
<td>Berlin: Schlesinger</td>
<td>Carl Friedrich Zelter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Piano Quartet in B minor</td>
<td>Berlin: Fr. Laue</td>
<td>Johann Wolfgang von Goethe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sonata in F minor, violin and piano</td>
<td>Berlin: Fr. Laue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Capriccio in F-sharp minor</td>
<td>Berlin: Schlesinger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 6</td>
<td>1826</td>
<td>Sonata in E major</td>
<td>Berlin: Fr. Laue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 7</td>
<td>1827</td>
<td>Sieben Charakterstücke</td>
<td>Berlin: Fr. Laue</td>
<td>Ludwig Berger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 8</td>
<td>1826/27</td>
<td>Zwölf Gesänge</td>
<td>Berlin: Schlesinger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 9</td>
<td>1830</td>
<td>Zwölf Lieder</td>
<td>Berlin: Schlesinger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 10</td>
<td>1828</td>
<td>Die Hochzeit des Camacho</td>
<td>Berlin: Fr. Laue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1834</td>
<td></td>
<td>Berlin: Schlesinger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Zwölf Gesänge (Twelve Songs), Op. 8 was released in two installments in 1826 and 1827. Zwölf Lieder (Twelve Songs), Op. 9 was released all in one year (1830), but retained and emphasized the partitioning of the earlier opus; the first set of six Lieder is titled “Der Jüngling” (“The Youth”) and the second “Das Mädchen” (“The Maiden”). Three of Fanny’s Lieder appear in each opus—and, it is likely no coincidence that her three Lieder in Op. 9 all appear in the second half, “Das Mädchen.” Neither of these publications carried a dedication, perhaps simply because they weren’t all the work of one composer. That Felix did not present his first collections of Lieder to the public as
wholly his own work carries quite a significant payload of implications for his own reception of his sister's *Lieder*.

One area in which Fanny’s family universally acknowledged her supreme skill was in the genre of the *Lied*. For Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Fanny’s activities composing diminutive *Lieder* would not conflict in any way with her expected role as a dutiful daughter, wife, and sophisticated woman.\(^{10}\) For Felix, Fanny’s *Lieder* were among the best he knew, which was high praise coming from one who held unflinchingly high artistic standards with even the closest of friends.\(^{11}\) And for Fanny, the *Lied* became her ultimate medium for artistic expression. While listening to Fanny’s *Lieder* we truly feel we may understand the depth of Fanny’s emotion, or what Sarah Austin meant when she said “One had always the fullest assurance that Madame Hensel said less rather than more than she felt.”\(^{12}\) Fanny may have felt greater freedom to express herself in song, and her *Lieder* thus take on a diary-like aspect. The language of expression and harmonic density is incredibly intense, so that a one-page *Lied* can deliver the emotional charge of a much longer work. In comparison to the *Lieder* of her brother, Fanny’s *Lieder* are much more chromatically adventurous, even more Schumann-esque.

Looking back from our post-modern viewpoint, we struggle to come to terms with the apparently repressive action of publishing a sister’s *Lieder* under one’s own masculine, patriarchal, authorship. One positive reading might be that Felix did hold his sister’s *Lieder* in such high regard that he would make them public under his own name.


In addition, Fanny could thereby enjoy the satisfaction of public reception of her *Lieder*, even while remaining the discrete woman she had been educated to become (although I will explore in greater detail throughout this dissertation how Fanny tested the boundaries of these socially prescribed roles for the remainder of her life). In any event, the subsumed publication caused Felix a good deal of embarrassment when he visited Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort Albert in the Queen’s private quarters in Buckingham Palace in 1842. The Queen sang Fanny’s song, *Italien* (No. 3 in Felix’s Op. 8), while Felix played the piano; Felix had to confess that the *Lied* was not his own, and asked her to sing another of his own composition.¹³

Felix, it seems, was conflicted about his sister’s talent. He knew most intimately how excellent a composer she was and apparently wanted to allow her works to be known to a larger circle, but like his father could not wish to see her to publish under her own name. That Felix did not experiment extensively in the genre of the *Lied*, while Fanny was encouraged by all around her to write *Lieder*, may suggest that he to some extent ceded the genre to her—and the publication of her *Lieder* as his own may have been intended as a silent gesture of inclusion, honor, and recognition, rather than of suppression. The musical and artistic lives of the two composers were so firmly intertwined, that I believe they saw these joint publications as a perfectly natural outgrowth of their artistic cohabitation. See Table 1.3 for a listing of all twelve *Lieder* in Op. 8, including the Mendelssohn-Werkverzeichnis (MWV)¹⁴ numbers for Felix’s *Lieder*

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and the Hellwig-Unruh (H-U)\textsuperscript{15} numbers for Fanny's \textit{Lieder}. Fanny's contributions, furthermore, are emphasized in bold face.

\textbf{Table 1.3: Zwölf Gesänge (Twelve Songs), Op. 8, 1826 (1-6) and 1827 (7-12)}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Catalogue number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Italien / Italy</td>
<td>By 24 Aug 1825</td>
<td>G major</td>
<td>H-U 157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Erntelied / Harvest Song</td>
<td>24 Jan 1824</td>
<td>A minor</td>
<td>MWV K 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pilgerspruch / Song of the Pilgrim</td>
<td></td>
<td>F major</td>
<td>MWV K 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Frühlingslied / Spring Song</td>
<td>2 April 1824</td>
<td>E major</td>
<td>MWV K 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Maienlied / May Song</td>
<td></td>
<td>G major</td>
<td>MWV K 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Hexenlied (Andres Maienlied) / Witch's Song (Another May Song)</td>
<td></td>
<td>G minor</td>
<td>MWV K 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Abendlied / Evening song</td>
<td></td>
<td>E flat major</td>
<td>MWV K 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Romanze / Romance</td>
<td></td>
<td>G minor</td>
<td>MWV K 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Im Grünen / In the Greenery</td>
<td></td>
<td>E major</td>
<td>MWV K 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Suleika und Hatem, duet</td>
<td>28 April 1825</td>
<td>E major</td>
<td>H-U 149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The twelve Lieder in Op. 8 don’t outline a narrative in the teleological or dramatic sense, as those in Op. 9 do (more on Op. 9 to follow). Instead, we find groupings of poetical figures and loose associations of keys. The set opens with a simple folk song by Felix, the Minnelied im Mai in F major. Its innocence and simplicity—illustrating the naive, idealized, love experienced by the lyric persona—is maintained through a minimal use of chromaticism, repetitive, lilting dance rhythms, and a plagal cadence. Fanny’s Heimweh, Op. 8 No. 2, presents a visual conundrum: although it retains the F major key signature of Felix’s Minnelied, and the overall impression is D minor, the first (and final) chords are in D major. The mode wavers between major and minor throughout the Lied, perhaps illustrating the wavering emotions of one experiencing homesickness—happiness while dwelling on the remembrance of the place (or time, person, emotional/psychological place, or experience) that is being recalled, juxtaposed with the more present pain of longing.

In contrast to Felix’s simple folk song, Fanny’s Lied shows her confident hand in rendering the text by a family friend, the soprano Friederike Robert. The declamatory style of “Es ist das Heimweh” is particularly bold and dramatic: Fanny replaces the arpeggiated accompanimental figures which predominate throughout the piece with blocked chords, a dramatic intensification of the texture also adapted by Felix in his first version of Suleika Op. 57 No. 3 (MWV K 93) as well as in his piano music, such as the

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16 The revised version of this Suleika (“Was bedeutet die Bewegung”), still unpublished, is housed in the Juilliard Manuscript Collection, in the Liederbuch für Cécile, Weihnachten 1845. Felix replaced the block chords with tremolo chords to evoke the rustling winds described in Willemer’s text (attrib. Goethe). Private performing edition prepared from the manuscript for the Lyric Chamber Music Society of New York by Angela R. Mace in 2008; the Leipziger Mendelssohn Ausgabe (LMA) complete edition of Mendelssohn’s works will most likely publish a critical edition of the manuscript within the next twenty years.
Lied ohne Worte Op. 53, No. 2. One might have assumed that Fanny's contributions to this set would be more modest, smaller scale, more “appropriate” for a female composer, but the opposite is true here.

The locus dramaticus switches from the idealized love of the first Lied and the unidentified addressee (a place? a person?) of the second Lied to a specific place in Op. 8 No. 3: Italy. The reference to the idealized land of Italy would have been instantly recognizable to any educated person in society of the time; Goethe’s writings about his own experiences in Italy, his Italienische Reise, and the romanticized vision of Italy were popular tropes in life, literature, and artistic circles.

The reference ran even deeper for Fanny, however. Italy was her promised land just beyond the Alps, which she had come so close to seeing when the Mendelssohn family had taken their Swiss vacation in 1822. It was a region that, as a single woman, she would have had no distinct opportunity to visit of her own volition, unlike her brother who would travel to Italy as the ultimate destination of his four-year Grand Tour. And even more significantly, the man she loved, Wilhelm Hensel, was residing in Italy at the time she penned this Lied. Banned by her parents from corresponding with him for the duration of his five-year Italian painting sojourn, Fanny turned her thoughts towards her distant love and her dreams for both her future happiness and her hopes for travel to Italy in song instead. For all of its biographical context, however, Italien does not betray any deep, tortured emotions; rather, the supple, chromatic vocal line curves seductively through the musical space, tempting the listener with splendid visions of the exotic sights, smells, and sensations of the Mediterranean region.17

17 See also Sirota (1981), 193ff.
Felix’s *Erntelied* (*Harvest Song* or *Altes Kirchenlied/Old church song*) follows as No. 4, an almost ascetic return to a nearly monophonic texture at the opening, with simple chordal accompaniment throughout. The harvest is not of grain, but of souls – “Es ist ein Schnitter, der heisst Tod” (“there is a harvester, who is called death”). Simple, triadic melodies prevail, confined within one octave (the voice exceeds the upper c” limit established by the opening motive only once throughout the entire *Lied*), and the harmonies remain primarily within the orbit of A minor (and the related keys of C major, E major, and A major). After the voice comes to rest after each verse on a firm perfect authentic cadence on the dominant (E major), the repose is undermined by the movement of just one voice in the piano harmony; in the first four strophically set verses, the raised third, g sharp, slides down to the minor third, g natural (Ex. 1.1); in the fifth verse, the major third remains but the root of the chord, e, falls to the minor seventh, d (no example given). The refrain returns the cadence to A minor, but the almost rustic ornamentation of the part writing (particularly the use of the F-natural as a lower neighbor tone and passing tone) gives it an archaic quality. The voice comes to rest on e, the fifth of the chord, while the piano continues the line to cadence in A minor. At this point, we can make note of a convergence of style between Felix and Fanny – also in these early *Lieder*, but especially in her later published opuses, Fanny makes extremely effective use of the sustained note in the voice, while the piano advances the narrative or harmonic language of the *Lied*. 
Example 1.1: Felix Mendelssohn, Op. 8 No. 4, Erntelied, mm. 10-19

Pilgerspruch (Pilgrim’s Proverb), No. 5, continues the religious vein of Erntelied—albeit in a rather more serene manner—with a simple, hymn-like texture. The F-major tonality in Pilgerspruch proceeds seamlessly out of the A minor of Erntelied; indeed, the unresolved quality of Erntelied is closed here in the opening measures of Pilgerspruch. The first dyad in the right hand is even identical to the last dyad in Erntelied (c’-a’), and the first two measures sound more like a closing gesture than opening material. One of the most striking features of Erntelied—the suspension of one note over further figuration in the piano—is employed as well in Pilgerspruch: on “heisst” in m. 24, Felix suspends not the highest note of the piece, as Fanny often does, but instead the note (c) before the highest note (e flat). The e flat is also the point of harmonic tension in this firmly F-major Lied – the flat seventh in V/IV. We hear this e-flat high point twice before (in m. 11), so the ear is trained to expect the e-flat immediately following the c; thus, the delay on c is rendered much more effective. While we wait for the c to proceed to the e flat, the piano emphasizes our expectation, repeating a chromatic falling third motive in the upper voice.
The mood shifts abruptly with Felix’s Frühlingslied (Spring Song), No. 6, a cheerful setting of a text by Friederike Robert. Felix incorporates distinctive E-major horn calls at the opening, evoking the pastoral locus and heralding spring. These are no mere generic horn calls, however. The Mendelssohns were fond of incorporating echoes of each other’s works, works of great common interest (such as the St. Matthew Passion), or references to their compositional models. In this case, the reference may specifically be traced back to their piano teacher—and possibly their first composition teacher, or at least their teacher for works in the piano idiom—Ludwig Berger.

In 1819, Berger selected poems from a salon hosted by the Stägemanns,¹⁸ and set them to music in a publication titled Gesänge aus einem gesellschaftlichen Liederspiele “Die schöne Müllerin.” (Songs from a Social Song Circle, “The Beautiful Miller Maid”). These were not settings of only the poems by Wilhelm Müller, as were Schubert’s Lieder in his later Die schöne Müllerin (D. 795, 1823). Schubert used poems excerpted from Müller’s collection, Sieben- und siebzig Gedichte aus den hinterlassenen Papieren eines reisenden Waldhornisten (Seventy-Seven Poems from the Posthumous Papers of a Traveling Horn Player), revised extensively, augmented with new poems, and published in 1821, but Berger’s settings remained closer to the original Liederspiel, using texts by several members of the Stägemann salon. Horn calls figure prominently

¹⁸ The Stägemann salon was hosted by the Stägemann parents for the benefit of their two children, and included among its members Clemens Brentano, Wilhelm Müller, Ludwig Berger, Wilhelm Hensel, Louise Hensel, etc. The salon members banished thoughts of the cold Berlin winter of 1816-17 by creating their Liederspiel on a pastoral, spring-time topic. For more, see Susan Youens, Schubert, Müller, and ‘Die schöne Müllerin’ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
throughout settings of “Die schöne Müllerin” tale by both Berger and Schubert, as the story takes place mostly outdoors and features a hunter as one of the main characters.

After Fanny received Müller’s version of Die schöne Müllerin from her then-suitor Hensel as a Christmas present in 1822, she set eight of the poems to music, including Die liebe Farbe (The Favorite Color). In this case the favored color was green, as the color traditionally represented the hunter – or, for Fanny, Wilhelm Hensel, who had played the hunter in the Stägemann salon’s version of the tale in 1816-17. Her opening recalled closely the horn calls of Berger’s setting of Am Maienfeste (Ex. 1.2)—the text for Berger’s Lied by Wilhelm Hensel in his role as hunter, no less—but on her manuscript she expressed some dissatisfaction with her setting (Ex. 1.3) or at least acknowledged her musical debt, noting “Das hat Herr Berger besser verstanden” (“Herr Berger understood this better”). Roughly one year later, Felix recalled the same topic, closely echoing Fanny’s version of Berger’s horn call; all three examples are in the same key of E major (Ex. 1.4). Felix thus contributed his own Lied to this long-standing tradition of biographical connections and compositional echoes of music that had some personal significance.

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19 Horn calls feature in the settings of the tale by many other composers as well, by virtue of the pastoral and hunting themes, as Youens has shown in her book, Schubert, Müller, and ‘Die schöne Müllerin.’

The next two Lieder in the seasonal progression highlight May, a favored month for poets evoking the springtime flowering of love and nature. These two Lieder feature two very different associations for May, however: the first Maienlied (May Song), No. 7,
celebrates the new flora and the sweet songs of the nightingales with a simple folk song in G major, while the *Hexenlied* (*Witches Song*) or *Andres Maienlied* (*Another May Song*), No. 8, sweeps the listener away to join a diabolical dance in G minor celebrating the “Walpurgis Night” (the bright and dark sides of May perhaps reflected in the paired major and minor tonalities).

This *Hexenlied* is not the only occasion on which Mendelssohn evoked the “Walpurgis Night” tradition, but is part of a serious engagement with the tale. Mendelssohn was intimately familiar with Goethe’s *Faust*, which prominently features a scene narrating Faust’s and Mephistopheles’ attendance at the “Walpurgis Night” festival on the Brocken in the Harz Mountains. The “Walpurgis Night” tradition existed in literature much earlier than Goethe’s *Faust*, of course; Mendelssohn chose a poem by the Minnesinger, Jakob von der Warte (1278-1331), for this setting. In addition, Mendelssohn’s *Scherzo* from the *Octet for Strings*, Op. 20 (1825), was, according to Fanny (as we saw above), inspired by a stanza from the “Walpurgis Night” scene in Goethe’s *Faust*. About five years later, Mendelssohn would embark on a ten-year project setting Goethe’s ballad “Die erste Walpurgisnacht” as a cantata (first version 1831-32, revised version, Op. 60, 1842-43).²¹

The *Abendlied* (*Evening Song*), No. 9, drops a major third to a more relaxed E-flat major. The simple textures and narrow melodic range provide a soothing contrast to the fury of the *Hexenlied*. Despite the simplicity of the *Lied*, this *Abendlied* is not a folk song like many of Felix’s other settings here in Op. 8. The piano introduces a gentle, folk song-like accompaniment, but then introduces increasingly sophisticated chromatic

maneuvers. The opening gesture introduces a descending four-note group of eighth notes over the barline. By measure 6, the gesture is extended to full scales with chromatic extensions. At measure 11, a brief tonicization of C minor pulls the mode another third lower. The texture changes from the rocking motion in the right hand to more forceful blocked chords, which follow the voice by step back up to E-flat major: a German augmented sixth arrives on a C-minor 6/4 chord, which proceeds to an F-minor seventh chord as a sort of minor-mode secondary dominant to B-flat dominant seventh and thus back to the tonic, E-flat major. Although one might interpret an “Abendlied” as a farewell in this poetic progression of seasons as a metaphor for flowering love, the topic is much more overtly religious: an evening song of satisfaction for a day’s work well done, and an expression of faith that a full reward awaits in heaven.

Returning to a doleful G minor, the Romanze (Romance), No. 10, also returns to a secular theme of earthly love—although even the lyric persona hopes that she may be pardoned by heaven apparently for her fixation on a lost love. The Lied wavers between the G minor mode and the relative major, B-flat major, as the lyric persona remembers the kisses of her lover, somewhat like Schubert’s Gretchen am Spinnrad. Most striking in this Lied, however, are the melismas, which carve graceful arcs through the melodic space, all the way up to a high b-flat². This b-flat² marks the highest note in the opus, achieved only in one other Lied in addition to the Romanze, the Hexenlied. The style is quite strikingly different from most of Felix’s other Lieder in this opus, highly lyrical and even approaching an arioso style, perhaps betraying the origins of the concept for this Romanze in Felix’s Singspiel, Die Hochzeit des Camacho (1827).

With the arrival of No. 11, Im Grünen (In the Greenery), we return to an effervescent celebration of the arrival of springtime, which has emerged as the central
theme for Op. 8. Once again in E major, and featuring robust horn calls, as well as prominent references to greenery, we are once again in the world of the Stägemann salon, and in the realm of German folk traditions generally. In fact, this Lied would even be at home in a German opera such as Weber’s Der Freischutz, which had impressed Felix greatly at its premiere in the Berlin Schauspielhaus in 1821. The text is by the family friend Gustav Droysen, so an inside reference to the family interest in both the pastoral hunt topic and a fascination with Der Freischutz is not out of the question, although at this point entirely speculative.

Concluding the opus is a Duett – Suleika und Hatem for soprano and tenor, contributed by Fanny. Combining the genres of solo Lied and duet in this way in this set of Lieder suggests an interpretation of this duet as an acknowledgement of, or symbolism for, the dual authorship of Felix’s Opus 8. Certainly, friends and close associates of the family who knew of Fanny’s involvement in publishing the opus would have recognized the significance of this duet. In fact, A. B. Marx—who surely knew of Fanny’s authorship—reviewed Op. 8 in his Berliner allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung, and offered an Easter egg to any perceptive reader, saying in regards to No. 12: “one could even call the composition feminine, if one did not know the composer…”

Continuing the E-major key, the duet features first the female protagonist, answered by the male. The voices then sing together, in sweet thirds and sixths, at one point approaching each other from opposite ends of their range to meet in the middle, a

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22 A. B. Marx, “Recensionen.” Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung (1827): 178. “Süße innige reinste Liebe durchhaucht das Ganze, beide Stimmen übereinklingend und doch verschieden, der Jüngling aber fast mädchenhaft, wie man denn bald versucht wäre, die Komposition weiblich zu nennen, wenn man den Komponisten nicht kenne, wenn es Komponistinnen gäb’, und wenn Damen so tiefe Musik in sich aufnähmen.” While Marx’s statement seems rather shocking to modern eyes, he surely knew of Fanny’s authorship here and this statement reflects and mocks the contemporary attitude towards female composers. This is just one more example of members of the tight Mendelssohn circle embedding inside jokes in public forums.
particularly effective moment which highlights the close relationship between two people.

This duet, alongside the references to Berger’s own short song cycle from the Stägemann Liederspiel, encourage a reading of the full opus as Felix and Fanny’s own “song cycle by committee”; certainly not so focused an endeavor as the original Die schöne Müllerin, but clearly an indication of the Mendelssohns’ awareness of, and participation in, this salon tradition.

Table 1.4: Zwölf Lieder (Twelve Songs), Op. 9, "Der Jüngling und Das Mädchen"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Frage / Question</td>
<td>Pentecost 1827</td>
<td>A major</td>
<td>MWV K 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Geständnis / Confession</td>
<td>April 1829 or earlier</td>
<td>A major</td>
<td>MWV K 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Wartend / Waiting</td>
<td>3 April 1829</td>
<td>D major</td>
<td>MWV K 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Im Frühling / In Springtime</td>
<td>27 Jan 1830</td>
<td>D major</td>
<td>MWV K 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Im Herbst / In Autumn</td>
<td>23 May 1827</td>
<td>F-sharp minor</td>
<td>MWV K 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Scheidend (Auf der Fahrt)/ Departing (Traveling)</td>
<td>13 Jan 1830</td>
<td>E major</td>
<td>MWV K 50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part II: “Das Maiden” (“The Maiden”)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sehnsucht / Longing</td>
<td>24 June 1828</td>
<td>D major</td>
<td>H-U 219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Frühlingsglaube/ Springtime hopes</td>
<td>19 Jan 1830</td>
<td>E major</td>
<td>MWV K 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ferne / Distance</td>
<td>13 Jan 1830</td>
<td>E-flat major</td>
<td>MWV K 53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Verlust / Loss</td>
<td>28 Dec 1827</td>
<td>D minor</td>
<td>H-U 213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>entsagung / Renunciation</td>
<td></td>
<td>F major</td>
<td>MWV K 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Die Nonne / The Nun</td>
<td>May 1822</td>
<td>A minor</td>
<td>H-U 46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Zwölf Lieder (Twelve Songs), Op. 9, “Der Jüngling und Das Mädchen,” 1830

Op. 9 represents perhaps even more of an intentional arrangement as a song cycle than does Op. 8. Already signaling cyclic intent in Op. 9 are the titles in each half of the set, “Der Jüngling” (“The Youth”) and “Das Mädchen” (“The Maiden”), as seen in Table 1.4 above. The key areas in Op. 8 grouped into at best loose associations, but when considered as a straightforward set, from the first Lied to the last, the key progression in Op. 9 also presents some difficulties for contextualization, although the groupings of sharp and flat keys do offer some coherence (Table 1.5).

Table 1.5: Tonal Progression in Op. 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Sharp Key</th>
<th>Flat Key</th>
<th>Neutral Key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A I</td>
<td>E flat bII/iv</td>
<td>a i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A I</td>
<td>E V</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A I</td>
<td>D IV</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>D IV</td>
<td>E V</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>D IV</td>
<td>E V</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>f# vi</td>
<td>F V</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>E V</td>
<td>E V VbII/iv</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>D E V</td>
<td>E IV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>A D E V</td>
<td>E V I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>A D E</td>
<td>E V I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>A D E</td>
<td>E V I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>A D E</td>
<td>E V I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>A D E</td>
<td>E V I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A major to A minor is the clear tonal trajectory here, through the subdominant D major, the submediant F-sharp minor, progressing through the dominant E major. The introduction of E-flat major is harder to contextualize, but the voice leading in the imagined bass line is simply falling by half a step to the minor subdominant, D minor (See Ex. 1.5). We could analyze No. 8 as the tonal pivot point for the set; E major serves as the dominant chord for both A major and A minor, of course, then the tonality slips towards the flat side to emphasize A minor. E-flat major (No. 9) then functions as the flat II (Neapolitan) of the minor subdominant, D minor (No. 10), while F major (No. 11) provides the major VI chord expected in a minor mode to arrive at A minor in No. 12. Further emphasizing the gendered divide is the selection of keys: there are no flat keys
in the first half of the set, while three of the six *Lieder* in the second half are in flat keys, and the set concludes with a *Lied* in A minor, one of the most neutral, or pale, keys in the tonal system, perhaps taking its cue from the “bleiche Jungfrau” of the poem.

Example 1.5: Key areas in Op. 9

There exists an intriguing alternative to this progression, however: in his essay “Mendelssohn’s Cycles of Songs,” Douglass Seaton asserts that “the clear implication is that the songs should be sung by two singers in some sort of alternation, perhaps 1, 7, 2, 8, 3, 9, and so on. Rather than a cycle, such a plan would be better considered a *Liederspiel* for two characters.”23 This sort of alternating performance results in a rather more convincing harmonic progression, thus:

Table 1.6: Tonal Progression in alternating performance option, Op. 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Eb</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>f#</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>bII/IV</td>
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<td>iv</td>
<td>VI/i</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tonal trajectory remains A major to A minor, but the alternations between the subdominant, dominant, and tonic key areas are more evenly spaced. The problematic E-flat key area is now very near the center of the “cycle” not only as a tritally distant

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center, but also as an upper neighbor-note motion with the surrounding D-major key areas. The E flat also keeps the oscillation between the tonic, subdominant, and dominant from becoming too predictable; at this point, the key area could easily have been E major, which would have fit in seamlessly with the already established pattern. Furthermore, the “cycle” now concludes with a dominant to tonic tonal motion, E major to A minor—instead of the submediant F major to A minor—for a more convincing feeling of tonal resolution and closure (Ex. 1.6).

Example 1.6: Key areas in Op. 9, alternating performance option

Seaton’s hypothesis presents a plausible scenario, especially as the Mendelssohns were growing up in the most prolific flowering of Berlin salons; consider, for example, the Stägemann salon, which produced the first version of Die schöne Müllerin as a Liederspiel in 1816-17, as already discussed in regards to Opus 8, above. The implication for performance this way does not seem quite so clear as Seaton would suggest, however, as the songs were consistently written for high female voices, but we can imagine that Fanny and her circle would readily have been able to transpose the Lieder to accommodate the vocal ranges of their circle. For the rest of the musical world, however, there is no indication whatsoever that one might choose to perform the set this way, beyond the clearly more cohesive harmonic progression of the set when performed in alternation, as pointed out above.
Table 1.7: Alternating (or Liederspiel) performance option, Op. 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Cat. No.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Frage / Question</td>
<td>Pentecost 1827</td>
<td>A major</td>
<td>MWV K 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sehnsucht / Longing</td>
<td>24 June 1828</td>
<td>D major</td>
<td>H-U 219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Geständnis / Confession</td>
<td></td>
<td>A major</td>
<td>MWV K 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Frühlingsglaube / Springtime hopes</td>
<td>19 Jan 1830</td>
<td>E major</td>
<td>MWV K 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Wartend / Waiting</td>
<td>3 April 1829</td>
<td>D major</td>
<td>MWV K 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ferne / Distance</td>
<td>13 Jan 1830</td>
<td>E-flat major</td>
<td>MWV K 53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Im Frühling / In Springtime</td>
<td>27 Jan 1830</td>
<td>D major</td>
<td>MWV K 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Verlust / Loss</td>
<td>28 Dec 1827</td>
<td>D minor</td>
<td>H-U 213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Im Herbst / In Autumn</td>
<td>22 March 1827</td>
<td>F-sharp minor</td>
<td>MWV K 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Entsagung / Renunciation</td>
<td></td>
<td>F major</td>
<td>MWV K 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Scheidend / Departing</td>
<td>13 Jan 1830</td>
<td>E major</td>
<td>MWV K 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Die Nonne / The Nun</td>
<td>May 1822</td>
<td>A minor</td>
<td>H-U 46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On a global scale, when performed in alternation (as seen in Table 1.7), the dramatic progression of the set changes from loose associations of themes (in the first half from hardly daring to ask if the possibility for love exists, through confession, waiting, the typical romantic tropes of springtime flowering and autumn death, leading to a departure; and in the second half, a more quick descent from longing and "springtime hopes" to loss, renunciation, and the cloistering and death of a young woman) to a dialogue that has more dramatic coherence. First, the question, “can it be?” that there is a love developing, followed by longing for an answer. The confession of love leads to the springtime flowering of hopes; the romance progresses, but the lovers are apparently parted. Spring changes to autumn, and the cold winds of loss and separation—possibly
death—wither the budding relationship. The male protagonist departs, the female protagonist renouces her dependence on the world, and finally proclaims her devotion to God, before perishing before a picture of the Virgin Mary.

As R. Larry Todd points out, the two personae in Op. 9 may represent Felix and Fanny as they embarked on new chapters in their lives—Felix heading out into the world to launch his international career as a composer, performer, and conductor, and Fanny a recently married housewife.24 Indeed, Felix was absent from Berlin, and requested that Fanny begin the process of selecting the Lieder for Opus 9 herself, apparently in the face of deadline pressure from his publisher:

Concerning Schlesinger, there’s no need for him to rage further, because I will gladly keep my word to him, even though it is difficult for me to do; ask him if he is intending to publish the Lieder immediately, and in this case I can propose the idea of 2 Liederkränzen, for a young man and a maiden, and give him six colorful pieces for each, which I ask Fanny, without any further reference to me, to select from my or her things completely without stipulations, only the accompaniment must be very light, and there should be at least one enjoyable, cheerful, and fast [Lied] among the selection. If he wants to wait, however, until I have found a little peace and can arrange everything prettily, which must happen soon, I believe, he would be much smarter and do me a favor, because I don’t think that the press is in a hurry; thus I ask all of you to present him with this alternative, and tell him that he would do me a favor if he would wait.

That Fanny was so involved in the process, even the point of most likely selecting which of her brother’s Lieder were included in Op. 9, encourages us to reframe

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24 Todd, Hensel (2009), 142ff.
the approach we often take to understanding this situation—Fanny was a significant partner in the artistic decisions that went into forming this pseudo-cycle of Lieder. This letter proves that Fanny’s Lieder were not stolen or appropriated, as some scholars believed before this sort of documentary evidence was available. Thus, an analysis of the opus—even though most of the Lieder are by Felix—considering both musical and biographical parameters, may reveal just as much about Fanny as it does about Felix.

All three of Fanny’s Lieder fall in the second half the cycle, “Das Mädchen”; the reasoning behind that decision is clear enough. But on the other hand, that Fanny likely chose from her brother’s Lieder to complete “her” half of the set opens up the intriguing possibility that Fanny’s voice was not subsumed by Felix’s, but rather the opposite: Felix is integrated into Fanny’s artistic vision, and his songs are adapted to the feminine persona.

Without attempting to draw a biographical correspondence to every feature of the set, it is still possible to identify several significant chronological references to the events of the late 1820s. Todd points out that Op. 9, No. 6: Scheidend (Departing), on a text by the family friend Droysen, alludes most likely to Felix’s own departure on his “Grand Tour” with a reference to the opening motive of his overture, Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt (Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage). Inspired by Goethe’s two epigrammatic poems under the same title, Felix wrote the overture in 1828, and then recalled it ruefully

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26 For a discussion of these earlier analyses, see Marian Wilson-Kimber, “The "Suppression" of Fanny Mendelssohn: Rethinking Feminist Biography.” 19th-Century Music 26/2 (Fall 2002): 113-129.
27 Many thanks to Douglass Seaton (Florida State University) for his insight on these issues (private E-mail correspondence, February 4, 2012). See also his “Mendelssohn’s Cycles of Songs.” In Cooper and Prandi, The Mendelssohns (2002), 217ff.
when he was experiencing severe seasickness while making the channel crossing (see Ex. 1.7 and Ex. 1.8).28

The biographical and musical exchange may extend even further: when Felix departed Berlin for England in April 1829, Fanny wrote a duet, *Schlaf Du, schlaf Du süß* (H-U 233), which contains a quotation from the closing theme of Felix’s *Overture to “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,”* both also in E major. Fanny’s lied, also on a text by Droysen, depicts waves gently rocking a traveler safely to sleep (perhaps in the “calm sea” of Felix’s overture) while two mermaids (representing Fanny and her younger sister Rebecka) keep guard (See Ex. 1.9 and Ex. 1.10).29 Felix’s *Scheidend* here may close the circle in this complex web of musical references—he transposed the reference to his own *Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt* from the D major of the overture to match the E major of his *Overture to “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”* and Fanny’s *Lied,* incorporated a similar rocking motive in the piano part, and only slightly rearranged the closing theme to his *Overture to “A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in the opening vocal line (Ex. 1.11).

![Example 1.7: Felix Mendelssohn, *Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt* Overture, Op. 27 (MWV P5, 1828), opening bass motive.](image-url)

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29 The original mermaid and musical references here run even deeper, as the closing theme in Felix’s overture echoes the closing theme in Carl Maria von Weber’s *Oberon.* In addition, Fanny and Rebecka were affectionately dubbed “otters” by their circle of intimate friends – not a big leap to impersonating other sea creatures.


Example 1.10: Fanny Mendelssohn, duet (Sop. and Alto), *Schlaf Du, schlaf Du süß* (H-U 233, 1829), introduction (voices only).


Fanny crafted a deceptively simple, highly effective contribution for the final *Lied* in Op. 9, *Die Nonne (The Nun)*, on a text by Ludwig Uhland (Table 1.8), paints a pathetic
picture of a young woman walking in convent gardens under a pale moon, as the tears for a lost love cling to her eyelashes. She imagines her dead lover transformed into an angel, for—as one who has dedicated herself in chaste devotion to God—she is “allowed to love angels.”

Table 1.8: Ludwig Uhland, "Die Nonne" ("The Nun"), 1805

| In a silent convent garden                  | Im stillen Klostergarten                        |
| A pale damsel wandered.                    | eine bleiche Jungfrau ging.                     |
| The moon shone upon her somberly.          | Der Mond beschien sie trübe,                    |
| And on her eyelashes hung                   | An ihrer Wimper hing.                           |
| The tears of a tender love.                | Die Träne zarter Liebe.                         |
| “O it is better, that my true love is dead!”| "O wohl mir, daß gestorben der treue Buhle mein! |
| Because I may love him again:              | Ich darf ihn wieder lieben:                     |
| He will be an angel,                        | Er wird ein Engel sein,                         |
| And I am allowed to love angels.”          | Und Engel darf ich lieben.”                     |
| She walked with hesitating steps           | Sie trat mit zagem Schritte wohl zum Mariabild; |
| To the picture of Mary;                    | Es stand im lichten Scheine,                    |
| It was enveloped in a gentle glow          | Es sah so muttermild                            |
| And gazed with motherly tenderness         | Herunter auf die Reine.                         |
| Down on the innocent girl.                 | Sie sank zu seinen Füßen,                       |
| She sank to her feet,                       | sah auf mit Himmelsruh',                       |
| And looked up with the peace of heaven,     | Bis ihre Augenlider                            |
| Until her eyelids                           | Im Tode fielen zu:                              |
| With death were closed:                    | Ihr Schleier wallte nieder.                     |
| Her veil fluttered down.                    |                                                                 |

Fanny’s setting—by far the earliest Lied in the set, written in 1822—captures the fragility of the young nun in a vocal line that is at once pure and simple, yet also full of pathos. The opening leap of an octave carves out the aural space for the entire melody, which never exceeds the high e”; the cloistered walls likewise constrain the footsteps of the nun, as well as her painful past and her limited future. Fanny’s nun appears to be
attempting to peer beyond those walls, however; as she raises her thoughts, her prayers, and her eyes to God, the vocal line flirts with the upper limit of the melody, repeatedly leaning on the leading tone. Victoria Sirota has shown how a revision to the last four measures of the *Lied* mitigated the original drama of the first version. The upper voice had descended to the tenor range, or as Sirota interprets it, into the grave. On an even more specific level, one could also understand the descending lines as echoes of several images in the text: the moon shining down on the nun, the tears falling from her eyes, the portrait of Mary casting a benevolent gaze down to the girl kneeling before it, the girl’s eyelids falling in death, and the veil fluttering down after them.

Sirota does not make clear who made these revisions, although in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, one can assume it was Fanny herself, returning to this early song after nearly eight years. Over the last bars are penciled “Schluß leicht verändert” (“Ending lightly revised”), which prompts us to consider the possibility that Felix revised the ending, since a composer would normally simply enter revisions without calling any special attention to them. However, the handwriting appears to be Fanny’s, and it is more likely that Fanny made the notation to draw attention to her revisions, so that they would not be missed when the manuscript was prepared for publication.

One aspect of Sirota’s transcription of the autograph (D-B MA Ms. 32, p. 41) is quite striking: the absence of a root in the dominant seventh chord in m. 28 (Ex. 1.12). An examination of the autograph in Berlin (on June 15, 2012), however, revealed that although Fanny did forget to write the necessary e in her first version, she penciled it in later. Although I do not know whether or not Sirota had the opportunity to view the

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original manuscript, the pencil is so light that it would have been impossible to detect on a microfilm.

Example 1.12: Fanny Mendelssohn, first version of *Die Nonne*, 1822, mm. 27-30

Example 1.13: Fanny Mendelssohn, revised version of *Die Nonne*, ca. 1829, mm. 27-30

The full extent of the revision—beyond the four measures shown in Sirota’s dissertation—is also visible in the original manuscript. The revised version alters the seven last measures of the *Lied*. Fanny moves the repeat sign from m. 26 to m. 23, and extends the E pedal, thus emphasizing the dominant, before resolving to an incomplete authentic cadence in A minor, the fifth scale degree still emphasized by its placement in the top voice of the piano texture (Ex. 1.13), and its persistence all the way through the final chord in the left hand. In a way these revisions do temper the somber finality of the first version, as Sirota noted, especially as the final A-minor chord is not intoned twice as it was in the first version; rather, a more conventional dominant seventh harmony—
complete with root—is resolved carefully by step in the last two measures. The revised last chord is difficult to make out, as the pencil is extremely faint, but contrast and exposure alteration on an enlarged photograph of the manuscript makes the full root-position A-minor chord more easily detectable (Fig. 1.14). There are, however, neither ties nor dotted quarter notes visible in the version of Die Nonne, so in the absence of any other manuscripts, we can conclude that the change was made in proofs.

Figure 1.1: Enlarged and color-enhanced photo of Fanny Mendelssohn, Die Nonne, mm. 29-30 (D-B MA Ms. 32, p. 41). Photo by Angela R. Mace, with permission of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin-Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv.
Figure 1.2: Fanny Mendelssohn, *Die Nonne* (1822), (D-B MA Ms. 32, p. 41). Photo by Angela R. Mace, with permission of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin-Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv.
Now, following this discussion of the Lieder in Felix Mendelssohn’s Opp. 8 and 9, we are faced with the same question, but from a new perspective: how could Felix get away with publishing Fanny’s Lieder as his own? What is it about the “Mendelssohnian” style that still allows Fanny’s Lieder to be performed from Felix’s catalog on recitals around the world as the music of Felix Mendelssohn? How can the musical styles of the two composers be so indistinguishable to the unaccustomed ear that highly-educated musicians and scholars still frequently ask, “So, how much of Felix’s music was really by Fanny?” Fanny Hensel would believe us all not clever enough to “separate the wheat from the chaff,” but that is what I will attempt to do in this dissertation (without, of course, making any pejorative associations of Fanny’s music with chaff).

As we have already seen, the compositional proximity of the two composers in the 1820s was incredibly intimate; hardly a note was thought of or written down without the involvement of the other composer. Their music exhibits many shared characteristics, gestures, settings of favorite poets, and themes, and even, in the case of Op. 9, the appearance of a co-authored song cycle. It is perhaps significant that Felix never published a real song cycle in the sense that Schubert and Robert Schumann did, nor did he write other large-scale cycles (although, as Benedict Taylor has shown, Felix did often use cyclic features across multi-movement works in multiple genres\textsuperscript{31}). Fanny, on the other hand, compiled several notable themed cycles of Lieder, character pieces for piano, and most famously, Das Jahr. The siblings shared “inside jokes” in their music, effectively personalizing an otherwise very public endeavor. The people who could hear

the biographical references—whether they lived in Berlin, Leipzig, Paris, or London, the musical references a sort of hidden message for the tight circle of friends and family that surrounded the supremely gifted Mendelssohn siblings—have long since passed, but we can rediscover these echoes and clues in the Lieder of the two composers and their circle and approach a better understanding of the context for these early publications.

Thus, these early years served as a testing ground for the formation of the “Mendelssohnian” style in an atmosphere that fostered their mutual development. I am by no means the first person to discuss this aspect of their musical education, but I aim to discover new ways of thinking about the same issues, and to suggest new answers by avoiding thinking, “that sounds like Felix” as we have naturally been in the habit of doing (since Felix’s music is clearly much more well known than Fanny’s) or even playing devil’s advocate to an extreme by hunting for instances in which it appears that Fanny influenced Felix. Although these instances will be important to my discussion, I will attempt instead to discover how their common style coalesced, then differentiated in the second half of their lives; how they critiqued their own music and the music of each other; how they worked through their compositional models together, and then separately; how Fanny eventually broke through her own indecision to claim her place in the “guild” of composers alongside her by then internationally renowned brother. I endeavor to examine the paradox of the “Mendelssohnian” style: how can the music of one composer sound so much like the other composer that a piece by one could be mistaken for a piece by the other? Yet, at the same time, those who are more familiar with the catalog of both composers can more easily distinguish between the two composers, discerning the particular flavor of each Mendelssohn.
Both Felix and Fanny seem to have been quite aware of the sorts of changes Felix’s extended absence from Berlin would bring about. When Fanny first started keeping her diary on January 4, 1829, she had sensed what was to come with a mixture of apprehension and exhilaration: “Felix, our soul, is leaving, the second half of my life stands before me.”32 For Felix, the separation was a very different experience. He was embarking on the first great adventure of his life, and was generally accompanied by a family member or friend. Felix did not record his feelings upon leaving Berlin, and any emotions seem to have been quickly pushed aside in the flurry of preparation for his departure. The day Felix was to board the ship that was to take him to London from Hamburg, Abraham Mendelssohn wrote to his wife and Fanny, confirming that Felix was in an elevated state of excitement: “Felix is, as is completely correct and natural, happy and lively. He is heading off into a radiant future, but doesn’t realize yet, how short life is.”33 Felix appended a note to his father’s letter, betraying a nervous excitement: "I have no idea what to write, I have so much to do to pull myself together today, that I am completely distracted, and can not think sensibly about anything; when I am finally in England, I will be much more calm, right now it is just impossible for me.”34

Once Felix arrived in London, he was immersed in a whirl of social engagements, concert appearances, performances of his works, and new experiences to write home

32 Hensel, Tagebücher, 1. “Felix, unsre Seele, geht fort, mir steht der Anfang meiner 2ten Lebenshälfte bevor....”
about, from the dry toast served at his breakfast on a foggy morning, to the unique experience of a night at the theater.\textsuperscript{35} A walking tour of Scotland with his dear friend Carl Klingemann followed, so that not until August 25, 1829 was Felix truly alone. The pair had arrived in Liverpool, where Klingemann left Felix and returned to London. After Klingemann’s departure, Felix experienced several days of a cold, English, summer rain. When he was finally able to leave his lodgings for a walk, he explored a tunnel then under construction from the city to the harbor, and rode a trolley through it for over a mile in complete, chilly darkness—“for the first time in my life I saw nothing”\textsuperscript{36}—echoing his apparent mood of alienation.

The melancholic mood was passing, but further difficulties lay ahead, the greatest among them the carriage accident in London that prevented Felix from attending Fanny’s wedding on October 3, 1829. Thus, when Felix returned to Berlin after eight months, Fanny was a married woman and Felix a composer with an international reputation on the rise. The fairytale story—dazzling musical soirées, intense sibling musical rivalry, intellectual, and personal companionship, and a privileged education with the best tutors in Berlin and Europe, all capped by the stunning success of Felix’s role in the revival of J. S. Bach’s \textit{St. Matthew Passion}—had come to an end.

Only the halcyon days of childhood were at an end, however, and both Felix and Fanny matured confidently into the 1830s, in both their compositional and personal lives. Felix traveled Europe for four years, before accepting a post in Düsseldorf, then marrying Cécile Jeanrenaud in 1837, and wrote in larger forms from full symphonies to his first oratorio, \textit{St. Paul}. Fanny settled into her role as wife, mother, and salon hostess,

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Ibid.}, 269ff.
and also ventured into larger genres such as her three cantatas and her String Quartet in E-flat. Both composers continued to work through the influence of their most significant musical models, Bach and Beethoven. One work in particular spanned this chronological turning point and sparked one of the most intriguing Mendelssohn mysteries through the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries: the “Easter Sonata.”
Chapter 2 The Ostersonate

In which an investigation is launched and a discovery made concerning the most peculiar matter of the “Easter Sonata.”

The “soul” of the Mendelssohn family life departed on that April morning in 1829, but life went on. Fanny’s journal entry continues with a matter-of-fact report on the day’s activities, and unwittingly sparked one of the most fascinating mysteries in Mendelssohn scholarship:

Hensel stayed until 7. Later in the morning we attended a baptism at Marianne’s. Rosa and I held the little one, Franz Paul Alexander. At midday, mother and I ate alone, after lunch Hensel came, in the evening Marx, Droysen, Albert Heydemann, [and] Gans [visited] for an hour. Droysen brought me a wonderful poem about Felix, which put me in such a pleasant mood that the melody occurred to me immediately. I played my Easter Sonata.

What Easter Sonata?

For nearly two centuries, the Easter Sonata has been shrouded in mystery, its identity clouded by the unavailability of sources for Fanny’s works and personal papers,

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1 Hensel, Tagebücher, 1.
2 Marianne Mendelssohn née Seeligmann.
3 Rosamunde Ernestine Pauline Mendelssohn née Richter.
4 Franz Paul Alexander (Franz von) Mendelssohn.
5 Albert Gustav Heydemann, Classicist
6 Eduard Gans, Professor of Law at the University of Berlin (later Humboldt University of Berlin).
especially before the 1990s. Based on documentary evidence, as I will show here, the work is clearly by Fanny, but in the absence of a known autograph manuscript or edition, the sonata has been subject to various speculations, and its authenticity has been unconfirmed.

Despite the manuscript’s uncertain status, there remained significant documentary evidence to argue for Fanny’s authorship. The first surviving reference to the Easter Sonata is from April 10, 1829, the day Felix left for his first trip to England, cited above. Fanny had written a sonata movement in F major in 1821 (H-U 43, lost) and her first full-length sonata, in C minor (H-U 128), in 1824, but there is no reason to suspect that she would have revived one of these sonatas and given it a new title several years later. Because this is the first surviving reference to the sonata, scholars have believed that the sonata dated from April 1829.

According to French pianist Eric Heidsieck, who examined the only rumored surviving source in 1972, the sonata is dated “Easter 1828,”8 which would have fallen on April 6 of that year. An examination of the chronology of works in the Hellwig-Unruh catalogue does reveal a gap between 17 February (H-U 217) and the middle of June 1828 (H-U 218). While gaps in Fanny’s compositional activity were not uncommon, a four-movement sonata could very well have fully occupied Fanny for many weeks. Comparing Fanny’s compositional activity to the same time frame a year later in April 1829, which is where Hellwig-Unruh places the Easter Sonata (H-U 235) based on the first surviving reference in Fanny’s diary, we find that Fanny was busily engaged with composing songs and drafting piano pieces, and in May had begun to notate her “Liederkreis” on texts of Johann Gustav Droysen, which marks the departure of her

8 Private correspondence with Eric Heidsieck, Paris, 10 February 2010.
brother Felix from Berlin with a series of Lieder in much the same way Beethoven’s “Lebewohl” Sonata, Op. 81a, had commemorated the departure of the Archduke Rudolph from Vienna in 1809.

If Fanny did complete this sonata around Easter 1828, why did it take a year for the Easter Sonata to appear in diaries or letters? Two plausible answers are that Felix did not travel as extensively in 1828, and that Fanny did not start to keep a diary until January 4, 1829. Just nine days after Fanny’s diary entry in which she first mentions the sonata, Easter Sunday would be observed on April 19, 1829, which perhaps prompted her to return to the sonata at this time. Thus, the title does not merely locate the work chronologically, but also functions programmatically. Moreover, when Fanny mentioned playing her sonata in 1829, the Mendelssohns were still very much involved in the revival performances of J. S. Bach’s St. Matthew Passion—indeed, Carl Friedrich Zelter would conduct the third performance of the St. Matthew Passion in Felix’s absence on Good Friday, April 17, 1829. Preparations for the historic performance of the St. Matthew Passion consumed the musical and social life of the Mendelssohn family for several years, and Fanny—as a member of the alto section in Zelter’s Singakademie—was as fully invested in the project as her brother Felix was, and took part in the performance.

Exchanging Berlin for London on the heels of the first two wildly successful performances of the St. Matthew Passion, Felix wrote home regularly from the first segment of his English tour, as did his traveling companions. In one of the letters from the Mendelssohn family friend, Carl Klingemann, we read next of the Easter Sonata. Klingemann, an official of the Hanoverian delegation to London, welcomed Felix to London on his arrival on April 21. After the concert season in London had ended, the two set off on a walking tour of Scotland on July 22. By mid-August, the pair had turned their
steps southwards back towards London, and arrived in Liverpool. There, as Klingemann informed Fanny, they boarded an American ship in dock, ostensibly to sightsee:

Liverpool, 19. August [1829], Evening 9:30

Felix envies me the miserable bit of space still left on this paper, as it gives me the privilege of setting forth a piquant event of this morning, how we were aboard an American ship today, from New York, called “Napoleon,” on which, among all other imaginable mahogany comforts, we found a Broadwood piano, entertainment for long sea voyages, at which—in the Liverpool harbor, close to the Atlantic—Felix sat down and played for me the first movement of your Easter Sonata, O Maiden Bride, about which we had previously only spoken. Cool sea breezes wafted in from above board, and sailors in the distance sang a monotonous song in a minor key as they worked.

We can gather from this letter that the sonata was an exciting addition to Fanny’s collection of works since Klingemann had last been part of the Mendelssohns’ social circle in Berlin (he was transferred from Berlin to London in late 1827), and that Felix had been relating details of it to Klingemann. We can also infer that Felix knew at least the first movement of the sonata by memory, or that he carried a copy of the sonata with him.

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9 The “Napoleon” was an American packet ship of 538 tons, built in New Bedford, Massachusetts in 1827. It was owned by the Blue Swallowtail Line, and may have had luxury accommodation for several passengers. Visitors would have boarded at the captain’s discretion; it is impossible to determine exactly how Mendelssohn and Klingemann were invited on board, but perhaps as a German delegate in London, Klingemann had some connections or perhaps they were merely allowed on as German tourists. Sincerest thanks to John Winrow (assistant curator, National Museums Liverpool) for this information in E-mail correspondence of January 6, 2009.

on this journey.\textsuperscript{11} We do know that Felix had a phenomenal capability to memorize quickly, but in this instance may indicate a certain closeness to the score as well. Felix most likely did not help his sister write the \textit{Easter Sonata}{}; the siblings were certainly very much involved in critiquing each other’s works and suggesting changes, but we still have not found evidence that either composer significantly contributed to the act of original composition in a sense that we would today consider co-authorship. In the case of the \textit{Lieder} Op. 8 and Op. 9 discussed in Chapter 1, the partnership was closer to co-editing, and the siblings often criticized each other’s works (the criticisms were preserved for posterity once Felix and Fanny were living in separate cities). Most likely Felix was a close observer of the process and could have had some influence on the score, just as we know Fanny had been a close observer of and participant in Felix’s compositional process.

The final firm documentary evidence we have for Fanny’s authorship of the \textit{Easter Sonata} is in her next letter to Felix. As usual, Fanny is self-effacing, but displays no hesitation about claiming her authorship of the work—and she does not fail to appreciate Klingemann’s vivid description of the incongruous effect of her sonata played in an atmosphere so far removed from the music room at Leipzigerstraße 3 in Berlin:

\begin{quote}
To Felix, August 26, 1829

But dear Felix, that you, in the Atlantic, played selections from my \textit{Easter Sonata} on a Broadwood, would be infinitely grotesque, if it were not — if it were not so absolutely wonderful. I amuse myself with it all week long.\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{11} No second copy of the sonata is known to survive, so it is most likely that Felix memorized the piece, which would have been entirely normal for him. His memory was phenomenal, as well as a significant tool in his compositional practice; Felix would often improvise a work for several years (the \textit{Fantasie} Op. 28 is one excellent example) before writing it down.

\textsuperscript{12} GB I Ms. MDM b. 4, No. 83. “Aber lieber Felix, daß du im Atlantischen, Stücke aus meine Ostersonate auf einem Broadwood gespielt hast, wäre grenzenlos grotesk, wenn es nicht — gar so hübsch wäre. Daran amüsiere ich mich wochenlang.”
After this letter, Fanny never again made explicit reference to the *Easter Sonata*, as far as we can determine. There is, however, one more letter by Felix which may reference the work. Writing from Rome on February 1, 1831, Felix mentioned a sonata with an “A-major beginning” (“adur Anfang”), by which he may have meant Fanny’s *Easter Sonata*—or, perhaps, Beethoven’s Sonata in A major, Op. 101—as Felix never wrote a sonata in A major himself.\(^{13}\) Thereafter, the work fell out of the Mendelssohn family papers completely.

In 1972, French pianist Eric Heidsieck recorded a *Sonate de Pâques* (*Easter Sonata*) for the Cassiopée label. The LP sleeve listed the composer of the sonata as “Mendelssohn,” without a first name, and it is clear that Felix Mendelssohn is intended, although it is not possible to prove either way whether or not the owner of the manuscript knew whether or not the sonata was by Felix or Fanny, or even that there was any question about the matter.\(^{14}\) At that time, most listeners would have assumed that Mendelssohn was “Felix,” since the true extent of Fanny’s work as a composer was still only little known, and the other composers mentioned on the LP were also referred to by only their last name (Robert Schumann’s *Carnaval de Vienne* Op. 26 is the other work on the record, and Johannes Brahms is mentioned in the notes). Until the scholarship on Fanny began slowly gaining ground in the 1980s and 1990s, the documentary research


required to document the sonata was not possible without extensive archival research and a knowledge of exactly what to look for. With the publication of Fanny’s letters and diaries, as well as the publication of catalogs of Hensel’s full oeuvre, reconstructing the story of the “Easter Sonata” is now much more easily achievable. Even Felix Mendelssohn was not as respected as he is today, so a new sonata, while interesting to scholars, may not have piqued the interest of a larger audience as it would today.

The sole traceable manuscript that was supposed to be connected to the sonata, in private possession, was even thought by some to be a copy in Felix’s hand, further strengthening the attribution to Felix in the absence of the documentary evidence.\(^{15}\) Without access to the score, there had been no way to prove that the *Easter Sonata* mentioned in Fanny’s diary entry and the *Sonate de Pâques* on the recording were one and the same. That one could confidently attribute the work to Felix in the absence of a full knowledge of Fanny’s style demonstrates just how stylistically intertwined the two composers were, especially in their early years.

In 1983, Roger Fiske proposed that the title *Easter Sonata* referred to Felix’s *Fantasia* (or *Sonate écossaise*) in F-sharp minor, Op. 28, and suggested that the work accrued the title because it had been given to Fanny as an Easter present.\(^{16}\) But Felix never referred to any of his works as an *Easter Sonata* while, as we have seen, Fanny did. Moreover, while Felix often did present works to Fanny for her birthday and Christmas, he did not make a habit of offering her Easter gifts of that kind, as far as we know. Although Felix’s early improvisations of the *Fantasia* Op. 28 do date from the

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\(^{15}\) Correspondence with Eric Heidsieck, February 10, 2010.

\(^{16}\) Roger Fiske, *Scotland in Music: A European Enthusiasm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 141. It seems that Fiske was not aware of Eric Heidsieck’s recording, since the Fantasia Op. 28 and the work recorded as the “Easter Sonata” are clearly not the same piece.
same period as the *Easter Sonata*, there are no indications in the documentary sources that the *Easter Sonata* was another name for the *Fantasia*, nor does the *Fantasia* exhibit any Passion story musical topics. Other direct references to the possibility that the *Easter Sonata* was by Felix rather than Fanny—besides the marketing of the recording as the work of Felix—are difficult to locate, but the idea became established within the scholarship, was passed on with the legend, and held sufficient prominence to cast real uncertainty on the true identity of the composer.

After Heidsieck recorded the sonata in 1972, the work for unknown reasons disappeared from public consciousness once again, but Hensel scholars remained optimistic that the sonata was by Fanny, and that the manuscript would surface at some point. In 1992, Françoise Tillard stated that the manuscript was in the private possession of someone who would let no one see it, so it does not appear likely from her writing that she ever had the opportunity to view it.\(^{17}\) In 2000, Renate Hellwig-Unruh published her thematic index of Hensel’s works, in which she asserted that the manuscript was lost (H-U 235, “verschollen”), but cited a 1975 listing by Rudolf Elvers in *Mendelssohn Studien 2* as a possible reference to the work and to its former location in a collection of papers.\(^{18}\) Elvers provided a brief description of a volume, then in private possession, which contained works in several genres from the late 1820s.\(^{19}\) He noted that pages 89 through 110 were missing from the volume, but provided the information that they may have been filled with a “Sonate für Klavier.” How he knew or supposed that a sonata had


occupied those pages is unclear, but Elvers was at the time the curator of the Mendelssohn papers in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, and a recognized expert on the collection and known to have access to many private and unknown collections.20

This volume, MS. M. Lohs 4 (now in the collection of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv), betrays no physical evidence that a portion of the manuscript had been forcibly removed; only the gap in pagination identified by Elvers remains as evidence of a missing manuscript. Thus, we can infer that the volume was bound or rebound at some point in the twentieth century, after the *Easter Sonata* had been removed. The volume itself does not appear to have been a pre-bound composition album filled with blank pages of equal size, like many of Fanny’s working albums, but rather a collection of compositions dating from the late 1820s and early 1830s, collated and numbered.21

Did Fanny collect these works together for this volume herself? Most likely she did organize her own papers, but we can’t be entirely certain in this case, since we do have evidence that the volume was bound or rebound later. However, the rough chronology of the volume is consistent with Fanny’s usual practice, so we may work under the assumption that she did collect these works together. Other works in the volume include her *Festspiel, Die Hochzeit kommt* (H-U 248) for the silver anniversary of her parents on December 26, 1829, featuring three sopranos, tenor, two basses, four-voice choir and chamber orchestra; *Hero und Leander* (H-U 262, December 1831-January 1832), a dramatic scene for soprano and piano or orchestra on texts that

20 Some of these collections were his own; shortly before his death, Elvers donated his personal collection to the Stadtgeschichtliches Museum zu Leipzig, containing ca. 1000 items including manuscripts, letters, artwork, and other personal items including quill pens. I had the opportunity to preview this collection on August 19, 2011, as it was being processed.

21 Hellwig-Unruh (2000), 32.
Wilhelm Hensel adapted from Friedrich von Schiller; *Zum Fest der heiligen Cäcilie* (H-U 272, November 1833), a setting of texts from the mass for St. Cäcilia (Fanny’s name day saint, and her middle name) for soprano, alto, tenor, bass, four-voice choir, and piano; and some smaller genres, such as *Lieder* and various piano pieces and sketches, including the first version of her Sonata in E-flat major (H-U 246), which she began serious work on in the days just after her wedding and later revised into her String Quartet in E-flat major (H-U 277). Also included are the two organ preludes Fanny wrote for her own wedding which was held on October 3, 1829 (F major, H-U 242; and G major, H-U 243). Perhaps the works in MA MS. M. Lohs 4 represented works of biographical significance to Fanny, as well as works in larger genres, which she may have been especially proud of, and interested in carefully preserving. If the *Easter Sonata* ever had formed part of that volume as Fanny arranged it, it was certainly removed before the volume was bound, or rebound, probably at some point in the 20th century, and before it was acquired by the Mendelssohn-Archiv. Most likely, the *Easter Sonata* has never been physically present in the Mendelssohn-Archiv. Thus, we have collected a string of clues to construct a sketch of the manuscript and its author (see Table 2.1).
Table 2.1: The Easter Sonata - A Chronology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 April 1828</td>
<td>Fanny Mendelssohn composes the Easter Sonata (date on ms.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 10 April 1829 | Felix departs Berlin for London via Hamburg. Fanny records in her diary that she played her Easter Sonata.  
| 19 August 1829| Klingemann writes a letter to the Mendelssohn family from Liverpool, stating that Felix played the first movement of the Easter Sonata aboard the American packet ship, “Napoleon.” |
| 22 August 1829| Fanny writes a letter to Felix, mentioning Klingemann’s account of Felix’s performance of her Easter Sonata in Liverpool.  
| 1972          | Eric Heidsieck records a Sonate de Pâques of Felix Mendelssohn (France, Cassiopée).  
| 1975          | Rudolf Elvers describes a manuscript, then in private possession, with a missing sonata.  
| 1983          | Roger Fiske proposes that the missing Easter Sonata is Felix Mendelssohn’s Fantasie Op. 28.  
| 1992          | Françoise Tillard states that the Easter Sonata is in private possession.  
| 2000          | Renate Hellwig-Unruh lists the manuscript as lost.  

As of Fall 2009, this documentary evidence represented the furthest possible state of research on the Easter Sonata. The year 2009 had been rich with festivals, 

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24 GB I Ms. MDM b. 4, No. 83.
26 Roger Fiske, Scotland in Music, A European Enthusiasm (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 141
conferences, concerts, and publications celebrating the life and music of Felix Mendelssohn’s bicentenary around the world. Fanny’s own bicentenary had been celebrated with much less fanfare in 2005, but as Felix enjoyed a moment in the spotlight in 2009, so too did Fanny. Todd’s recent biography of Fanny—the first to take full account of Fanny’s complete oeuvre since much of it had been closed to research for most of the 20th century—appeared in late 2009 and established Fanny as a composer to be taken seriously in her own right. But still the mystery of the *Easter Sonata* remained. Within several months, however, this would change dramatically.

The mystery of the *Easter Sonata* makes a salient case study for how a work by one of the siblings can be mistaken so easily—and convincingly—for a work by the other. For the uninitiated listener, the music of Fanny “sounds like” the music of Felix, because we have known the music of Felix for two hundred years, as his symphonies, violin concerto in E minor, *Lieder ohne Worte*, *Lieder (mit Worte)*, and the two oratorios are a staple of concert halls and piano studios. My first intention, in the absence of the manuscript, was to explore what made each composers’ music unique, and to apply these parameters to Eric Heidsieck’s recording of the *Sonate de Pâque* in order to argue for the correct authorship. I gathered everything I could find—letters, catalogue entries, references to the work in Mendelssohn scholarship, as seen above—and put them together with what stylistic features I could glean from the recording to conclude that if the sonata on the CD really was authentic, then it was most surely by Fanny. When I visited the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv in September 2009, I examined the volume with the gap in
pagination that had been described by Elvers in 1975 (MA MS. M. Lohs 4, pp. 89-110), which was by then in the archive. Hoping for a clue to guide my next steps, I also visited Elvers in his home in Berlin at this time (September 10, 2009), and asked him if he knew where the sonata was, or if he knew anything about it; he maintained that he knew nothing about the sonata or its whereabouts.²⁹ I was at an impasse and continued to puzzle over the mystery, but in January 2010, John Supko (Duke University), helped me obtain Heidsieck’s contact information, and the puzzle pieces started to fall into place.

Heidsieck informed me that he had seen the manuscript in 1971, that it was dated Easter 1828—a full year earlier than we had previously believed, and fitting neatly into the compositional gap in Hensel’s catalog mentioned above—and that it was in Felix’s hand, perhaps a manuscript copy. Slightly disappointed to hear that the manuscript might not be an autograph in Fanny’s hand, but hopeful that I would have the opportunity to at least see whatever copy he had used when learning the sonata, I requested a visit to speak with Heidsieck in Paris, with the intention to ask him about his experience recording the sonata and simply to see what there was to discover if I were there in person. In the interim, through Heidsieck, I was able to obtain an appointment to meet the manuscript owner, and examine the manuscript—apparently the first time such an interview had been granted.³⁰

On Sunday, May 16, 2010, I was finally in Paris to see the Easter Sonata, with Eric Heidsieck. First, and most importantly, I was able to confirm that the sonata was in Fanny’s hand, thus proving that this was indeed her work. Since no scholar had

²⁹ Sadly, this would be the first and last time I had the honor to speak with Dr. Elvers; I received news of his death as I was drafting this chapter, on October 24, 2011.
³⁰ Françoise Tillard may have known who owned it, but it seems clear that she had never seen it, as she wrote that the sonata was “in the private ownership of someone who would allow no one to see it.” Tillard, Fanny Hensel, 1996.
reportedly ever been allowed to see this manuscript, this was the breakthrough moment for this attribution; without the specialist knowledge of the unique musical handwriting styles of both Felix and Fanny, which I had studied for several years, this identification would have been impossible, because there is no signature on the work.

Second, I was able to move the terminus post quem of the work from April 1829—which, as I have shown above, had been the proposed date for the sonata, based on the first surviving documentary evidence—to one year earlier, confirming Eric Heidsieck’s date of April 1828 for the sonata. As it turns out, this was not the end of work on the sonata, but rather only the beginning. The first movement is dated “Ostermontag. den 7ten April 28” (Easter Monday, the 7th of April [18]28). Fanny had completed work on the second movement, the prelude and fugue, by April 24th, and finally finished the work on “den 10ten Mai 1828. Abends ½10” (the 10th of May. Evening 9:30). This last gesture, providing the exact time of completion (to add one more straw to the already sizeable pile of evidence), is quite typical of Fanny’s practice. She would often specify the time, place, and sometimes the company she was with when she began or finished a work, particularly one clearly so significant as this sonata. In this way, as Todd is fond of pointing out, Fanny’s music sketchbooks became an extension of her diary, each facet of her life—social life, education, music, culture, religion, and family—blending with the others.

The third major question that I was able to answer about this sonata was whether or not the work was in fact titled an Easter Sonata, or if Fanny and Klingemann had merely referred to the time frame in which she had written it. Without any evidence that Fanny had given the work a title, any programmatic interpretation could only be
provisional. But, clearly inscribed on the cover sheet, in Fanny’s hand, is the title “Ostersonate” (Easter Sonata), and below that, the year, “1828.”

And finally, as I directed my attention to the lower right corners of the pages, the last puzzle piece fell into place: the manuscript pages were numbered 89-110, matching the page numbers missing from the volume now housed in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz (MA MS. M. Lohs 4, pp. 89-110). The manuscript I held in my hands was incontrovertibly the missing sonata from the volume I had examined in Berlin just over six months earlier.

While my examination of the manuscript answered these four pressing questions—authorship, date, title, and provenance—new questions inevitably arose. Most significantly, the unknown copyist who had prepared the score for Heidsieck in 1972 may not have been aware that the flag on one bar line near the end of the finale indicated that an insertion was to be made (a common practice for Fanny). A loose leaf at the back of the manuscript contains the insertion, headed by matching flags. Heidsieck had already explained to me that the finale was in some disorder, and that he had had to make some choices regarding in which order the chorale segments were to be played. It is still not clear to me, as I was unable to take this manuscript to a piano, nor take any photographs or copy any extensive portions, to determine whether or not this loose leaf represented that confusion of material that Heidsieck had referred to, or if this loose leaf never made its way into the copyist’s score, and then ultimately onto the version that Heidsieck recorded.

This determination must await a critical edition of the sonata, which may not be a possibility for many years yet as the manuscript remains in private possession. Also, the precise details of the manuscript’s journey through the years between composition and
Heidsieck’s recording are unknown as of this writing, but it is possible and hopeful that more information will surface in the future if the owner decides to sell. Most likely is that the manuscript, like most of Fanny Hensel’s papers, was passed down through the family until it was sold by Hugo von Mendelssohn Bartholdy to its current owner, who at this time remains anonymous.

iii

Now that the manuscript of the *Easter Sonata* has been rediscovered and positively identified, we can confidently proceed with analysis based on biographical chronology and programmatic intent. In addition, as we continue to explore the idea of the “Mendelssohnian” style, the *Easter Sonata* allows us to examine a moment in Fanny’s development as a composer as she grappled with the three most significant musical influences in her life. And always present in this discussion must be the question: “how could this work have been misattributed to Felix”?

Overall, the form is expansive and elastic, featuring frequent fantasia-like digressions and virtuoso fireworks, an especially prominent characteristic of Fanny’s style. The sonata is cast in the classic four-movement format, but rather than featuring a Haydnesque minuet and trio, or a Beethovenian theme and variations slow movement, the sonata showcases several unusual choices (see Table 2.2). The first movement is a modified Sonata-Allegro form, while the second movement is a pensive and heavily chromatic prelude and fugue reminiscent of J. S. Bach’s music, an unconventional choice for the second movement of a sonata. The third movement is—to use the term I am attempting to redefine—a darkly tinged “Mendelssohnian” scherzo. If we see each of the first three movements as a representative of a particular composer’s style—Ludwig
van Beethoven, Johann Sebastian Bach, and Felix Mendelssohn—we have the three pillars of Fanny’s musical style, after which she even named her only son, Sebastian Ludwig Felix Hensel. The finale, then—a powerful, stormy movement giving way to a chorale—may represent Fanny’s own emerging voice.

Table 2.2: Movements of the *Easter Sonata*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Allegro assai moderato</td>
<td>Sonata-Allegro</td>
<td>A major</td>
<td>Flexible sonata form Turn figures – Beethoven Sonatas Opp. 101, 109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Largo e molto espressivo</td>
<td>Prelude and Fugue</td>
<td>E minor</td>
<td>Pensive, Bachian fugue – recitative conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Allegretto</td>
<td>Sonata Allegro/Rondo hybrid</td>
<td>E major</td>
<td>Scherzo – Staccato arpeggios, theme like “April” from Das Jahr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Allegro con strepito</td>
<td>Finale and chorale fantasy on “Christe, du Lamm Gottes”</td>
<td>A major / a minor</td>
<td>A minor – “earthquake” musical topic, Passion music tradition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following discussion of the individual movements of the *Easter Sonata* will refer to specific measure numbers. Please see the Appendix for a complete score of the *Easter Sonata*.

I. Allegro assai moderato

The first movement, *Allegro assai moderato*, is cast in the Beethovenian vein. The relationship to Beethoven’s Sonata in A major Op. 101 is clear; also in A major, the opening of the *Easter Sonata* evokes a similar lyrical strain. Turn motives and a reaching first theme recalling both Beethoven’s Op. 101 and the Sonata in E major Op. 109 are
woven together above a lush harmonic foundation, inviting the listener to follow their path to thematic transformation. Listening with the expectation of a traditional sonata-allegro form movement is frustrating but not entirely unfruitful. Fanny does not repeat the exposition—a formal latitude Felix also adopted in works with programmatic overtones such as his *Hebrides Overture* Op. 26 and *Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt* Op. 27—and liberal use of transition material and extensive development of main themes blurs the formal boundaries, rendering this movement fantasy-like. Such an elastic treatment of sonata form would become something of a hallmark for Fanny, annoying her more fastidious brother.\(^1\) Thus Fanny takes late Beethoven—who had died just one year earlier in 1827, the same year scores for both Op. 101 and Op. 109 are listed in Fanny's catalogue of her music collection\(^2\)—and recasts his model in her own flexible concept of form and thematic development. As Table 2.3 shows, the Sonata-Allegro form in this first movement is quite loosely constructed. There are several elements that prevent a tidy summarization of themes into the traditional "exposition-development-recapitulation" model.

\(^1\) Todd, *Hensel*, 185ff.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mm.</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-14</td>
<td>Exposition: First theme group</td>
<td>Theme A1, Theme A2, (including minor variant of A2, arriving on dominant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-20</td>
<td>Bridge</td>
<td>Establish dominant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-34</td>
<td>Extension of A2 to V/V</td>
<td>Quasi-development of A2, mm. 30-34.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-43</td>
<td>Second theme group (B1)</td>
<td>Rising scale motive repeated at the octave and extended, which carves out space for lyrical descent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58-61</td>
<td>Return of minor variant of A2</td>
<td>Used as closing theme for the second theme group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-69</td>
<td>Bridge</td>
<td>Scale motives derived from B1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-80</td>
<td>Closing</td>
<td>Quick return to end of B2…which seems to be blended with rising fourth of A2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-88</td>
<td>Arpeggio fantasia digression</td>
<td>V/V/V (F♯7) to V/V (B7) to V (E).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88-91</td>
<td>Bridge</td>
<td>Different type of arpeggio bridge, second iteration extends the range up to provide frame for descent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92-100</td>
<td>Arpeggio fantasia digression</td>
<td>Return to arpeggio fantasia – a♯0, to d♯0 cycling through inversions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-107</td>
<td></td>
<td>Change of texture, closing to the fantasia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-127</td>
<td>Retransition/closing themes</td>
<td>Development of the opening theme (A1) which quickly dissolves into a chain of suspensions to retransition (pedals and descending bass lines).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128-136</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rising and falling scale motive over harmonic progression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136-143</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chromatically rising thirds, then arpeggiated thirds descending before Recap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143-156</td>
<td>Recapitulation</td>
<td>On Theme A2, not Theme A1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>157-175</td>
<td>Return of B1 and B2, etc</td>
<td>Developed and expanded, again extending the frame upwards for a dramatic descent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>175-184</td>
<td>Return of mix with A2</td>
<td>Descending arpeggios break up the prevailing development of A2 + B2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>185-188</td>
<td>Bridge</td>
<td>Thickening of texture underneath the return of A2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>189-201</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Rising scale over continued thickened chords in LH leads to a &quot;Mendelssohnian&quot; La-So-Do cadence (the Do is displaced to the bass).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>202-205</td>
<td>Closing</td>
<td>Arpeggios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>205-212</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first part of the first theme group (Theme A1) never returns verbatim, rather, the second part (Theme A2) is developed throughout the movement and returns in the tonic to function as the recapitulation at m. 143. Perhaps, then, Theme A1 functions as an introduction of the kernels of the thematic materials for the first theme group without functioning as a full theme on its own. Indeed, the basic structure of the first theme group is a descending triad (Ex. 2.1 and Ex. 2.2). This is clearly the most simple of reductions, and descending triads occur throughout all works in the Western tonal practice, but the use of the descending triad here (embellished with passing tones, retardations, and suspensions) is ubiquitous and does tie these seemingly disparate elements together. Thus, the first measures influence the future of the sonata, but remain a distant, imperfect, memory.  

Example 2.1: Fanny Mendelssohn, *Easter Sonata*, Mvt. I, first theme group, Theme A1

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Example 2.2: Fanny Mendelssohn, Easter Sonata, Mvt. I, first theme group, Theme A2

Throughout the movement, the borders between fantasia-like digression and development are quite porous. The movement does not proceed through the sonata form in an orderly fashion, while neatly ticking off all the analytical boxes. Instead, Fanny interweaves brief fragments of thematic recall with developed motives, new motives, and bridge passagework or figuration (we will see her return to this method of deconstructing form in the Scherzo and Finale). We get the sense that the main themes weren’t really the most important element of the form for Fanny. Instead, she worked to disguise her themes as much as possible and stretch, extend, or otherwise repurpose them.

Such stretching or extending of motives or ideas was a typical developmental device for Fanny. She experimented with it in her cadenza to Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. in C major, Op. 15 in 1823 (see also Chapter 4). Fanny extended the distinctive six-note rising scalar motive to nine notes, so that we retain in our ears the memory of the original motive but realize that something is different. In the Easter Sonata, Fanny extended motives not only to develop motives, but also to carve out an
aural space or frame for her material. Looking in particular at the presentation of the second theme group, starting in m. 35, we see that Fanny first wrote her theme as a simple ascending scale, which spans an octave. Then, she repeated the idea immediately, starting at the next octave, but extended it at the top an additional third. The result is two-fold: first, the frame for any ensuing musical material has been expanded exponentially, but quite elegantly, in a short span of time.

Second, the slight extension at the end of the second ascent increases the tension or sense of expectation that something must come as a result of this over-extension of the idea. Like a ball that has been thrown high into the air, there is a moment when the momentum slows and the ball must inevitably reverse its direction and fall with gathering speed back to earth. Fanny’s music does just that, with a lyrical broadening at the top of the ascent, which is followed by a motive that tumbles back down the keyboard to the exact point of departure. Fanny uses the unembellished scalar motive only to ascend, never to descend, and each ascent or descent is subtly foiled in bass line, which always moves in contrary motion (Ex. 2.3).
Examining the overall structure of the movement with the established methodologies of Sonata-Allegro form reveals that Fanny either deliberately thwarted traditional sonata form (as it was understood in her time), or simply used it as an elastic mold for her musical ideas. Indeed, the concept of “Sonata-Allegro form” as we know it today was codified long after Fanny first started composing. However, she had many historical models, especially in Beethoven. Also, Adolph Bernhard Marx—who did the most to shape our modern-day understanding of the form—was a close family friend.

34 A. B. Marx, *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition*, 1845.
We know that the family spent many hours in the company of A. B. Marx during the mid-
to late 1820s, so it is not a stretch of the imagination to assume that they discussed his theoretical ideas.

Looking back today with an entire repertoire to assess, however, does have its advantages, and distinct patterns do emerge. Charles Rosen has famously surveyed the repertoire in his *Sonata Forms* of 1980. While the book is not recent, it is now a standard text, and offers insight particularly in the area that interests us for the young Mendelssohns’ work – just before 1830. Rosen claims that “Sonata-Allegro” form was basically dead by about 1830, which has significant implications for both Felix and Fanny. Although both composers did use sonata form frequently throughout their lives, Felix wrote only a handful of piano sonatas compared to his near contemporaries Schubert and Beethoven, and of course in comparison to the high classicists Haydn and Mozart.\(^{35}\) The Mendelssohns’ later contemporaries also did not write many sonatas – Robert Schumann wrote three major sonatas, Johannes Brahms wrote three, Chopin wrote three, Fanny Hensel wrote three (including the *Easter Sonata*), Clara Wieck Schumann wrote one, and all of these composers have sketches and single movements for other sonatas in their papers as well.

\(^{35}\) Out of the seven complete sonatas that Felix wrote for piano solo, all were written before 1830, and most near 1820; the last attempt was one movement of a sonata in G minor, from about 1839-1841 (MWV U-147). Sonata in A minor, 1820 (MWV U-8); Sonata in E minor, 1820 (MWV U-19); Sonata in F minor, 1820 (MWV U-23); Sonata in B-flat minor, 1823 (MWV U-42). Only one sonata was published in an authorized edition—the Sonata in E major, Op. 6 in 1826 (MWV U-54)—while the others, Sonata in G minor, 1821, Op. 105 (MWV U-30) and Sonata in B-flat major, 1827, Op. 106 (MWV U-64) (with high opus numbers because they were published posthumously in 1868) represent what Mendelssohn probably would have considered juvenilia or unsuccessful attempts. The remaining five remained unpublished, appearing finally in the LMA/IV starting in 2008 (as well as some smaller publications in the 1980s and 1990s – complete details can be found in the MWV catalog).
Even though the Mendelssohns kept up with their contemporaries in terms of numbers, the piano sonatas by Brahms, Robert Schumann, and even Chopin are much more frequently programmed today. The implication is compelling: perhaps the Mendelssohns did not successfully transform the piano sonata into a 19th-century concept that could outlive the weight of the 18th century, and instead left the form uncomfortably straddling the fence between old and new. Indeed, the sonatas of Felix and Fanny Mendelssohn are in general much less substantial than those of Brahms or Schumann, and perhaps audiences looking for the true successors of Beethoven passed over the more Classicist tendencies of the Mendelssohns—who, according to Fanny herself, absorbed the influence of Beethoven differently than did some of their later contemporaries—and found the stormy, thick-textured, virtuosic sonatas of Brahms and Schumann to be more capable of withstanding, if not dispelling, the shadow of Beethoven.

The use of sonata form lived in on chamber sonatas, for piano and violin, viola, or cello—which were much more popular than solo piano sonatas for 19th-century composers, the Mendelssohns included—or string quartets and symphonic movements. Solo piano music certainly was not underrepresented in the 19th century, as is of course well known, but the predominance of character pieces, fantasies, waltzes, mazurkas, nocturnes, *Lieder ohne Worte*, etc., does support Rosen’s observation that the sonata form, which I am modifying to emphasize especially the solo piano sonata, had outlived its glory days by 1830.

Once something is defined or perfected it becomes static, stale, immutable; once the form is no longer a living entity, the challenge becomes not how to further develop and innovate within a growing tradition, but rather how to breath new life into it, to
produce something original, to put new wine into old bottles without causing an explosion (however interesting such an explosion might be). Rosen points out that Felix Mendelssohn does manage to innovate, but he of course does not consider Fanny Mendelssohn in his broad swath of exclusively male composers. How Rosen reconciles the prevailing image of Felix’s respect for the sanctity of classical forms with the idea of a composer radically challenging the conventions of those forms is quite fresh, even today over thirty years later, and somewhat overlooked at least in the most commonly held conception of Felix. However, Felix certainly does not experiment with the form in the same way that Fanny does. In Fanny’s music, the elastic approach to thematic development and form is apparent to most listeners, much more akin to Beethoven, but with Felix the innovations are on a much more micro level, although to the informed theoretist like Rosen every bit as ground breaking.

II. Largo e molto espressivo

Pensive, searching, and permeated with pungent chromaticism, the second movement, marked Largo e molto espressivo, offers a Bachian prelude and fugue in E minor. A recitative-like passage closes the movement and sets up the drastic change of mood that follows in the third movement. With its searching, twisting, fugal texture and

36 Charles Rosen, Sonata Forms (New York: W. W. Norton, 1980), 329. “The generation born around 1810 preferred to place the climax, the point of extreme tension, very near the end of the work. This makes the final area of stability of the sonata uncongenial to them. What they reject, in most cases, is the sense of climax and resolution at the end of the development and the beginning of the recapitulation. In Mendelssohn’s most striking words, as I have said, the end of the development is the point of lowest tension, of an extraordinary poetic stillness. The change of function at this crucial point of the form is so radical that only tradition and convenience prevent us from calling this a new form and giving it a new name.”

heavy dissonance, this fugal second movement could have been intended to evoke the agony of Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Taking interpretive latitude from the title, *Easter Sonata*, we can map the development of themes and form in this movement onto the scene from Matthew 26:36-46 (Table 2.4).

Table 2.4: Fanny Mendelssohn, *Easter Sonata*, Mvt. II and Matthew 26:36-46

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prelude</td>
<td>Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. <em>Matthew 26:36-38</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fugue</td>
<td>And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. <em>Matthew 26:39</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction theme, developed and combined with fugue subject</td>
<td>And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. <em>Matthew 26:40-44</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fanny would have been familiar with this passage from her German Bible and it would have been a topic of special interest not only for the observance of Easter, but also because of Felix and Fanny’s work with the *St. Matthew Passion*, which by 1828 was well under way.\(^{39}\) Fanny’s movement is by no means a direct musical adaptation of Bach’s *Passion*, however. In Bach’s setting, this scene is extended over five recitatives, two arias with choral commentary, and a chorale (“Was mein Gott will, das g’scheh’ allzeit”). The key scheme in Bach’s rendition remains mostly in flat keys: G minor, F minor, C minor, and D minor.

The closest we might come to finding direct musical inspiration for Fanny’s *Prelude and Fugue* movement in this section of Bach’s *Passion* may be the aria No. 23, “Gerne will ich mich bequemen” (Ex. 2.4) The opening gesture of a rising sixth, followed by a leap down to a rising and falling third motive in eighth notes, which then continue the downward gesture to rest on a G can be traced in the opening measures of Fanny’s *Prelude* (Ex. 2.5).

![Example 2.4: J. S. Bach, St. Matthew Passion, aria "Gerne will ich mich bequemen," mm. 1-4](image)

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Siehe, die Stunde ist hier, daß es Menschen Sohn in der Sünder Hände überantwortet wird. Stehet auf, läßt uns gehen! Siehe, er ist da, der mich verrät.”

\(^{39}\) Todd, *Mendelssohn*, 194.
Another work possibly echoing in Fanny’s mind when she was writing this movement is the second movement of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 7, in particular the version of the main theme ornamented with passing tones. The theme also undergoes contrapuntal development in Beethoven’s movement, bringing these disparate genres, instrumental media, and time periods into stylistic proximity in Fanny’s sonata.

The fugue subject also provides an intriguing comparison to Felix’s Fugue in E minor, Op. 35 No. 1, which was written just one year earlier. Although Fanny’s prelude has already traversed E minor so that the fugue commences in the dominant B minor, the rhythmic and triadic construction of the theme, subsequent falling scale, and use of accidentals shows a clear relationship to Felix’s fugue (see Ex. 2.6 and Ex. 2.7).

Example 2.6: Fanny Mendelssohn, *Easter Sonata*, Mvt. II, fugue subject (1828)
Example 2.7: Felix Mendelssohn, Fugue in E minor, Op. 35 No. 1 (1827)

Felix may have written his Fugue in E minor during the sickness and death of his friend August Hanstein, and the topic of mourning in both fugues is clear, especially in the biting dissonances and the descending chromatic lines imbedded in both Felix and Fanny’s subjects. Todd has noted that Fanny’s Klavierbuch e-moll, dating from late 1827, betrays a similar interest in the St. Matthew Passion and the descending tetrachord, as well as another reference to Felix’s Fugue in E minor Op. 35 No. 1. Considered in this context, this fugue in the Easter Sonata grows from a logical compositional process of development, experimentation, and refinement we would expect to find in the works of a young composer. In this way, Fanny traces a path backwards, through Beethoven, to Bach, before reinterpreting both along with her brother Felix in a new work that is at once original but also clearly inspired by her interest in the earlier works.

III. Allegretto - Scherzo

Casting aside the heavy introspection of the fugal movement, the third movement erupts into an effervescent Scherzo in E major. This is the most “Mendelssohnian” of the four movements, especially in that it utilizes a type of Scherzo style that became

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40 Todd, Mendelssohn, 172.
41 Todd, Hensel, 113ff.
42 These Bachian works, in particular the Klavierbuch e-moll, will be explored in greater detail in Ch. 3, “Sebastian.”
synonymous with Felix through his Overture to A Midsummer Night’s Dream: the slightly sinister, elfin Scherzo. Fanny displays a confident hand with the genre as well, and employs her unique sense of a porous border between the major and minor modes to give this lively movement a dark undertone. The scherzo is unabashedly virtuosic, showcasing the pianist’s abilities in the three-hand technique and parallel octave passages made popular in her time by virtuosos such as Kalkbrenner, Thalberg, Pixis, etc. Dancing arpeggios at the opening and throughout the movement foreshadow “April” from Fanny’s later piano cycle Das Jahr (1841), and an internal tremolo is not far removed from a similar passage in the Scherzo from her Piano Sonata in G minor (1843).

The movement is in a Sonata-Allegro/Rondo form, which digresses into a development section hinting strongly at F minor in m. 142 (Table 2.5).
**Table 2.5: Fanny Mendelssohn, *Easter Sonata*, Mvt. III**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mm.</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>A (in E major, I)</td>
<td>Chordal arpeggio theme, foreshadows <em>April</em> from <em>Das Jahr.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-24</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Secondary arpeggio theme (lighter texture which gradually thickens).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-38</td>
<td>A (B major, V/V)</td>
<td>Return of opening on the dominant, developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39-53</td>
<td>C (B major, G major, C major)</td>
<td>Descending arpeggios, transition on octave motive on F♯ (vi or V/V).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54-67</td>
<td>A (B major, V/V)</td>
<td>Introduction of chromatic rising bass line.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68-83</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Repeated note / falling chords theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84-96</td>
<td>A developed (E major, V)</td>
<td>Basic rising chordal arpeggio theme, but developed with a new melodic character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97-106</td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107-141</td>
<td>Bridge 1</td>
<td>Switch to ¾, rising scalar motive developed, busy figuration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142-154</td>
<td>Minor theme</td>
<td>Reminiscent, similar to minor-mode motive in the first movement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155-160</td>
<td>Bridge 2</td>
<td>Trill motive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161-173</td>
<td>Bridge 1</td>
<td>Rising scale, busy figuration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>174-179</td>
<td>Minor theme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180</td>
<td>A interjection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181-186</td>
<td>Minor theme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>187-199</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Development, fragmented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200-203</td>
<td>Bridge 1</td>
<td>Rising scale, with chordal texture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>204-</td>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>Descending arpeggio (4 mes), followed by rising scalar motive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>224-227</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Interjection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>227-238</td>
<td>Closing, modified Bridge 1</td>
<td>Rising chromatic scale with thick bass texture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>238-271</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Final fragmented presentation of main theme, blended with minor closing theme; arpeggios provide an E pedal in the uppermost note, which frames the final measures. The final chord attains that highest note.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The rising and falling third motive recalls a similar passage at m. 128 in the first movement, the opening of the Scherzo movement, and the Prelude from the second movement, the darker memory intruding on, disrupting, and troubling the more optimistic present, as cyclic recalls often do. The darker moments pass by like quickly-moving shadows of volatile spring clouds, the short but intense spring-time cloudbursts move away, and the sun breaks through as the opening motive struggles to return in m. 180, only to disappear behind the clouds again (in D minor this time) in mm. 181-186. A flurry of the opening motive (beginning in A major) is fragmented across the keyboard and disperses the darker mood, and by m. 204, triumphs with a confident, march-like descending motive, first in A major, then in E major before spinning out the motives in a mercurial, chromatic, final virtuoso tour de force over the dominant pedal (B).

The opening arpeggio returns in the tonic at m. 239, but the tonic (E major) is quickly turned into the dominant of IV by the introduction of the flat seven (d), in a manner not unlike Felix’s Erntelied (Op. 8 No. 4) as discussed in Ch. 1. Instead of moving to the expected A-major harmony, Fanny uses the minor mode to reintroduce and juxtapose the opening motive with the melancholy minor mode memory. The dominant is achieved twice, in mm. 255 and 262, alternating with the A-minor motive, before the sunny E-major arpeggios return, the clouds are dispersed, and the movement scatters to the winds—not unlike the Scherzo to Felix’s Octet, where, ultimately, “alles ist verschwunden.”

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### IV. Allegro con Strepito

**Table 2.6: Fanny Mendelssohn, *Easter Sonata*, Mvt. IV**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mm.</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-28</td>
<td>A (First theme group), A minor</td>
<td>Mm. 1-3: three motivic kernels are arpeggios, falling chords, and leaping chords. These three motives are increasingly extended throughout this first A section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-43</td>
<td>B (second theme group), A minor</td>
<td>“Earthquake” topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43-49</td>
<td>Bridge / episode (C♯7, with A pedal, or added sixth, back to E dominant)</td>
<td>Continued busy 16th-note texture against rhythms in quarter and eighth notes, except flipped (16th notes in right hand, slower rhythm in left)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49-58</td>
<td></td>
<td>C♯7 and A harmony returns, with different presentation. Half-step clashes echo Beethoven.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59-98</td>
<td>A (developed)</td>
<td>In E minor (dominant minor), leading to extended development of falling chords motive, brief return of allusion to leaping chords motive, closing with embellished scale motive, arriving on an E7 chord. Also, mm. 67-71. solemn, whole-note chords, prefigure closing/coda chords.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98-109</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Deceptive F major key area, “earthquake” topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110-119</td>
<td>A (developed)</td>
<td>Allusions to leaping chords and falling chords, leading to closing theme of embellished falling scale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120-145</td>
<td>A (restatement)</td>
<td>Recap of A in original form leads to development of falling chords motive, then into an alternate closing theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>146-183</td>
<td>B (closing)</td>
<td>Earthquake music in A minor, which leads into an extensive closing section/coda of chord inversions over continued rumbling in the bass, finally arriving on A-major chord.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>184-241</td>
<td>Coda: Chorale Fantasy</td>
<td><em>Christe, du Lamm Gottes</em>. Presented twice, the second time in a higher register.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the opening of the fourth movement, a stirring, impetuous motive strives three times to attain the upper reaches of the keyboard over a i-V6-2-i-V2/iv-iv progression (mm. 1-5). But just as the minor subdominant arrives, a sudden reharmonization of the d to the Neapolitan sixth (m. 6) invokes the pathetic, and the powerful motive wilts into a cascade of thirds. The Neapolitan chord (d-f-b-flat) contains a disruptive “a” (d-f-a-b-flat) which
propels a sequence through a series of chain suspensions nearly four octaves down the keyboard before the opening motive gathers strength and prevails once again (m. 16). This time, the motive is foreshortened: the half rest between the sequential rise of the motive is breathlessly absent, and the motive occurs only twice before hurrying through an extension of the second half of the opening motive over a precipitously descending scale in the left hand. The end of this scale is a fully chromatic sixth, increasing the tension to the breaking point and reigniting the opening volleys—this time even more volatile than the first iteration. Fanny alters her own concept here, and instead of filling out the space with arpeggiated chords, she opts for more forceful, blocked chords, foreshortens the motive even further, and dispenses with the second half of the motive entirely.

Although the emphasis on the closely related subdominant in this opening passage may seem like a pedestrian choice, Fanny's handling of the tonal space she creates with this chord is beautifully subtle, and has implications for both the programmatic elements and the larger harmonic trajectory of the movement. The subdominant evokes the sacred, implying the plagal, or “Amen” cadence, and prefigures the plagal cadence that concludes the movement (and thus the entire sonata). When the opening motive returns after the detour through the Neapolitan, we hear it now in the minor subdominant (D minor at m. 16), then in the parallel major tonic (A major at m. 17). The second half of the motive over the descending scale tonicizes iv and i alternately, before arriving at the bottom on C sharp, the vii\(^{07}\)/iv (at m. 21) for the first rising chord motive. But then, Fanny's compositional sleight of hand is revealed once again when instead of harmonizing the D with the minor subdominant we have come to expect, the D becomes part of the dominant seventh chord (V\(^7\)) for the second rising
chord sequence—not the first time the subdominant harmony has been transformed by reharmonization, as we have already seen.

The drama continues as, instead of returning directly to the tonic A minor, the third sequence rises by one more half step (C-sharp-D-D-sharp) to a vii°/V. Evading resolution yet again, the top of the sequence arrives on a cadential six-four chord, instead of the tonicized dominant harmony, precipitating another descent. Functioning as a mini-cadenza following the cadential harmony, the lyrical thirds are disrupted and filled out with running sixteenth notes, which provide leading tones to the basic arpeggiation of the tonic and dominant harmonies. Again descending nearly four octaves to the bass, we finally arrive back on terra firma, the tonic A minor—which is immediately shattered by an earthquake of tremolos rumbling ominously in the bass, as the octaves rise chromatically from the dominant to the tonic in the left hand. And indeed, this motive may very well have been intended to depict an earthquake.

Thus, we may venture a hermeneutical reading of the opening just analyzed here, similar to that of the second movement, although here the references appear to be more general and topical. This fourth movement is marked with an arresting Allegro con strepito, which we might interpret as “fast and noisy.” In the context of the Easter program, which frames this sonata, the use of the term strepito—literally “clamor” or “fracas”—may evoke images of the crowd calling for Christ’s crucifixion, the “turba” choruses of the Passion tradition:

But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water,
and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. (Matthew 27:20-24)

J. S. Bach had imagined this scene some 100 years earlier in vivid musical terms—the moment when the crowd calls for the release of Barabbas on a fully diminished-seventh chord spanning nearly four octaves is as terrifying as any operatic drama—and it is quite probable that Fanny had his setting in mind while she wrote this movement. First, both the recitative on this text and the following choral stretto (Choruses 45b and 50b) on “Lass ihn kreuzigen” (“Let him be crucified”) are in A minor. The alternation between the stormy opening motive and the pathetic Neapolitan passage is akin to the alternation between the turbulence of the call for Jesus’ death and the reflection in the chorale No. 46, “Wie wunderbarlich ist doch diese Strafe!” and the aria No. 49, “Aus Liebe will mein Heiland sterben.”

The crowd calls out once again for the crucifixion of Jesus, prompting in the St. Matthew Passion a return of the “Lass ihn kreuzigen” chorus and in Fanny’s sonata the return of the opening motive. As described above, Fanny stretches the musical drama to the breaking point, perhaps representing the intensity of the torture that Jesus experienced on his procession to Golgotha and the crucifixion:

Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him. Matthew 27:26-31

But even this physical torture could not compare to the emotional and spiritual torture that Jesus experienced just before his death:
Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Matthew 27:45-46)

At this point in Fanny’s sonata, the cadential six-four chord triggers the descent to the bass, just as the temple curtain is split from top to bottom and the earthquakes begin:

Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent. (Matthew 27:50-51)

By invoking this *topos*, Fanny joined a long tradition of earthquake music in Passions, including but not limited to the *St. Matthew Passion*. Bach’s example is also in A minor, as pointed out earlier (although the intervening music had strayed to several other key areas), and features 32nd-note runs and tremolos ascending chromatically in the continuo as the Evangelist narrates the story (Ex. 2.8 and Ex. 2.9).

**Example 2.8: Fanny Mendelssohn, *Easter Sonata*, Mvt. IV, mm. 28-33, earthquake topic**

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Fanny (and Felix) would have also been intimately familiar with Carl Heinrich Graun’s *Der Tod Jesu* (Ex. 2.10) because it was the most commonly performed passion in the second half of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, before being largely replaced by Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* following the 1829 revival. *Der Tod Jesu* was traditionally performed in Berlin on Good Friday, and the siblings would have most likely taken part in readings of the work at Zelter’s *Singakademie*. One feature of Graun’s earthquake passage that may have been echoing in Fanny’s ear is the dotted rhythmic motive prevalent throughout his recitative (see the first appearance of dotted rhythms at m. 26, Ex. 2.11).

Example 2.10: Carl Heinrich Graun, *Der Tod Jesu* (1755), No. 23

![Example 2.10: Carl Heinrich Graun, Der Tod Jesu (1755), No. 23](image-url)

Example 2.11: Fanny Mendelssohn, *Easter Sonata*, Mvt. IV, mm. 25-30

![Example 2.11: Fanny Mendelssohn, Easter Sonata, Mvt. IV, mm. 25-30](image-url)
A later example of the continuing earthquake music tradition can be found in Joseph Haydn’s *Die sieben letzten Worte unseres Erlösers am Kreuze* (*The Seven Last Words of Our Savior on the Cross*) of 1795-96. Haydn also favored rising chromatic lines and repeated notes (although not the vigorous tremolos of the Baroque examples) as well as operatic grace note slides and trill figures. Whether or not the Mendelssohns were familiar with this piece is unknown, but certainly not impossible.

The stormy passagework finally abates through grating diminished sonorities to an A-minor cadence. A single chord in A major, voiced in the resonant register of the keyboard just below “middle C” is intoned like a bell, out of which “Christe, Du Lamm Gottes,” the German *Agnus Dei*, materializes in a delicate chorale (see Ex. 2.12).

![Example 2.12: Fanny Mendelssohn, *Easter Sonata*, Mvt. IV, transition to "Christe, du Lamm Gottes"]

This particular chorale melody offers one more biographical and chronological tie to the lives of Felix and Fanny. For Christmas 1827, Felix had given Fanny a chorale cantata based on this same chorale melody, and it appears that Fanny responded to his
gift—as she often did—in this sonata. Fanny interrupted the first presentation of the chorale with flourishes reminiscent of the sonata material between each phrase, including a recitative-like passage. Eventually, the chorale wins, and is presented a second time uninterrupted, an octave higher, and concludes on a peaceful, but strong, cadence.

The appropriation of chorale melodies as a programmatic element in otherwise absolute music was an effect Felix favored as well—see, for example Felix’s Fugue in E minor Op. 35 No. 1, Cello Sonata in D major, Op. 58, and Piano Trio in C minor, Op. 66—and we see here that Fanny was experimenting with the device in 1828. Thirteen years later, in 1841, Fanny utilized a chorale in “Dezember” for Das Jahr, where the chorale melody is “Vom Himmel hoch” for the Advent season. Two other chorales fill out the program of Das Jahr. In “März” we find another reference to Easter, this time to the resurrection instead of the crucifixion—the chorale melody “Christ ist erstanden.” In a postlude after “Dezember,” the chorale “Das alte Jahr vergangen ist” offers closure to the cycle. This final chorale in Das Jahr, incidentally, alternates with an allusion to the instrumental accompaniment to the opening chorus from the St. Matthew Passion, bringing the web of references full circle.

44 Todd, Hensel, 112.
46 Fanny’s placement of the Easter chorale in “März” may indicate that the movement refers to March 1839, when Easter Sunday fell on March 31, even though the work originates in 1841. It is equally possible that she selected that month for purely formal, organizational reasons, as one of the months in which Easter generally occurs.
The ambiguity of authorship, even though we have now solved the mystery, offers an opportunity to observe the formation of the "Mendelssohnian" style at a particularly critical juncture. By 1828, both composers were pianists of an extremely high level of proficiency and they had absorbed together the influence of J. S. Bach and Ludwig van Beethoven, as well as the instruction of their composition teachers and the visiting artists who frequented their parents' salon.

But Felix and Fanny had now parted ways, and their compositional styles—while similar enough that a listener not familiar with the works of both composers could mistake one for the other—had to develop apart as well, although not without a frequent exchange of letters. Felix would write his oratorios St. Paul and Elijah, as well as symphonies, concertos, and other works beyond the realm of Fanny's Musiksaal, but while Fanny appears to have struggled with the conflicting impulses of a wife and mother versus a talented pianist and composer, she would also mark numerous achievements. Among her over 450 works can be found several orchestrated works—the Overture in C major, Hero und Leander, the Cholera Cantata—as well as numerous lieder, and her chamber works, including the String Quartet in E-flat major and the Piano Trio in D minor Op. 11. Had Fanny lived to publish more than the eight opuses she saw through the press, perhaps we would have seen an authorized edition of her Easter Sonata, but as it is, she rarely returned to revise her early works.

The rediscovery of the Easter Sonata has significant implications for Mendelssohn and Hensel scholarship. It allows us to analyze one more large-scale work in Fanny's oeuvre at a particularly critical juncture in the formation of the "Mendelssohnian" style, when both composer had completed their training and were
about to enter the next stage of their musical development. The sonata itself is excellent, and will easily be mastered by any pianist who already plays Beethoven. At about 25 minutes in length, the Easter Sonata will be easily programmed, rather than the much longer cycle, Das Jahr, which has represented Fanny’s most frequently-performed solo piano music since its discovery late in the 20th century. The now correctly dated Easter Sonata fills a gap in Fanny’s compositional progress, and offers another opportunity to observe the young composer grappling with the most significant musical influences in her life: Bach, Beethoven, and her brother, Felix. Here we see Fanny’s technique achieving a level beyond her early training and looking towards her more mature style, which was more formally free than that of her brother.

Fanny clearly struggled with the very question we are asking here—what is the “Mendelssohnian style” and where is Fanny’s place in it, in contradistinction to her much more well-known brother? In 1836 she wrote to Felix “I don’t know exactly what Goethe means by the demonic influence…but this much is clear: if it does exist, you exert it over me.”47 By contrast, Felix acknowledged their mutual style, when they wrote two similar works, at about the same time, in two different cities: “Isn’t it peculiar how musical ideas sometimes seem to fly about in the air, and land here and there? … It’s simply too wild—and it’s lovely that our ideas remain so close.”48 The answer appears to lie closer to Felix’s assessment—Fanny was no mere epigone of her more famous brother, but an

equal partner in their common style. As the young composers developed their skills together, the first dominant influence they contended with was J. S. Bach.
Chapter 3 Sebastian

In which the first significant influence on Fanny and Felix, Johann Sebastian Bach, is discussed – the study of counterpoint – fugues – cantatas – and other Bachian pursuits with friends at the Singakademie.

The St. Matthew Passion reverberated throughout the musical lives of the Mendelssohns for many years, and as we have just seen, had an immense impact on Fanny’s musical conceptualization of Eastertide in her Easter Sonata. Bach’s Passion dominated the Mendelssohn family circle for the majority of the 1820s, sparked by Bella Salomon’s history-making gift of the score to Felix in early 1824, on through the successful first performances in March and April 1829. For Fanny, these years were personally significant for another reason—her suitor, Wilhelm Hensel, was absent from Berlin from July 1823 through October 1828, finishing his education as a painter in Italy and carrying out several commissions for the Prussian court.

Forbidden by her parents from any correspondence with Wilhelm, because of fears that Wilhelm might convert to Catholicism, Fanny turned instead to expressing her feelings in music. In his absence, Fanny matured from the 17-year-old girl he had met in 1822 to a 24-year-old woman with her own creative world firmly established within the extensive and high-powered social circle of the Mendelssohn family in Berlin. For his part, Wilhelm poured his feelings for Fanny into portraits and letters sent to her parents, but on his return to Berlin, found the Mendelssohn family circle rather intimidating, and himself rendered an outsider both because of his extended absence and his lack of musical ability. He returned to find Felix planning his first extended professional journey,
and to find the Mendelssohn family in the throes of preparing for the monumental performances of the *St. Matthew Passion*.

![Figure 3.1: Wilhelm Hensel, "Das Rad" ("The Wheel"), 1829](image)

On January 23, 1829, Hensel made his official bid to join this circle when—following the announcement of his appointment as Hofmaler at the Prussian court—he finally obtained the Mendelssohn parents' approval to marry Fanny and the two were formally engaged. Throughout the following months, he was at Fanny’s side as she took part in the revival of the *St. Matthew Passion*, as she waved goodbye to Felix when he

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departed for England on April 10, 1829, and as they made preparations for their wedding set for October 3, 1829. But he was still something of an outsider, even after a mock initiation into the tightly knit family circle, lovingly called “the wheel” on Midsummer’s Day, June 24, 1829.

When we picked up Mother and Father at Marianne’s in the evening, the entire wheel came along, Louis Heydemann carrying coats and umbrellas (it was a dry heat, with no hint of rain). And when we had to separate, the wheel, struck with enthusiasm, selected Hensel to be one of its members, right on the street, by means of a ceremonious round wreath of roses and holding up of the opened umbrella. ²

Hensel responded with a drawing titled “Das Rad” (“The Wheel”), showing the family circle as a wheel, the spokes formed by each family member or friend (Fig. 3.1). Felix, at that time not present in the family circle, is curled up in the middle, represented as the center around which the rest of the wheel rotates. Clinging to the outside of the wheel is a figure connected to Fanny by a string: Wilhelm Hensel himself, clearly struggling to maintain his hold on the wheel and become a part of this exclusive world, with its own set of complex intellectual pursuits, musical talent, inside jokes, and traditions.

How, then, could Hensel prove himself an equal in this circle? The answer may lie in his masterpiece, Christus vor Pilatus. Completed in 1834, the original painting was some fifteen by nineteen and a half feet in size, and depicted about fifty figures gathered at the moment when Pilatus washes his hands of the blood of Jesus, and the crowd takes the guilt upon themselves and their children:

When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Matthew 27:24

Hensel’s choice to paint the “turbā” crowd from the Passion tradition may have been a response to his wife’s musical depiction of this scene a few years earlier in the finale of her Easter Sonata, with its intriguing Allegro con strepito tempo indication. Hensel’s inclusion of Fanny and their son Sebastian in the lower right hand corner of the painting emphasizes the personal involvement of the Mendelssohn family in this tradition. Unfortunately, only conceptual sketches and a small oil copy of Hensel’s masterpiece survive; the picture was hung as an altarpiece in the Garnisonkirche, where it was lost in a fire in 1908. Another intriguing interpretation of Fanny’s place in the painting has been suggested by Cordula Heymann-Wentzel. In her article on the Lobgesang, Heymann-Wentzel darkened the image and heightened the contrast, which shows that the faces of Jesus and Fanny (plus Sebastian) are clearly the most important in the painting, “as if spotlights were directed at their faces.” The raised arm of the woman just off center in the painting draws attention diagonally to Fanny and Sebastian as well, and emphasizes the connection between Fanny and Jesus. In Heymann-Wentzel’s interpretation, then, this painting is not only a contribution to the Mendelssohns’ Passion tradition, but also a response to Fanny’s own composition, Lobgesang, as the parents asked Jesus for the blessing of a healthy child.

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3 See Todd, Hensel (2009), 187ff.; and Cécile Lowenthal-Hensel and Jutta Arnold, Wilhelm Hensel: Maler und Porträtiert, 1794-1861 (Berlin: Mann, 2004), 194ff. The Garnisonkirchplatz is a open plaza today, just South of the Tram tracks at S-Bahn Hackeschermarkt. Fortunately, an example of Hensel’s large-scale painting, a copy of Rafael’s “Transfiguration,” can still be seen in the Orangerie at Sans souci in Potsdam.

Figure 3.2: Wilhelm Hensel, oil sketch for "Christus vor Pilatus" ("Christ before Pilate")\(^5\)

A separate, completed, portrait of Fanny and their son Sebastian in the pose of Madonna and child as they appeared in this painting did survive, and occasionally goes on exhibit in Germany.\(^6\) In this way, Hensel too contributed an artistic echo of one of the


\(^6\) I was able to view this portrait at an exhibit of culturally and politically powerful women, “Preußens Eros - Preußens Musen” at the Haus der Brandenburgisch Preußischen Geschichte in Potsdam, Germany, December 2010.
most significant family projects, the 1829 performance of the *St. Matthew Passion*, and took his place in the Mendelssohn family circle.

![Image of Wilhelm Hensel, Fanny and Sebastian Hensel, study for "Christus vor Pilatus"](image)

*Figure 3.3: Wilhelm Hensel, Fanny and Sebastian Hensel, study for "Christus vor Pilatus"*\(^7\)

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That the performance of the *St. Matthew Passion* represented the culmination of the education of the Mendelssohns, and marked the end of their childhood and the beginning of their careers is quite fitting. Fanny and Felix came from a long and distinguished line of Bach admirers and performers in their own family, as is well known, and their pedagogical lineage through Zelter can be traced back to Bach within just two generations.\(^8\) Their mother and first piano teacher, Lea, was well versed in the keyboard works of Bach, and famously noted that Fanny had “Bach fugal fingers” when she was born.\(^9\) And indeed, Fanny fulfilled her mother’s prophecy: in 1818, at the age of just thirteen, Fanny surprised her father for his birthday by performing all 24 preludes from the *Well-Tempered Clavier* from memory. Their maternal great-Aunt Sarah Levy\(^{10}\) was one of the most influential Berlin salon hostesses in her time, and promoted the works of the Bach family extensively. She performed J. S. Bach’s keyboard concertos with the Berlin *Singakademie* (when it was under the direction of its founder, Carl Friedrich Christian Fasch), and she also commissioned an unusual work from C. P. E. Bach in 1788: the double concerto in E-flat major for fortepiano and harpsichord (H 479). Another maternal great Aunt, Bella Salomon, is famed as the woman who presented her then 13-year-old great nephew with a copy of Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion*.

The family had multiple connections with sources of Bach manuscripts and like-minded Bach enthusiasts. The most famous of these connections was their composition

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\(^{8}\) For more, see Todd, 1983.


teacher, Zelter, who encouraged the siblings in their Bachian inclinations. Zelter trained them in the strict contrapuntal techniques of the Baroque master between 1819 and 1821, which would profoundly influence the musical style of both composers for the remainder of their lives. Through Zelter, the Mendelssohns gained access to the library of the Singakademie, which held an extensive collection of Bach manuscripts. Through participation in rehearsals and readings at the Singakademie, the Mendelssohns came into contact with the choral music of Bach, which due to its technical difficulty was at that time not widely performed outside specialized circles such as the Singakademie. Other members of the choir were also from important and wealthy families in Berlin. One of Fanny's closest friends was first an acquaintance, Therese Schlesinger, who later married Felix's dear friend, Eduard Devrient. Another influential family at the Singakademie was the Pistor family. One of Felix’s first infatuations was with the Pistor daughter, Betty, an amateur but very talented singer and actress.

Betty formed a close friendship not only with Felix but also with his younger sister Rebecka. When the Pistor family acquired some Bach manuscripts, they invited Felix to examine them in their home. One of these visits, on January 14, 1828, led to a misunderstanding and the dissolution of the friendship between the families. Felix heard Betty laughing with her friends when he arrived, and thought they were making fun of the rumored attraction between the two young friends. Always hypersensitive, Felix took offense and chose not to attend Betty’s birthday party a few days later, and then Betty was not allowed by her father to attend Felix’s birthday party on February 3. The Pistor parents decided that Betty should not be so closely socializing with a young man, and

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especially a young Jewish man, and much to the pain of both Betty and the Mendelssohn family, the friendship was ended.\textsuperscript{12}

Another Bachian connection—to the organ works this time—can be traced through another student of Zelter and Berger, August Wilhelm Bach. Although not a descendent of the famous Bach family, A. W. Bach nevertheless held several important organ posts in Berlin (at the Gertraudenkirche and the Marienkirche), and gave Felix his first organ lessons at the Marienkirche in Berlin.\textsuperscript{13} Fanny was not allowed to take lessons, as it wasn’t considered appropriate for a young woman to play the organ, but she was allowed to attend Felix’s lessons. Bach was also a member of the Singakademie, and taught at Zelter’s Institut für die Ausbildung von Organisten und Musiklehren, of which he became leader when Zelter died in 1832.

The Singakademie thus formed the center of the Bachian activities in the Mendelssohn family for most of the 1820s. The famed resurrection of the St. Matthew Passion would not have been possible without the involvement of the Singakademie, and the friendships and partnerships that Felix and Fanny formed at the rehearsals resulted in lifelong associations and influences.

The Mendelssohns were introduced to the Passion through participation in the Friday afternoon choral readings at Zelter’s Singakademie. The Singakademie’s typical fare consisted of a variety of early sacred compositions, including the occasional selection from the St. Matthew Passion. Impressed by the beauty and magnitude of this work, Felix dreamed of owning a score of the Passion. By the time he was fourteen,

\textsuperscript{13} The Marienkirche, reconstructed after sustaining heavy damage in World War II, stands just next to today’s Alexanderplatz. The original organ on which Felix took his lessons did not survive.
Mendelssohn owned the score; Bella Salomon had convinced Zelter to allow Julius Rietz to copy it.\(^\text{14}\) The precocious Felix studied the score for five years without any conceivable date for performance, but when he was nineteen, his close friend, the tenor Eduard Devrient, who desired nothing more than to sing the part of Jesus in the \textit{Passion}, goaded him into applying to Zelter for permission to begin rehearsing for a grand concert of the \textit{St. Matthew Passion}.

Mendelssohn was eager to put on a performance of the \textit{St. Matthew Passion}, but at the same time he was somewhat hesitant about the project, because the obstacles were seemingly insurmountable.\(^\text{15}\) Among the most significant difficulties in the way of such a performance were Mendelssohn’s youth and lack of experience, the complexity of the work, and the anticipated recalcitrance of director Zelter and his \textit{Singakademie} choir members and ripienists. After successfully applying to Zelter for permission to use the resources of the \textit{Singakademie} to perform the \textit{St. Matthew Passion}, Devrient and Mendelssohn worked enthusiastically to promote, rehearse, and finally perform the \textit{Passion}.

The first performance was widely marketed to the Berlin musical community. The singers themselves added to the growing excitement: at first skeptical about the project, the \textit{Singakademie} members soon spread the word amongst themselves about the “surprising beauty and grandeur of Old Bach” and soon more singers started showing up.

\(^{15}\) Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel. \textit{The Bach Reader: a life of Johann Sebastian Bach in letters and documents} (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966), 379. Devrient’s amusing account of the story shows a timid but passionate Mendelssohn willing to risk the anger of his venerated teacher to bring the beauty of Bach’s music to the general public. Mendelssohn, afraid of seeming disrespectful, allowed Devrient to do most of the talking and rejoiced along with him when the finally carried their point and obtained the skeptical blessing of Zelter for their project. As they left the interview, by his own account, Devrient said “Anything you like for the honor of God and Sebastian Bach.”
for rehearsals. By the time of the first performance on March 11, 1829, tickets were selling at a top price of 20 Groschen, and the hall at the Singakademie was overflowing with an audience comprised of the elite of Berlin. A second performance took place ten days later on March 21, Bach’s birthday, and it was performed a third time under Zelter’s direction after Mendelssohn left for England on April 10.

Such heavy participation in performing Bach’s music, in combination with the intense instruction in counterpoint from Zelter, could only have a significant impact on the contemporary compositions of the Mendelssohn siblings. The 1820s show Fanny and Felix struggling to reconcile their early compositional influences, which by the mid 1820s included Beethoven in increasingly large doses (more about Beethoven in Chapter 4), but their first and most enduring compositional influence was clearly Bach.

The young Mendelssohns apparently felt no compunction about writing music so heavily influenced by the music of the past. For their contemporaries, such a fascination was certainly on the rise, but not so pervasive as it is today, with our concert programs populated almost exclusively by composers of previous generations and

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16 David and Mendel (1966), 384.
17 Harry Haskell, The Early Music Revival: A History (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 13. The building of the old Singakademie was spared the ravages of World War II, and still stands next to the main building of the Humboldt University Berlin (which had been the University of Berlin when Felix attended). Today, it is the Maxim-Gorki-Theatre. The choir of the Singakademie also lives on, although still split by the ghost of the wall. There are two Singakademies today, each debating their relative authenticity in the city. The Singakademie that meets in the Villa Elisabeth in the East (north Mitte), directed by Kai-Uwe Jirke, focuses on smaller repertoires, and is believed to be the “true” descendent of the original Singakademie. The group that meets in the West was founded in 1963 by Helmut Koch, and is directed today by Achim Zimmermann. This group produces larger, highly publicized, concerts of masses and oratorios, as well as 20th-century repertoire.
centuries. However, these early years were also their training period, which followed a classic model: imitating the great masters before attempting to strike out into new territory. The Mendelssohns also had the luxury of forming their musical style in relative privacy. With no financial necessity to progress quickly or perform publicly, Fanny and Felix could experience their musical education in a much more measured and academic way (although this did not prevent them from excelling quickly). In a time when their contemporaries were expected to improvise and perform on hours-long mixed concerts of mostly current music—such as the most recent hits from the opera house, solo instrumental improvisations, and premieres of symphonies and concertos—the Mendelssohns could instead test their works in front of a small, private audience in their parents’ home.

Not all of the works by the Mendelssohns in the 1820s openly echoed Bach’s influence, of course, but there are many clear examples from this period that display especially a marked reception of his contrapuntal style. Especially intriguing in Fanny’s catalog is her Klavierbuch e-moll (H-U 214), dating from 1827. The set of six pieces may have been intended to evoke a Baroque suite, in at least a very loose sense. The progression of movements does not strictly follow the usual form for a Baroque suite; most significantly, the overt dance types are omitted. If pressed to identify a real model for this set, we may find a closer match in the toccatas of J. S. Bach. Indeed, the set even concludes with another prelude and a toccata. The final appended Fuga is a 12-measure fugue fragment, which does not appear to have satisfied Fanny for completion or inclusion in the set.
The opening Prelude and Fugue are the strongest pieces in the set, perhaps influenced by Fanny’s close study of the Well-Tempered Clavier when she was memorizing the preludes at the age of thirteen. While these pieces do hint strongly at the preludes and fugues of Bach, they are also clearly cut from nineteenth-century cloth. Most noticeably, the pieces were written in a clear piano idiom; the prelude especially maintains thickly voiced chords in the right hand throughout. As far as we know, the siblings did not own a harpsichord, although they most likely did have at least occasional access to a harpsichord at the Singakademie. At times, however, the style—especially the inclusion of regular pedal points—suggests that Fanny was also thinking about the organ works of J. S. Bach. Pedal points are not uncommon in Bach’s other keyboard works as well, of course. Bach’s Prelude IV in C-sharp minor from WTC I, while not in E minor, could have provided a model for Fanny’s prelude: sustained notes in the bass anchoring falling upper lines in predominantly eighth and quarter-note rhythms are common to both Bach’s and Fanny’s prelude (Ex. 3.1).
The walking bass line in Fanny’s prelude is a distinctly Baroque gesture, but its doubling at the octave is another nineteenth-century update which both Fanny and Felix adopted throughout their contrapuntal works. Felix even took the liberty of filling out Bach’s bass lines in the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue with octave doublings, as he explained to his sister in a letter of 1840:

I take the liberty of playing [the arpeggios] with all possible crescendos, and pianos, and fortissimos, pedal of course, and doubling the octaves in the bass.\(^{18}\)

The Fugue introduces an arpeggiated head motive followed by a compound line, a classic Baroque fugue subject construction and continuation (Ex. 3.2).

For the most part, Fanny maintains a clean texture of four distinct voices throughout, but does dissolve into thick chords reminiscent of the Prelude at mm. 90-98.

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The descending chromatic line contained in the fugue subject (and prevalent throughout the rest of the set as well), as R. Larry Todd points out in his analysis, alludes to the Baroque lament, which was an especially powerful influence on both Fanny and Felix in 1827 as they rehearsed the *St. Matthew Passion*. Fanny maintains for the most part strict control over the linear voice leading in her fugue, until a *sempre accelerando* near the end of the fugue (m. 146 of 173) leads to a section of two-voice counterpoint and even some development of the main theme. This sort of thematic and dramatic development causes us to expect the return of the fugue theme in its entirety, almost as if in a sonata form or one of the grand organ fugues of J. S. Bach, where we might hear fragments of the main theme in the pedal part before the full return in all manual and pedal parts. The walking bass, doubled at the octave, returns from the *Prelude*, and the fugue concludes on a strong, but somber, plagal cadence in the minor mode.

Another piece strongly mirroring these stylistic features is the Prelude in E minor by Felix, also from 1827. This prelude eventually became part of the *Six Preludes and Fugues*, Op. 35 (MWV U 66), which Felix assembled ten years later from both previously and newly composed preludes and fugues. The heavy chromaticism is especially prominent, which may be due to the circumstances under which the fugue was written. According to Julius Schubring, Felix wrote this fugue at the side of his friend, August Hanstein, as he lay on his deathbed in summer 1827. The fugue is thus believed to trace

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20 Victoria Sirota also notes the influence of the opening of the *St. Matthew Passion* on this prelude, from "its initial E pedal point, suspensions, and cadential use of the diminished seventh chord of the dominant. They are both in e minor, and evoke the mood of majestic solemnity." I believe it is a bit of a stretch to say that Fanny was trying to directly evoke the *St. Matthew Passion*, but the aura of the Passion certainly does strongly affect this Prelude. Sirota (1981), 152.
the progress of the illness and Hanstein's eventual spiritual release through death in late July.

Felix's contrapuntal textures, just like Fanny's, occasionally turn to thick chordal passages. The form begins clearly with bass to soprano fugal entries. About half way through the fugal section, at m. 38, Mendelssohn inverts the subject after approaching it through disjunct chords and an *accelerando*. Another *accelerando* occurs at m. 58, where Mendelssohn introduces the running embellishments that he especially enjoyed adding to chorales during his early training with Zelter. The constant sixteenth notes lead to an extended passage of octaves in the left hand, which is also common to both Felix's and Fanny's E-minor fugues. Felix's fugue differs substantially from Fanny's, however, when he introduces a freely composed chorale (which does closely resemble "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott" / “A mighty fortress is our God”) and modulates to the major mode (E major) to conclude his fugue on an extended Picardy third.

Another work of Fanny's that seems to originate from this same period and stylistic aesthetic is the Prelude and Fugue movement of her *Easter Sonata*, already discussed in Chapter 2. A *Klavierstück* in E minor (H-U 216, January 24, 1828) which has clear echoes of the prelude in E minor from the *Klavierbuch*, is positioned just between the completion of work on the *Klavierbuch e-moll* and commencement of work on the *Easter Sonata*. Perhaps, then, the Prelude and Fugue from the *Easter Sonata* represents Fanny's most carefully considered working out of the compositional ideas that produced these works in E minor by both Felix and Fanny in 1827 and 1828.

22 R. Larry Todd, “The instrumental music of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy: selected studies based on primary sources.” (Ph.D. diss. Yale University, 1979), 78.
Whether Fanny was influencing Felix or Felix was influencing Fanny is always the first question that comes to mind in a case where works are so close, both chronologically and stylistically. Felix’s fugue may have predated Fanny’s by a month or two, but according to Wehner, there is no known date for this work; the only chronological clue is the memory of Julius Schubring.\textsuperscript{23} The exact date of composition for Fanny’s fugue is also unknown. Fair copies of Fanny’s prelude exist from both August 3 and December 27, 1827 (see Table 3.1 above), indicating that work on the entire set took place between summer of 1827 and December 1827. Because we do have references to an earlier date for Felix’s fugue, we could conclude that Fanny was influenced by her brother. However, the idea of influence in the typical sense between these two composers is much more complex than the influence of, for example, Beethoven, on either of the siblings (or any composer after him, for that matter). Fanny and Felix worked in such close proximity, especially in the 1820s, that to attribute one particular characteristic to one composer or the other must be done only with careful consideration. Just as artists working in a particular city are responding to the same external stimuli and inspirations from the cityscape itself, as well as particular influences from the style of their contemporaries and teachers (take the Renaissance painters in Amsterdam or The Hague, for example, who often exhibit a similar curiously golden light), so too did Fanny and Felix respond in similar ways to their own unique context. These resonances between the composers persisted for most of their lifetimes, but did of course change over time as the two composers developed apart after the 1820s.

Returning to the Klavierbuch e-moll, we find an Allegro di molto in the place of perhaps a Gigue (Ex. 3.3). The time signatures on these movements do not suggest

specific dance types, however, so proceeding with an analysis of this set as a Baroque suite must be done with caution. Fanny is clearly not attempting to write a Baroque suite; rather, she is evoking one. The *Allegro di molto* is more of an invention or etude and loses its strict Baroque style by m. 34, when cascading arpeggiated figures in the right hand are placed over dotted-rhythm fanfares in the left hand. In m. 81, a leaping chordal passage even sounds like a possible foreshadowing of Var. 6 in Mendelssohn's *Variations serieuses*, Op. 54 (1841) (Ex. 3.4 and Ex. 3.5). However, the chromatic lines and contrapuntal treatment of the motives do keep this piece from wandering too far from the Baroque aesthetic.

Example 3.3: Fanny Mendelssohn, *Klavierbuch e-moll, Allegro di molto*, opening

Example 3.4: Fanny Mendelssohn, *Klavierbuch e-moll, Allegro di molto*, mm. 83-86
Example 3.5: Felix Mendelssohn, *Variations Sérieuses*, Op. 54, Var. 6 (1841)

The *Largo* following again resists definition as part of a suite; this movement should be a Sarabande, but the *Largo* is in Common time. There is, however, an implied motion to the second beat of each bar - the phrases are structured over the bar line - but to call this a real Sarabande is not possible. Fanny handles some jarring dissonances quite subtly in this *Largo*. She introduces accidentals that have the effect of cross relations, but are technically spaced too far apart. In Ex. 3.6, note the use of a D natural in the bass on the last beat of m. 3 and a D sharp in the soprano on the second beat of m. 4. Furthermore, the resolution of the 9-8 suspension—which has been set up as the pattern over the bar line in mm. 1-2—is disrupted by the introduction of this D sharp.

Example 3.6: Fanny Mendelssohn, *Klavierbuch e-moll*, *Largo*, mm. 1-5

Fanny chose to conclude the set with another paired set of pieces: a *Prelude* (Ex. 3.7) and *Toccata* (Ex. 3.8). While this choice once again breaks up the coherence of the
set as a suite, it does mirror the Prelude and Fugue pairing which opened the Klavierbuch.

Example 3.7: Fanny Mendelssohn, Klavierbuch e-moll, Prelude (2), mm. 1-6

Example 3.8: Fanny Mendelssohn, Klavierbuch e-moll, Toccata, mm. 1-6

The style of this second prelude is neither lyrical nor chordal, which differentiates it from the first prelude. Exhibiting only two main rhythmic ideas, which are exchanged between the two hands, inverted, and slightly developed or varied, this movement is much closer in genre to a two-part invention for keyboard. Although there is no tempo indication, the character of the movement suggests a quick Allegro and crisp, precise articulation, evoking a typical Baroque sound. One could argue for a slow, inflected,
performance of the arpeggio figures in the style of a cello suite, but the genre is clearly that of a light and nimble two-part invention. The dotted eighth-sixteenth motives in the prelude (Ex. 3.7) prefigure the main rhythmic theme of the toccata (Ex. 3.8), tying these two movements together.

The toccata is initially contrapuntal, suggesting a fugue, but quickly reveals why it is a toccata when the texture switches from strict counterpoint to freer motivic development. However, Fanny does not fully commit to writing a toccata in the style of Bach in that she does not change the motives or textures significantly enough to result in multiple sections, nor does she allow the form to yield to any moments of fantasia style. The dotted rhythms and running sixteenth-note motives are instead maintained consistently throughout the movement. Oddly enough, this is in complete contrast to her usual style; in especially sonata forms, Fanny frequently indulges in fantasia-like digressions.

In the end, it is futile to attempt to summarize tidily the *Klavierbuch e-moll* as a Baroque suite in the traditional sense. Although the set does maintain one predominant key, E minor, and does present the typical alternation of slow and fast tempos expected in a Baroque suite, these pieces only suggest a Baroque suite, without in any way attempting to be one. The time signatures are never correct for the expected progression of dance forms, and the pieces are not in dance forms at all. However, the Baroque and especially the Bachian influences are undeniable. Even though these influences are so strong, Fanny’s developing personal style does shine through, and we can observe the complex network of compositional interactions here between Fanny and her brother.

The idea of a pseudo-Baroque suite was also on Felix’s mind in 1827: he published his Op. 7, the *Sieben Charakterstücke*, with, curiously enough, a dedication to
their first piano teacher, Ludwig Berger. The relationship with Berger had faded when the Mendelssohn parents dismissed him in 1822. We don’t know exactly what caused the strain, but we also do not know exactly how close the relationship remained after 1822. Felix’s dedication in 1827 shows that he clearly continued to respect his first music teacher.

Table 3.2: Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Sieben Charakterstücke*, Op. 7 (1827)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Tempo</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 | *Sanft und mit Empfindung* / Quietly, with feeling  
(MWV U 56) | E minor, *Andante* | Ms source and June 6, 1826 |
| 2 | *Mit heftiger Bewegung* / With forceful motion  
(MWV U 44) | B minor, *Allegro vivace* | April 17, 1824 |
| 3 | *Kräftig und feurig* / Strong and fiery  
(MWV U 59) | D major, *Allegro vivace*  
Fugue | Before 1827 |
| 4 | *Schnell und beweglich* / Fast and lively  
(MWV U 55) | A major, *Con moto* | June 4, 1826 |
| 5 | *Ernst und mit steigender Lebhaftigkeit* / Seriously, with increasing Vivacity  
(MWV U 60) | A major  
Fugue | Before 1827 |
| 6 | *Sehnsüchtig* / Longingly  
(MWV U 61) | E minor, *Andante* | Before 1827 |
| 7 | *Leicht und luftig* / Light and airy  
(MWV U 62) | E major, *Presto* | Before 1827 |

Felix’s suite, like Fanny’s, presents the expected alternation of affects and tempo markings. However, Felix’s suite is not in just one key area. Instead, Op. 7 traces a trajectory from E minor through a series of dominant, secondary dominant, and relative
major key areas back to E major.\textsuperscript{24} The first piece is, as appears to be a pattern, a prelude-like piece in E minor beginning with a pedal on the tonic (Ex. 3.9).

![Ex. 3.9: Felix Mendelssohn, \textit{Sieben Charakterstücke}, Op. 7 (1827), No. 1, “Sanft und mit Empfindung” (“Quietly, with feeling”)](image)

This work dates from 1826, but to say Felix “did it first” is still hardly productive: Bach still precedes any efforts by the Mendelssohn siblings together. As we peel back the layers of time and start to identify these references, we can see just how often the siblings tossed ideas back and forth in a sort of musical badinage spanning anywhere from within a year to over a decade. The exact dates of composition are not known for every piece in this set, but No. 1 and No. 4 were composed within just two days of each other in 1826. Thus, the likelihood that Felix conceived of them as a pair is quite likely, although he chose to split them up when he made them part of Op. 7.

The second of these two, from June 6, 1826, actually became the first piece in this set. The somber \textit{Andante} sets a contemplative mood with its falling scalar motive. The first section of the piece acts as a mini-prelude to the \textit{cantabile} theme that arrives after the repeat sign (Ex. 3.10). A plaintive \textit{Seufzer} motive spanning a perfect fourth,

\textsuperscript{24} Wolfgang Dinglinger has provided an excellent study of Op. 7, particularly in regard to its Baroque aspects and symmetrical and mirroring features in its construction as a cycle. “Sieben Charakterstücke op. 7 von Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy,” \textit{Mendelssohn Studien} 10 (1997): 101-130.
which is immediately filled in by stepwise motion in the opposite direction, prefigures a similar motive in Felix’s String Quartet Op. 13 in A minor from 1827 (Ex. 3.11). In the string quartet, the motive is used in the slow second movement, and is even in a similar position in the movement: the motive is placed after an introduction, as the theme of a stretto. The stretto is much more defined in the string quartet, but the layering of the motives in successive entries in the Charakterstück is quite evocative of a stretto as well. There is no immediately apparent intentionality to the relationship between the first piece in this set, from June 6 as discussed above, and No. 4, from June 4, 1826. We do not know whether or not Felix had already decided to write a set of seven pieces at this point, but if he had not, it must have occurred to him not long after, in order to assemble all seven pieces and see them through the press by the end of 1827.

Example 3.10: Felix Mendelssohn, Sieben Charakterstücke, Op. 7 (1827), No. 1, “Sanft und mit Empfindung! (Quietly, with Feeling”), mm. 10-14

No. 4, "Schnell und beweglich" is not particularly Bachian in style. It is more of a perpetuum mobile with development of the descending motive found in the first measures (Ex. 3.12). In fact, the Scherzo-like mood and some of the gestures are more evocative of the effervescent Octet for Strings in E major, Op. 20 (MWV R 20) and the Overture to A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Op. 21 (MWV P 3) which Felix decided the following month (July 7, 1826) to compose:
... I’ve tried composing in the garden and have already brought two piano pieces in A major and E minor into the world, and today or tomorrow I will start to dream the Midsummer Night’s Dream.25

Why Felix mentioned two piano pieces he had finished composing a month earlier is unclear, but the stylistic trajectory in especially Op. 7 No. 4 does indicate a certain conceptual relationship to the Octet for Strings.


The second character piece instructs the pianist to play "with forceful motion" which is visually apparent in the busy, jagged, contours of the constant sixteenth notes. Felix injects a strong dose of Baroque aesthetic into a nineteenth-century composition here, utilizing two-part invention style, sequences, and crisp articulation (Ex. 3.13). The nuanced dynamics and other pianistic articulation emphasize the piece’s true identity as a nineteenth-century creation, however. This movement is actually not unlike the fifth piece in Fanny's *Klavierbuch e-moll*. We do not know the exact date of composition for Felix's piece, so once again we can observe instead Felix and Fanny working in close

stylistic proximity to write pieces that are clearly different but also clearly inspired by a similar aesthetic concept.


The two fugues present two very different styles: one fiery and energetic, the other serious. No. 3, “Kräftig und feurig” ("With strength and fire"), presents a fugue on a Handelian model. Brilliant, energetic, and nearly concerto grosso-like in style, this fugue in D major is bubbling over with youthful energy (Ex. 3.14).


No. 5, “Ernst und mit steigender Lebhaftigkeit” ("Seriously, with increasing vivacity") at first presents a strict Bachian fugue in A major (Ex. 3.15). Fugal procedures are much more carefully observed in this fugue than in No. 3. The linear voice leading of
the four-part fugue is carefully maintained, and the main theme is put through various contrapuntal variations – most prominently, inverted when the form attains the dominant E major. Eventually, the “increasing vivacity” comes to the fore, as the eighth-note neighbor note or mordent embellishments heard at first in the tail end of the main theme are featured more and more prominently. Eventually, the half steps break out into fanfares, which struggle against the prevailing four-part fugue until the two unite triumphantly (Ex. 3.16).

**Example 3.15: Felix Mendelssohn, Sieben Charakterstücke, Op. 7 (1827), No. 5, “Ernst und mit steigender Lebhaftigkeit” (“ Seriously, with increasing vivacity”), mm. 1-9**

**Example 3.16: Felix Mendelssohn, Sieben Charakterstücke, Op. 7 (1827), No. 5, “Ernst und mit steigender Lebhaftigkeit” (“ Seriously, with increasing vivacity”), mm. 176-80**

Mirroring the plaintive E minor of No. 1, the sixth piece, “Sehnsüchtig” (“With longing”) once again returns us to contemplative mood. Some scholars, quoted by
Dinglinger, interpret this movement as a Sarabande, but like Fanny’s example, the dance form is not readily apparent. While it is in triple meter and does function within this set as a Sarabande does within a typical Baroque suite—the slow penultimate movement—this piece is clearly not a Sarabande. Rather, the flowing eighth notes below a prominent melodic theme calls to mind some of the shorter Lieder ohne Worte, especially Op. 67, No. 5 (MWV U 184) (Ex. 3.17).

Example 3.17: Felix Mendelssohn, Sieben Charakterstücke, Op. 7 (1827), No. 5, “Sehnsüchtig” (“With longing”)

A spritely nod to the Gigue completes the set. However, the Baroque Gigue is updated to a Scherzo here, in the scampering, elfin style that became synonymous with Felix Mendelssohn. No. 7, “Leicht und luftig” (“Light and airy”), in E major, has been compared to the Overture to A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Op. 21. We can also see an echo of the Octet, Op. 20. The oscillating thirds, arpeggiated grace notes, and nimble, scampering textures are all features of all of these famous scherzo movements. Fanny would later record that Felix had taken inspiration from the Walpurgis Night scene in Part I of Goethe’s Faust for the Scherzo in his Octet:

The flight of the clouds and the veil of mist
Are lighted from above.
A breeze in the leaves, a wind in the reeds,
And all has vanished.

Wolkenflug und Nebelflor
Erhellen sich von oben.
Luft im Laub und Wind im Rohr,
Und Alles ist zerstoben.

The final measures of Felix's character piece from June 6, 1826, also display a similar diabolical twinkle and airy departure. The Scherzo from Fanny's Easter Sonata yet another two years later also highlights a similar gesture in the final measures (Ex. 3.18, Ex. 3.19, and Ex. 3.20).

Example 3.18: Felix Mendelssohn, Octet for Strings, Op. 20 (1825), Scherzo

That the pieces in this set are called “character pieces” is something of an oxymoron, given their chronological position in the development of piano genres in the nineteenth century and their Baroque inspiration. Robert Schumann wrote that these pieces were “only...an interesting contribution to the development history of this young master, when he was still just a child toying with the chains of Bach and Gluck.”

These character pieces were among the few pieces Felix ever referred to as "character pieces" in an era when the concept would come to define the works his contemporaries, such as Robert and Clara Schumann. Instead of investing further in that direction, Felix Mendelssohn went on to publish his *Lieder ohne Worte*, which one could convincingly argue are character pieces anyway. His contemporaries certainly wanted to receive them as character pieces, famously attempting to fit the absolute music with evocative

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titles and affects, and even in some cases, words.  

28 Felix's reluctance to give titles to his piano music, as we know from his oft-quoted letter to his wife's cousin, Marc-Andre Souchay, stems from his belief that music should be pure and unencumbered by the dictates of the composer, and that the listener should be left free to form their own associations and understanding of the music, for he believed that "music fills one’s heart with a thousand things better than any words."  

29 Fanny, while she did not put her views on the matter into words, also composed in the genre of the *Lied ohne Worte*. She did not blindly follow the lead of her brother's publications, but rather tended to call her piano pieces *Lied fur Klavier*, a song for piano, and did not always maintain a singable melody as Felix generally did throughout his *Lieder ohne Worte*.

This most famous of Felix's piano genres may have even originated from both siblings, during a game that they used to play as children. Later, Fanny expressed amusement to her brother that their childhood game had become the pastime of Europe, as Felix's *Lieder ohne Worte* populated music stands in the parlors of nearly every respectable home and piano virtuosos such as Liszt adapted sung *Lieder* to instrumental improvisations:

...when text is removed from sung *Lieder* so that they can be used as concert pieces, it is contrary to the experiment of adding a text to your instrumental *Lieder*—the other half of the topsy-turvy world. I'm old enough to find many things utterly tasteless in the world at present: that may well fall into that category. But shouldn’t a person think a lot of himself (no, he shouldn’t) when he

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sees how the jokes that we, as mere children, contrived to pass the time have now been adopted by the great talents and used as fodder for the public?\textsuperscript{30}

A. B. Marx had another view of the origins of the *Lieder ohne Worte*, however. In his memoirs, the older musician and scholar described the atmosphere of constant artistic stimulation and the saturation in beauty at the Mendelssohn house, and remembers their indulgences in flirtatious nocturnal escapades:

Much more dubious, if equally understandable, was the influence exercised by his pleasure-laden environment and the constant company of his sisters’ young female friends. … More than once I climbed with Felix—not without danger—onto the roof of an outbuilding, in order to slip delicious peaches or swelling grapes onto the night table of a young lady with a Polish name. Was it surprising, was it otherwise possible than that the tender devotion awakened and simultaneously returned by so many should have left that soft impress on the compositions one would later term sweet, flirtatious, or tender, and that resulted in those “songs without words” whose offshoots would reach from that period through the whole life of the composer?\textsuperscript{31}


The inside jokes which made their way out to the public—the personal references concealed behind ignorance of their existence—could indicate not a particular attempt to embed such musical jokes for the ears of family and friends, as considered in Chapter 1, but rather an inattention to it. These ideas, as we have seen while examining just two sets of piano pieces by each composer (as well as in the Lieder discussed in Ch. 1), may have been so much in common to both composers that they subconsciously adopted them when composing a work that would suggest a similar approach.

For Fanny, this sequestered approach to music education and composition did not change as radically or as quickly as it did for Felix. Already by 1829, Felix was embarking on a public career and was open to public criticism. But while Fanny did remain at home, she too experienced significant changes in her life. As we have already seen, Felix's departure affected Fanny deeply. Felix had left home on numerous occasions for destinations where Fanny could not follow: the University of Berlin, Goethe's home in Weimar, and Paris for consultations with leading composers of his day, including Cherubini. Now he was embarking on his "Grand Tour" which was a tradition not for young women, but for young men. As an equally talented and equally educated woman with an equal desire to visit foreign lands (especially Italy), Fanny must have felt acutely the disadvantage of her sex, and must have felt incredibly jealous. If she did, she concealed it well, perhaps under her dry wit. She enjoyed receiving letters from Felix and his traveling companions, and fortunately she did have her dreamed-of travel to Italy in her future. Throughout most of 1829, Fanny had much to keep her busy. Wilhelm Hensel had returned in late 1828 from Italy, and after his appointment as
Hofmaler at the Prussian court, was at last able to secure the blessing of Fanny’s parents for their engagement on January 23, 1829. The revival performances of the St. Matthew Passion kept the family fully occupied through mid-April, and then Fanny had a wedding to plan.

As R. Larry Todd has shown us in his recent biography of Fanny, this period was an especially difficult one for Fanny as she negotiated the realities of her changing life roles and expectations. Fanny’s father had (now infamously) emphasized that Fanny could not become a professional musician like her brother: music could only be an ornament (“Zierde”) in her life, never the sole reason (“Grundbaß”) for her being. She must put away her ambitions, even though she could earn the same praise as her brother if she were in his position, and ornament herself with only feminine achievements. Abraham had expressed his approval of a Lied Fanny had sent him; also mentioned in the letter is one of Felix’s fugues. He expresses surprise and pleasure that Felix had applied himself to such a task, which he noted required much “deliberation and perseverance.” Apparently, Abraham did not believe that such an application of oneself to perfecting an art form was feminine, even though he knew that Fanny had the ability to equal her brother in musical achievements.


During the months between their engagement and their marriage, Fanny and Wilhelm negotiated the terms of their relationship. Wilhelm felt some jealousy over Fanny's friendship with Gustav Droysen, whose poems Fanny was especially fond of setting to music, and Fanny declared she would never set another of his texts. Furthermore, she offered to make the ultimate sacrifice: if Wilhelm felt her musical passion would impede her role as a dutiful housewife and mother, she would give it up. Fortunately, Wilhelm was the right choice for Fanny; although politically conservative, he was somewhat more socially progressive than many of his contemporaries, including Fanny's own father and brothers. He insisted that Fanny would never give up her music, and that the two would lead a life of intertwining artistic harmony. Fanny was aware of the challenges her engagement and wedding would pose to her activity as a composer, but seems to have taken an active position in warding off too much distraction, as she wrote to her brother:

I have a good idea of my organ recessional: G major, beginning in the pedals. Overall I’m happily convinced that my impending wedding hasn’t hurt my compositional activities. If I’ve made even one good piece during my engagement, then I’m over the hurdle and can expect further progress. Don’t you agree? I haven’t composed anything better than the lieder I wrote for you, and the piece by and for Hensel isn’t bad either.

Thus, as Felix left her side, Wilhelm—even though he was tone-deaf—filled the void and became a new source of daily artistic interaction. Following her marriage on October 3, 1829, Fanny Mendelssohn became Fanny Hensel: a wife, and soon a mother. Fanny found herself pulled in many directions as she adjusted to her new role. The greatest joy in these early years of marriage was the birth of her only child, Sebastian Ludwig Felix Hensel on June 16, 1830. The joy was at first marred by fears that Sebastian, born probably one month premature, was not healthy enough to survive infancy. Three weeks earlier, Fanny had apparently fallen or had some other accident while going to bed one night, which nearly caused her to go into labor prematurely. She describes in her diary how bringing her child closer to full term cost her much pain and effort, but also describes the loving attentiveness of her husband, sister, and mother.

On the 24th of May, I was lying down and had an accident in the night, which caused fears of an early birth, and it took all of my courage and strength to prevent it. In the following three weeks my beloved Wilhelm was so near to me, that I can never forget it, and mother and Rebecka also rarely left my side. On Monday the 14th [of June] my birth pangs started, and on Wednesday the 16th, just after 7 in the morning, I gave birth to my Sebastian, who at first was so thin and weak, that we all feared for his life, but now, as I write, we have the joy to hold a fat, splendid, healthy boy, whose development is no longer a worry, just like any other child. 36

Besseres wie die Lieder für Dich habe ich noch nicht gemacht, und das Stück von und für Hensel ist auch nicht übel.”

Afterwards followed a period of complete focus on her new role as a mother; as is easily seen in Table 3.3, not a single piece survives from a period spanning six months. Whether or not she even picked up a piece of staff paper or practiced piano during this time is unknown. Throughout the majority of the period between her wedding and her recovery from her difficult pregnancy (October 1829–February 1831), however, Fanny did remain active as a composer, and her devotion to her musical models Bach and Beethoven also remained strong. She of course continued to write Lieder, including three on texts by her husband, and none by her old friend, Droysen, as she had promised. With Felix’s encouragement, Fanny revived the Sunday musicales that her mother had organized in the 1820s, which now became an outlet for her own musical life as a performer and composer.

We see Fanny trying her hand once more at a piece for organ, before abandoning that genre entirely (she had written her own processional and recessional for her wedding), as well as trying her hand once again at larger sonata forms (Table 3.3). After composing three movements of her Piano Sonata in E-flat, however, Fanny put that work aside until 1834, when she reworked the first movement as the first movement of her String Quartet in E-flat major (more about this work in Chapter 4). The festivities for her parents’ silver wedding anniversary in December, which was the largest family gathering since her wedding in October, prompted Fanny to compose her Festspiel. The celebration also brought Felix home from London where he had been delayed by a serious carriage accident. We even see Fanny perhaps experimenting with an early version of a Lied ohne Worte (H-U 250). Then, suddenly, she composed almost nothing but cantatas for the next nine months.
Table 3.3: Fanny Hensel’s compositional activity in her first two years of marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prelude for Organ in G major (H-U 244)</td>
<td>October 22, 1829</td>
<td>Fragment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Lied</em>, “Zu deines Lagers Füßen” (H-U 245)</td>
<td>October 1829</td>
<td>On a text by Wilhelm Hensel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonata for Piano in E-flat major (H-U 246)</td>
<td>Oct. – Nov. 1829</td>
<td>Incomplete, later reworked into the String Quartet in E-flat major (H-U 277)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capriccio for Violoncello and Piano in A-flat major (H-U 247)</td>
<td>Fall 1829</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Festspiel</em>, &quot;Die Hochzeit kommt&quot; (H-U 248)</td>
<td>December 1829</td>
<td>For the silver wedding anniversary of Abraham and Lea Mendelssohn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Lied</em>, &quot;Wie dunkel die Nacht&quot; (H-U 249)</td>
<td>January 19, 1830</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Lied</em> in G major, for piano (H-U 250)</td>
<td>March 18, 1830</td>
<td>Three-stave system without words is either an incomplete song or an early “Lied ohne Worte”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prelude for Piano in A minor (H-U 251)</td>
<td>March 30, 1830</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Lied, Genesungsfeier</em> (H-U 252)</td>
<td>April 10 or 11, 1830</td>
<td>For Rebecka’s birthday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantasie for piano in A-flat major (H-U 253)</td>
<td>October 29, 1830</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Minnelied des Grafen Peter von Provence</em> (H-U 254)</td>
<td>November 16, 1830</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Frühlingslied</em> (H-U 255)</td>
<td>November 19, 1830</td>
<td>On a text of Wilhelm Hensel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Lied</em>, “Der Schnee der ist geschmolzen” (H-U 256)</td>
<td>Early 1831</td>
<td>On a text of Wilhelm Hensel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Lobgesang</em> (H-U 257)</td>
<td>Feb. 6–June 14, 1831</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Hiob</em> (H-U 258)</td>
<td>July 1–Oct. 1, 1831</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Lied</em>, “Nacht” (H-U 259)</td>
<td>October 1, 1831</td>
<td>On a text of Friederike Robert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Choleramusik</em> (H-U 260)</td>
<td>Oct. 9–Nov. 20, 1831</td>
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Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen, who has written one of the most thorough analyses of the cantatas to date, believes that the sudden appearance of cantatas in Fanny’s output is due to her renewed *Sonntagsmusiken* series, but does not clearly state why he believes the two efforts stem from the same ambition.\(^{37}\) The implication is that Fanny needed to create and share music that stretched the realm of her compositional prowess and confidence beyond *Lieder* and chamber music. Todd believes that Fanny specifically wished to showcase choral music in her *Sonntagsmusiken*, based on a letter Felix wrote that encouraged her to also include chamber and piano music on her series.\(^{38}\) Another intriguing aspect of Fanny’s cantatas—considered as well by Hinrichsen—is that she wrote them specifically for performance in her home; thus, they are sacred ("geistlich"), but not liturgical ("kirchliche") cantatas, in keeping with the nineteenth-century trend towards taking the church to the concert hall. In addition, Fanny—just like Wilhelm—may have felt a desire to make her own large-scale contribution to the family reception of Bach.

Whatever the exact reasons, it is clear Fanny was particularly inspired in 1831 to write three cantatas in a distinctly Bachian tradition, and completed all of the cantatas between February 6 and November 20, 1831 (Table 3.4). In each case, only one to two weeks separates the end of work on one cantata and the beginning of work on the next. Each cantata took progressively less time as she gained facility in the genre (about four months, two months, and seven weeks, respectively).

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\(^{38}\) Todd, *Hensel* (2009), 151. We don’t have the letter from Fanny that prompted Felix’s reply.
### Table 3.4: Fanny Hensel’s cantatas, 1831 – chronology and instrumentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Instrumentation</th>
<th>Dedication</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lobgesang / Hymn of Praise</strong></td>
<td>February 6, 1831 to June 14, 1831</td>
<td>Soprano Alto 4-part choir Orchestra: 2 Flutes 2 Oboes 2 Clarinets 2 Bassoons 2 Horns 2 Trumpet Strings</td>
<td>Sebastian Hensel (on the occasion of his first birthday) and Karl Klingemann, performed on Wilhelm Hensel’s birthday, July 6, 1831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hiob / Job</strong></td>
<td>July 1, 1831 to October 1, 1831</td>
<td>Soprano Alto Tenor Bass 4-part choir Orchestra: 2 flutes 2 oboes 2 clarinets 2 bassoons 2 horns 2 trumpets 2 timpani Strings</td>
<td>Wilhelm Hensel, performed on their wedding anniversary, October 3, 1831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Choleramusik / Cholera Cantata</strong></td>
<td>October 9, 1831 to November 20, 1831</td>
<td>Soprano Alto Tenor Bass 8-part choir Orchestra: 2 flutes 2 oboes 2 clarinets 2 bassoons 2 horns 2 trumpets 2 timpani 3 Trombones Strings</td>
<td>Abatement of the cholera epidemic, performed for the birthday of Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, December 10, 1831</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.5: Fanny Hensel’s cantatas, 1831 – movements and key areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Key</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lobgesang</td>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>G major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Chorus, “Meine Seele ist stille zu Gott”</td>
<td>E-flat major/G minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Schlußchor, “Ich will von Gottes Güte singen”</td>
<td>D major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiob</td>
<td>1. Chorus, “Was ist ein Mensch”</td>
<td>G minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Chorus “Leben und Wohltat hast du mir getan”</td>
<td>G major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choleramusik</td>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>G minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Arioso (BS), “Ich habe Kinder auferzogen”</td>
<td>F minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Recit. (A), “Sie rufen, aber da ist kein Helfer”</td>
<td>C minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Recit. (S), “Plötzlich muß das Volk sterben”</td>
<td>F major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Chorus, “Gott, unser Schild, schaue doch”</td>
<td>A minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Aria (T), “Ich bin elend und ohnmächtig”</td>
<td>D minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Recit. (S), “Er wird dich mit seine Fittichen decken”</td>
<td>D minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Trauerchor, “Sie sind dahin gegangen”</td>
<td>G minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Chor der Seligen, “Ich habe einen guten Kampf gekämpft”</td>
<td>C major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*12. Arioso (S), “Blick hin, auf die, so vollendet haben”</td>
<td>B-flat major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. Chorus, “Wir leiden um unsrer Sünden willen”</td>
<td>D minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. Recit. (SAB), “Der Herr ist nahe allen, die ihn anrufen”</td>
<td>G major</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Movements included from additional sources by editor of first edition.

With each cantata, Fanny also expanded her ensemble. *Lobgesang* has two soloists (Soprano and Alto), as well as a four-part choir and a reduced orchestra without percussion. *Hiob* adds two more soloists (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass), and expands the orchestra with two timpani. Finally, the *Cholera Cantata* represents Fanny’s most ambitious attempt, and even later accrued the title of an “Oratorio on Pictures from the Bible,” although at only thirteen movements, the work is clearly a cantata. In addition to
the expanded instrumentation used in *Hiob*, the *Choleramusik* incorporates three trombones and an eight-part choir.

The composition of cantatas (or other large-scale works, including double piano concertos) for birthday or Christmas presents was a favorite practice for the Mendelssohns. Felix had presented Fanny most recently with a cantata on “Christe, du Lamm Gottes” for Christmas 1827, which Fanny then responded to in the finale of her *Easter Sonata* just a few months later in 1828. Fanny then decided to do the same for her son, and simultaneously praised God for sparing the life of both herself and her child a year earlier. *Hiob* was dedicated to her husband for their second wedding anniversary; Fanny finished the score on October 1, 1831, and then recorded in her diary that the work was “probirt” on October 3.  

Finally, the *Choleramusik*, while it was for the most part intended to mark the cessation of the cholera epidemic that ravaged Berlin in 1831—taking both Hegel and Fanny’s aunt Henriette Mendelssohn—found occasion for a performance on Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy’s birthday on December 10, 1831. Fanny clearly conceived these large-scale pieces as performance landmarks in her salon. Unfortunately, Fanny did not keep records of the other performances in her salon from 1831, so we do not know what else Fanny was listening to at the time. It is quite possible that she was also directing her choir in performances of Bach’s choral works, since she did initially want to focus on choral music in her salon.

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40 Hegel’s cause of death was most likely due to cholera, but it has not been proven beyond doubt.  
Lobgesang (February 6 – June 14, 1831)

The Lobgesang opens with an instrumental introduction which is not particularly bombastic, as one might expect for a joyous “Hymn of Praise,” but rather almost peaceful; perhaps Fanny conceived this opening as a song to her child. The instrumental gestures are cut straight from Bachian cloth; the continuous, pulsating, trochaic rhythms, and gently arching lines echo especially the oboe obbligato in “Et in Spiritum Sanctum” from Bach’s B-minor Mass, while the gentle pastoral style and winds floating above strings call to mind the aria “Sheep may safely graze” from Bach’s Cantata No. 208. One significant feature of a Baroque cantata missing from Fanny’s Lobgesang, however, is the keyboard continuo. Fanny chose a continuo made up entirely of strings, which Felix, incidentally, would also choose for performances of Handel and Bach in performance spaces lacking a good organ or harpsichord.42

The relationship of Fanny’s Lobgesang to Bach’s Cantata No. 104, “Du Hirte Israel, höre” and the Christmas Oratorio has been noted by most writers, including Todd and Hinrichsen. The similarities are definitely there—one cannot listen to Fanny’s cantatas without instantly recognizing the influence of Bach—but there are quite a few significant differences of interest to us, as well. Fanny did not simply mimic Bach (not that either Todd or Hinrichsen were implying that); rather, she studied and absorbed Bach and then produced a work that is clearly in homage to her model. The first level of similarity can be found in the basic formal details of the two works; compare the progression of movements and key areas in Bach’s Cantata No. 104 (Table 3.6) with the Lobgesang (Table 3.5).

Table 3.6: J. S. Bach, Cantata No. 104, *Du Hirte Israel, höre*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Du Hirte Israel, höre / Thou Shepherd of Israel, give ear</em> (BWV 104)</td>
<td>Introduction and Chorus, “Du Hirte Israel, höre!”</td>
<td>G major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recit. (T), “Der höchste Hüter sorgt für mich”</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aria (T), “Verbirgt mein Hirte sich zu lange”</td>
<td>B minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recit. (B), “Ja, dieses Wort ist meiner Seelen Speise”</td>
<td>Modulates to D major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Da capo Aria (B), “Beglückte Heerde, Jesu Schafe”</td>
<td>D major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chorale, “Der Herr ist mein getreuer Hirt”</td>
<td>A major</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bach’s introduction and first chorus, in G major, are integrated into one movement; the chorus joins the chamber orchestra after a few minutes, and sings the same motivic material. Fanny’s orchestral introduction is also in G major, but her chorus is not only set apart by a closing cadence at a double bar, but also by a dramatic key change to the distinctly nineteenth-century chromatic third relation, the flat VI, E-flat major, instead of Bach’s more conventional E minor. In addition, Fanny’s texture and time signature change completely: the switch to cut time and even, instead of pulsating, rhythms, moves the drama of the cantata forward.

Fanny’s sense of developing drama also contrasts with Bach’s cantata, and is perhaps more indicative of her close study of the *St. Matthew Passion* than of his cantatas. Bach’s liturgical cantatas were meant as a contemplation on a theme, and thus do not progress dramatically like a Passion or oratorio. In Table 3.6, we can see that Bach’s texts ruminate on the basic theme of the believer’s relationship with the divine Shepherd and protector. On the other hand, Fanny’s cantata progresses through the

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43 Chromatic third relationships were of course very much associated with the nineteenth-century, especially in the music of Schubert.
experience of giving birth—the recitative explicitly references the event, using the text “When a woman gives birth, she feels pain”—to praising God, ostensibly for the safe deliverance of both mother and child, as well as the gift of life, and even eternal life. As Todd points out, the relationship to the Christmas Oratorio may have “celebrated her son’s birth by placing it in the context of Christ’s Nativity.” 44 The key relationships between the movements may also reflect the changing state of the woman giving birth; Bach’s key progression is a classic rising fifth progression (G major → E minor → B minor → D major → A major) with a detour to the relative minor key areas of both G and D, but Fanny’s cantata progresses through a slightly more forced route to D major. As the pain of childbirth passes, and the joy of a safe delivery takes its place, the key areas move through the least natural of the progressions from G major to B minor to A major, before returning to a simple progression by fifth, to conclude with a joyful movement in D major.

Table 3.7: Key progression in Bach Cantata BWV 104 and Fanny Mendelssohn, Lobgesang

Bach, Cantata No. 104, Du Hirte Israel, höre
G major → E minor → B minor → D major → A major

Hensel, Lobgesang
G major → E-flat major/G minor → G major/B minor → A major → D major

44 Todd (2009), 152.
Finally, Fanny never utilized an unadorned chorale in her cantata, while Bach, of course, concluded his cantata with the typical four-part chorale harmonization. Although she does use a chorale-like melody in her final chorus, she does not present it in a straightforward four-part harmonization. Instead, she incorporates the chorale melody phrase by phrase in the alto voices with embellishments in the sopranos, alternating with responses in the tenor and bass voices. Todd labels these interjections as “brief, freely composed choral interludes”\(^\text{45}\) which is not far removed from her treatment of the chorale melody in the Finale of her *Easter Sonata*. Fanny would go on to include true chorales in her cantatas, however, and in quite innovative ways, as we shall see shortly.

**Hiob (July 1 – October 1, 1831)**

*Hiob* presents immediately a completely different approach to style and formal model than we found in *Lobgesang*. Fanny is clearly placing musical drama at a much higher level of importance than in her first cantata. The voices enter after just five measures of introductory material, and as in many of Bach’s choral works, the opening chorus is integrated with the musical motives of the opening, rather than being set in contrast. The text for *Hiob* comes from the story of Job, so the musical depiction of questioning and of spiritual, emotional, and physical struggle is clearly the reason for this darkly turbulent opening chorus in G minor. As shown in Table 3.4, *Hiob* has only three movements, traversing G minor, C minor, and G major. As Todd has discussed, however, these are hardly the only keys employed throughout the cantata.\(^\text{46}\) Fanny is exploring a more adventurous sense of harmonic development in this cantata than she

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did in *Lobgesang*, and at times approaches the dramatic musical style in Felix’s oratorios and Psalm settings.

One of Felix’s Psalm settings in particular had a strong influence on *Hiob*: Fanny clearly pays homage to her brother’s setting of Psalm 115 in the opening measures of her cantata. Although Felix’s opening measures are thickly populated with sixteenth notes, the arpeggiated structure of the main theme in G minor is nearly identical (Ex. 3.21 and Ex. 3.22). The sixteenth-note embellishment of the prevailing rhythm does appear in a later portion of Fanny’s chorus, as well.

Example 3.21: Felix Mendelssohn, “Nicht unserm Namen, Herr,” Op. 31 (Psalm 115), No. 1, mm. 1-3 (1830)

Example 3.22: Fanny Hensel, *Hiob*, No. 1, mm. 1-3 (1831)

Another of Bach’s cantatas is believed to have served as inspiration for Fanny’s second cantata: this time, it was Bach’s Cantata No. 106, *Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste*
Zeit. Todd points out that Felix and Fanny quickly came to know and love this cantata after it was published in 1830,\(^{47}\) so the chronological impetus for its influence on Fanny is also strong. The thematic content of death and humble acceptance of God’s will and timing is also compelling, given the cholera epidemic that was then killing thousands by the day in Europe. These troubling events are believed to have been the inspiration for Fanny’s selection of texts from the book of Job.

Fanny’s choice to use four-part soloists in her C-minor second movement *Arioso* may have stemmed from Bach’s example as well: in the strange and haunting C-minor *Lento* section of Bach’s cantata, four soloists exchange phrases of Psalm 90:12. Fanny’s four soloists do not arrive until the alto has had an extended solo (which is effectively the aria for the cantata) on a theme which Todd points out is not far removed from the “Et incarnatus est” in Bach’s B minor mass. Also a common thread between Bach’s cantata and Fanny’s is a predominance of half-step oscillations. The influence of Bach is clear throughout Fanny’s cantata, but she almost always transforms the allusion into a recognizable homage, not a direct imitation.

Bach’s Cantata No. 106 may have influenced Fanny’s *Lobgesang*, as well. Fanny places the chorale melody in *Lobgesang* within the context of a choral movement, presented phrase by phrase with interruptions as is common in Baroque chorale movements, but she does not set it in four-part harmony. The chorale melody in Bach’s Cantata No. 106, “Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin” (“In peace and joy do I depart”) is also deployed in a similar way: this time, Bach gives the chorale melody to the alto alone and superimposes it over a wandering bass solo, who is singing the words of Jesus to the robbers on the crosses with him at Calvary: “Heute, wirst du mit mir in Paradies”

(“Today, shalt thou be with me in paradise,” Luke 23:43). The Mendelssohns were clearly moved and inspired by this intense and strange cantata, which can best be described by that most indescribably perfect of terms: unheimlich.

Many scholars consider Hiob to be a better-composed work than Lobgesang. However, in some instances the work does not bear the weight of the heavier orchestration and higher drama well. While the concluding passages in the third movement are quite stirring and employ the archetypical festive Baroque combination of trumpets and timpani effectively, Fanny’s choral writing and counterpoint exudes a certain unnaturally forced erudition. One passage of parallel first-inversion chords in the first movement—heard in all voices and instruments simultaneously—is set in sequence three times by step, from C to D to E. The effect of the sliding parallel chords, by the third time we hear it, is overdone and increasingly unpleasant (mm. 42-50).

Felix had pointed out that Fanny’s vocal lines were very lovely in her first cantata, but that melodic loveliness—Fanny’s trademark in her numerous Lieder—is somewhat lacking in Hiob. Rather, triadic and arpeggiated motives more suited for an instrumental texture predominate. In addition, there are no opportunities for the solo voice to shine and dispel the heavy choral counterpoint, as there are no arias or recitatives in this cantata. There is no explicit chorale or chorale melody, either; Fanny employs, as she did in Lobgesang, a simplified, chorale-like texture in the last moments of the piece, which offers a nod to the venerable chorale cantata tradition without strictly following Bach’s form. In a way, Hiob is more a set of three choral numbers on the topic of Job than it is a real cantata. We could conclude that, following her first essay in the genre, Fanny went back to the drawing board for her second attempt, with more knowledge but also less artistic freedom. We cannot factor Felix’s harsh but well-meaning criticism of
her orchestration into this equation, because he did not write his assessment of her cantatas until December 28, 1831, which was over two weeks after her third cantata had already been premiered.

**Choleramusik (October 9 – November 20, 1831)**

Also a response to the cholera epidemic, Fanny’s third cantata depicts the suffering, deaths, and departed souls of those who were afflicted by or perished from the disease. The cantata was written when the epidemic was finally abating, so Fanny wrote the cantata not only as a requiem or in memoriam, but also with joy and thankfulness at the passing of the scourge. The Mendelssohns for the most part survived the heavy infection in Berlin, but Felix did contract a slight case in Paris, where the mother of Marie Bigot, the pianist who had given both Felix and Fanny piano lessons in Paris in 1816, nursed him back to health. Abraham’s sister, Henriette, unfortunately did contract a case of cholera and died on November 9, 1831, just weeks before the epidemic faded out.

Fanny never specifically titled this work the “Cholera Cantata” nor an “Oratorio on Pictures from the Bible” (“Oratorium nach Bildern der Bibel”) as it is sometimes known. How the work came to accrue the title of an oratorio is unknown, but the idea that it was an oratorio appears to have been first put into print by Rudolf Elvers in 1972, while listing the contents of MA Ms. 39. He did not give it the title “Oratorium nach Bildern der Bibel” however; he simply identified it as an “Oratorio auf Worte aus der Bibel.”⁴⁸ Elka Masche Blankenburg reproduced this error when she recorded the work for the first time in 1984 and published it in 1994 as an “Oratorium nach Bildern der Bibel.” *Choleramusik* [48] Rudolf Elvers, “Verzeichnis der Musiken von Fanny Hensel im Mendelssohn-Archiv zu Berlin,” *Mendelssohn-Studien* 1 (1972): 171.
(Cholera Cantata) is instead the most accurate title for the work. None of the first drafts for the work contain a title, but some undated choral parts in Ox-Bod Ms. MDM Mendelssohn c. 58, 5, (fols. 36-73), discovered by Renate Hellwig-Unruh in 1994 do contain the indication in Fanny’s hand that they are for a “Cantata. Nach Aufhören der Cholera in Berlin, 1831.” In addition, Fanny herself referred to the work as “Choleramusik” or “Cholerakantate.”49 Hellwig-Unruh’s discovery came too late to affect the Blankenburg edition, but it correctly identified the work incorrectly known as the Oratorium as one and the same as the long-lost Choleramusik known from Fanny’s letters to Felix.50

Annegret Huber has taken Blankenburg to task for her inattention to critical detail in editing the score of the Choleramusik.51 When listening to various performances of the Choleramusik, one realizes that two movements placed in Blankenburg’s edition are not represented in all recordings. There is some disagreement over the two movements that Blankenburg designates No. 12 “Blick hin, auf die, so vollendet haben” and No. 13. “Herr errette mich von meinem Sünde.” Huber believes that these two movements, written on loose-leaf manuscript paper and tucked in the back of the main, bound, composing volume, should be included only as optional performance options, because the vocal parts discovered in Oxford are only for the movements included in the bound portion of the score. Blankenburg incorporated them into her edition without making any note that Fanny possibly had not chosen to include these two movements in the cantata. The misconception about this work has remained and the work is still most commonly

49 Hellwig-Unruh, Verzeichnis, 239.
known in CD titles and library catalogues as the *Oratorium*. With consistent use in future scholarship, however, the title *Choleramusik* or *Cholera Cantata* should take its rightful place. In his biography of Hensel, Todd analyzes the standard thirteen-movement form of the cantata, rather than Blankenburg’s fifteen-movement version, which indicates that he believes the thirteen-movement version to be the correct version, but he does not weigh in on this controversy.

Unfortunately, the first recording of this cantata was performed at far too slow a tempo. Fanny marks the movement *Allegro moderato*, but Elke Mascha Blankenburg, the Kölner Kurrende, and the Kölner Rundfunk-Sinfonie-Orchester achieve a ponderous *Andante maestoso* at best.\(^{52}\) The agitation of the strings and the phrasing in the woodwinds is rendered completely ineffective. This interpretation may be due to an attempt to bolster the importance of the work by making it seem longer, and make it more worthy of the title “oratorio” which Blankenburg believed was correct.

Still recorded under the incorrect title of *Oratorium nach Bildern der Bibel*, but at a much livelier tempo, the recording by Helmut Wolf and the Stuttgart Philharmonia Orchestra and Choir is likely much closer to Fanny’s intended concept.\(^{53}\) Indeed, Wolf’s faster performance shaves an entire ten minutes off of Blankenburg’s performance, resulting in a cantata of about twenty-nine minutes rather than thirty-nine. How performance tempos vary from conductor to conductor, and how they affect the rhetoric

\(^{52}\) Fanny Hensel, *Oratorium nach Bildern der Bibel*, Elke Mascha Blankenburg, Choir and Orchestra of the Kölner Kurrende (Classic Production Osnabrück, cpo 999 009-2, 1984).

and gesture of the composition is a topic for another day, but has been dealt with in
fascinating detail for Bach’s Mass in B minor by Uri Golomb.54

Totaling thirty to forty minutes in performance, compared to fifteen minutes for
*Lobgesang* and ten minutes for *Hiob*, the *Choleramusik* is clearly in a completely
different compositional realm than Fanny’s first two attempts. This cantata shows
Fanny’s advancing skill in the genre, as well as her increasing confidence and ambition.
Calling it an oratorio, while incorrect, is actually not far off the mark in terms of the
progression of themes and drama. The cantata traces the progress of the cholera
epidemic, the suffering of its victims and of those who lost loved ones, eulogizes the
souls of the departed, and finally thanks and praises God for the abatement of the
epidemic. In effect, Fanny stretched the boundaries of the cantata towards the oratorio,
which was a distinction that blurred increasingly through the nineteenth century. Felix
was already seriously considering a topic for his first oratorio by the early 1830s, which
may indicate that the *Choleramusik* was Fanny’s contribution towards the oratorio
discussion.

That said, the compositional style of the *Choleramusik* is still closely tied to
Fanny’s earlier cantatas, especially *Hiob*. Even the opening, once again in G minor,
evokes the same arpeggiated figure that opened Felix’s “Nicht unserm Namen, Herr”
and Fanny’s *Hiob* (Ex. 3.23).

54 Uri Golomb, “Rhetoric and Gesture in Performances of the First Kyrie from Bach’s Mass in B
minor (BWV 232),” *Journal of Musical Meaning* 3 (Fall 2004/Winter 2005),
[http://www.musicandmeaning.net/issues/showArticle.php?artID=3.4], sec.4.1.1.
References to Bach abound as well in the Choleramusik. As students of the Bachian tradition, both Fanny and Felix utilized a fairly conservative model for their cantatas. Some of Felix’s cantatas even feature only a simple string continuo without any winds, which was the basic early Baroque model for the cantata. But as Fanny progressed through her three cantatas, she came closer to the nineteenth-century style of a fully orchestrated cantata. She did keep orchestration light, however, which allowed her to combine the orchestration with the style and form of Bach’s cantatas.

At almost any point where we choose to focus our attention in these cantatas, we are likely to find a reference to Bach, and especially to the St. Matthew Passion. Fanny incorporated a long-standing Baroque tradition, the descending chromatic tetrachord in the bass line, into her orchestral introduction. Bach had also used the lament figure in the opening of the St. Matthew Passion, as Todd points out in his commentary on the Choleramusik. Fanny stretched the descending chromatic tetrachord over ten measures of orchestral continuo so that the reference is there, but does not overpower her musical concept for the introduction. Above this traditional bass line, Fanny’s orchestral sound is much fuller and more balanced than in her first two cantatas. This is a result not only just of the larger instrumentation, but also Fanny’s increasing facility in writing for orchestral ensembles. The strings open with an agitated ostinato, anchored by the horns. A lone
oboe intones a plaintive falling motive three times, before the rest of the woodwinds respond.

Even while she paid significant homage to her compositional models, Fanny remained original and creative in her compositional solutions. As noted already, Fanny did not include any four-part chorale harmonizations in her first two cantatas. In the Choleramusik, however, Fanny does include several moments of four-part chorale style. The most intriguing instance can be found in No. 11, “Chor der Seligen,” which is found at the turning point in the dramatic progress of the cantata. First, the “Trauerchor,” which mirrors the G-minor key signature of the opening instrumental lament, mourns the loss of life and loves ones, and offers them a benediction:

Sie sind dahin gegangen, wie das Gras verdorrt, wie die Blumen verwelket, wie eine weibende Spreu. Sie sind dahin gegangen, und ihr Leben ist verborgen in Gott.

They have gone away, as the grass withereth; the flower fadeth, and as chaff before the wind. They have gone away and their lives are hid in God.

Isaiah 40:7-8, and Colossians 3:3

Siehe, wir preisen selig, die erduldet haben, denn der Herr ist barmherzig und ein Erbarmer.

Behold, we count them blessed, who are patient, for the Lord is loving and merciful.

Jacob 5:11

Und der Tod wird nicht mehr sein, noch Leid, noch Geschrei, noch Schmerz wird mehr sein, denn die Erde ist vergangen.

And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

Und Gott wird wegnnehmen alle Tränen aus ihren Augen.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Revelations 21:4

The chorus at first features an exchange between the female voices and the male voices; the sopranos and altos present the first block of text (“Sie sind dahin gegangen…”) in a gentle, soothing series of rising and falling thirds. The tenors and basses present the second portion of text (“Siehe, wir preisen selig…”) in a similar
manner, until “Denn der Herr” arrives with fanfare-like rising fourths and fifths and the first Forte dynamic of the chorus. The choir and orchestra blend for a gorgeous, velvety sound in this chorus, although the voices do become muddled in the most contrapuntally complex moments. As the chorus progresses, the rising and falling third motives we hear initially become closer and closer to “Kommt, ihr Töchter, helft mir klagen” from the St. Matthew Passion.

The chorus that follows, the “Chorus of the Blessed” (“Chor der Seligen”) is an otherworldly eight-part chorale, which gives voice to the departed:

Ich habe einen guten Kampf gekämpft,  I have fought a good fight,
Ich habe den Lauf vollendet,        I have finished my course,
Ich habe Glauben gehalten.         I have kept the faith.

2 Timothy 4:7

Fanny heightens the strangeness of the chorale, and the separation of the departed souls from the “former things” of Revelations 21:4, by writing a “free” chorale, instead of selecting an established chorale tune. Fanny still does not commit to a full chorale, however; after just three phrases, instead of the usual four, Fanny breaks off the chorale and completes with an instrumental postlude. This compositional choice may also reflect Fanny’s experience as a Lied composer, where such instrumental completions of an unfinished idea are common. Fanny simply could not, or would not, write a straight-up four-part, truly Bachian, chorale in her cantatas. Rather, she felt the need to take the tradition and mold it into something new and uniquely her own. The “free” chorale would become something of a shared stylistic feature in the works of both Fanny and Felix. Felix wrote some twelve works that include “free” chorales, from his
early string sinfonias, to *Elias*. One of the most well-known examples occurs in the finale of his Piano Trio in C minor, Op. 66.\textsuperscript{55}

Although we don’t have Felix’s reactions to all three cantatas, the first cantata, *Lobgesang*, prompted quite a response from Felix. He apparently did not see the score for either of her two other cantatas before writing about the first, even though he wrote his letter on December 28, 1831, after the *Choleramusik* had already been performed. Felix wrote from Paris, where, presumably, Fanny must have sent the score for her brother’s assessment. Felix took issue mostly with Fanny’s orchestration and choice of text. According to Felix, Fanny set her horns too high, and her oboes too low:

> How the Devil can you try to set your Horns in G so high, have you ever heard a Horn in G that can take the high G without squawking? ... Don’t you know that one must obtain a license to write such low Bs in the oboes, and that it should be used only in really special cases, such as for witches or terrible pain. \textsuperscript{56}

Fanny’s choice of text, Felix pointed out, was too generic and not original enough: these texts could be found in any sort of sacred music, whether for a cantata, or an offertory.\textsuperscript{57} This weakness in the text—“not everything in the Bible that fits your theme is good for setting to music”\textsuperscript{58}—leads to another compositional misstep:

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\textsuperscript{56} Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Sämtliche Briefe*, Vol II, 444-45: “Denn ohne das kommst Du bei mir nicht durch, College; wie Teufel kannst Du Dich unterfangen Deine gHörner so hoch zu setzen, hast Du je ein gHorn das hohe g nehmen hören, ohne daß es gequakkel hätte? ... Weißt Du nicht, daß man einen Gewerbeschein lösen muß, um das tiefe h in den Hoboen zu schreiben, und daß er nur bei besonderen Anlässen ertheilt wird wie z.B. bei Hexen oder einem großen Schmerz.”

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., “Die beiden Chöre sind mir nicht originell genug; dies kling dumm, ich meine aber es sey die Schuld des Textes, der eben nichts originelles ausspricht, ein einzig Wort hätte vielleicht Alles ändern können, aber so wie er das ist könnte er überall anders stehen, in Kirchenmusik, Cantate, Offertorium etc. ”

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., “So ist also mein resumé daß ich Dich in der Wahl des Textes bedächtiger haben möchte, weil am Ende nicht Alles was in der Bibel steht und auf das Thema paßt, darum Musik enthält...”
In the choral movements, the music is of course beautiful, because it is by you, but it seems to me, first, that they could have been composed by any other good master, and secondly, that they don’t have a real necessity to be composed differently than by anyone else; this is because the words do not demand a particular music.\footnote{Ibid., "Bei den Chören aber ist es natürlich immer schöne Musik, denn es ist von Dir, aber mir ist erstlich, als könnte sie auch von irgend einem andern guten Meister sein, und zweitens, als wäre sie nicht grade nothwendig so, als dürfte die auch anders componirt sein; das liegt nun eben daran, daß die Worte keine Musik nothwendig bedingen."}

The unoriginal text called forth unoriginal music, in Felix’s incisive, and surprisingly harsh, criticism. Felix doesn’t fault only Fanny in this regard; he counts himself among those guilty of the exact same mistake:

This last point is also quite often the case in my own music, which I know well; in the mean time, when I feel a beam in my own eye, I will swiftly remove the splinter from your own, so that it doesn’t injure you.\footnote{Ibid., "Dies letzter ist in meiner Musik sehr oft auch der Fall, das weiß ich wohl; indessen, wenn ich auch den Balken in meinem Auge fühle, so werde ich doch gewiß ganz geschwind den Splitter aus deinem ziehen wollen, damit er dich nicht drückt."}

Although Felix is giving valid and valuable compositional feedback, the tone he takes in this letter is almost patronizing. Felix is aware of the way his feedback might be perceived, however, and attempts to lighten it with humor and self-deprecation, as well as praise of Fanny’s work, as we have just seen. Because Felix wrote this letter after all three cantatas were written, we can’t, unfortunately, see how Fanny received his criticism. Perhaps her response was to never write another cantata. Fanny did get a chance to return her brother’s criticism, however. When Felix was deciding which cantata to publish in 1835, he evidently asked Fanny for her help with the selection. She gave Christe, du Lamm Gottes (1827; MWV A 5) her vote (which may explain why she had chosen to incorporate that chorale tune into her Easter Sonata), but criticized Felix’s setting of the text in his Bass aria from Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh darein (1831; MWV A 5).
13. The aria progresses from F-sharp minor to A minor, but Fanny felt that the text required a more “constant and steadfast” setting. Even more pointed was her criticism of the solo vocal style in *Wer nur den lieben Gott läst Walten* (1828/29; MWV A 7), which she felt was inauthentic for Felix:

The aria from *Wer nur den lieben Gott* reminds me to mention that many of the solo numbers in your small sacred works exhibit a trait that I wouldn’t want to label a mannerism, although I don’t know exactly what to call it. The style is overly simple, which I don’t find natural to you—the rhythms, for example, are short and seem somewhat childlike but also somewhat childish—with the result that the music falls short of the seriousness of the genre as well as your earnest manner in treating choruses.\(^{61}\)

In the end, Felix selected *Christe, du Lamm Gottes* and *Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh darein* for future publishing, but never did publish them. Scholars often believe that Fanny’s criticism of Felix’s cantatas was retaliation for Felix’s sharp critique of Fanny’s String Quartet in E-flat major, even though Fanny insisted it wasn’t “tit-for-tat action.”\(^{62}\) It is difficult to believe Fanny’s insistence that she wasn’t retaliating for Felix’s most recent letter, however. It becomes even clearer that she probably did take at least a little satisfaction in finding fault with Felix’s music as well, when we view her criticism of his cantatas in the context of their larger cantata project of the late 1820s and early 1830s.

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\(^{62}\) Ibid., 173: “The aria is wonderful and beautiful, as is its text. But I must raise strong objections to the last movement—only please don’t take it as a tit-for-tat action, for it certainly is not.” P. 489: “Die Arie ist wunderlich und schön wie die Worte. Aber das Letzte Stück möchte ich Dir stark anfecten. Du mußt nur nicht glauben, daß ich Dir eine retour Kutsche schicken, das ists gewiß und wahrhaftig nicht.”
Felix’s criticism may have crippled Fanny on occasion, but here it seems that Fanny’s criticism may have undermined the confidence Felix needed to publish his cantatas.

Felix’s criticism came from a reliable source, however, as he was an experienced composer of cantatas who wrote about seven essays in the genre between 1828 and 1831, but one could certainly levy the same charge: any other great master—i.e., J. S. Bach—could have written his cantatas. Felix was, as Berlioz put it, “too fond of the music of the dead” and it was a constant struggle for him to define himself against the model of so formidable a musical giant. On one hand, he recognized that allowing the influence of a past composer to permeate his music so thoroughly was a serious stylistic weakness. On the other hand, he loved and revered the music of Bach so much, that he felt it an honor when the same texts inspired a similar setting from his pen and Bach’s.

If my music is like Seb. Bach, it is no fault of mine, for I wrote as I felt at the time; and if the words have suggested the same musical thoughts to me that they did to old Bach, I shall value them all the more. For I know you do not mean that I copy his form without his purport; if it could be so, its emptiness would disgust me too much to write it down.

Perhaps Schumann put it best, when he reviewed Felix’s *Six Preludes and Fugues*, Op. 35:

...these fugues have much of Sebastian and might deceive the sharp-sighted reviewer, were it not for the melody, the finer bloom, which we recognize as modern; and here and there those little touches peculiar to Mendelssohn, which identify him among a hundred other composers.

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We can extend this same struggle to Fanny as well, although her Bachian efforts did not have the chance to benefit from Schumann’s review. Fanny as well as Felix remained indebted to Bach for the remainder of their lives, but perhaps Felix even more so than Fanny. His next greatest Bachian effort can be seen in his first oratorio, *Paulus*, which by virtue of its intended audience (a German one) and liberal incorporation of chorales is the more Bachian of his two oratorios. *Elias*, intended for an English audience, is a more dramatic work in the style of Handel. It did not seem to frustrate Fanny so much that she kept writing music that sounded like Bach. Her relatively private realm perhaps afforded her greater peace of mind and less self-criticism over her compositional debt, but that was not always the case with every composer, as we shall see in Chapter 4 (Beethoven). Especially in a city and a family that was so completely devoted to J. S. Bach, there was no shame in revealing his influence and in celebrating his tradition. For Felix, however, when an orchestra in Paris refused to perform his “Reformation” Symphony because it was too contrapuntal, and esteemed colleagues such as Berlioz and his friend Devrient were constantly criticizing him for his devotion to Bach, the issue was more troubling.

One month after starting work on her first cantata, Fanny also started writing in her diary again. The entry describing the birth of Sebastian referred to above, from August 6, 1830, had been her last entry. Perhaps Fanny felt a need to return to her own goals and personal development after the first nine months of motherhood. However, Fanny’s diary entry, as was often the case, gives us absolutely no specific information
about her compositional activities, except to mention a premiere occasionally. Often, she does not even identify the piece premiered. This is certainly frustrating, but the Mendelssohns were in general good record keepers, so we do have an extremely rich resource in the diaries and letters, despite these lacunae.

Instead of chronicling her own life in any great detail, she outlines the political situation in Europe, and describes the family drama over her little sister Rebecka’s engagement to the mathematician Peter Gustav Lejeune Dirichlet. And, after a year and a half of marriage, Fanny paints a touching picture of the increasing intimacy and joy in her relationship with her husband. Their immediate pregnancy (Sebastian was born, ostensibly one month premature, just eight months after the wedding) had somewhat hindered their ability to experience life as a married couple. Now, however, Fanny and Wilhelm discovered the joy of sharing a bed every night (Fanny had been sleeping in the nursery with Sebastian and the nurse while Wilhelm’s studio was being renovated), and enjoyed simply being near each other every day and every night.

We are now using just one bed. Wilhelm has become accustomed to cradling my head in his arms, so now the nights are even dearer to us than the days. It had seemed impossible that our love and contentment could grow even more, but it absolutely the case that every day wins us more love, and every night we tell each other how happy we are.66

Sadly, Fanny’s second pregnancy resulted in the stillbirth of her daughter on November 1, 1832. After recuperating from that heartbreak, both physically and emotionally, Fanny had much to inspire her, and was particularly comforted by the presence of Felix, who remained in Berlin until May 1833 while he awaited the decision

of the *Singakademie* on who would replace the deceased Zelter. Although Felix would leave Berlin once again—first for Düsseldorf and then for Leipzig—he was near in spirit as he insisted that Fanny promise to never let her *Sonntagsmusiken* lapse again. These *Sonntagsmusiken* became a source of great inspiration for Fanny, and once she did start to take herself seriously, she also started to keep records of her programs. Thus, as discussed in Chapter 4, we find her very consciously creating an identity for herself as a pianist and composer of great skill, who not only composed her own songs, chamber music, and choral music for her salon, but also drew audiences of the most elite members of Berlin society to hear the music of Bach, Beethoven, and her brother.

Thus, as the 1830s dawned and the Mendelssohns left their glorious childhood days behind, their old friends Bach and Beethoven remained central to their lives both as composers and performers. After working through the genre of the cantata, Fanny did not return to it. She did, however, write several more orchestrated works, but these evince much more strongly the influence of Beethoven. If the late 1820s and early 1830s served as a working out of Fanny’s Bachian demons, then the mid-1830s were given to Beethoven. Just as Felix felt the weight of Bach perhaps a bit too heavily, so too did Fanny feel that Beethoven kept her captive to his powerful influence.
Chapter 4 Ludwig

_In which Ludwig van Beethoven joins the family circle – becomes a close acquaintance – Fanny and Felix explore the various routes through Beethoven – piano sonatas – piano quartets – cadenzas – string quartets – performing and programming Beethoven – the shadow of Beethoven._

...we were young during Beethoven’s last years and absorbed his style to a considerable degree. But that style is exceedingly moving and emotional. You’ve gone through it from start to finish and progressed beyond it in your composing, and I’ve remained stuck in it, not possessing the strength, however, that is necessary to sustain such tenderness.

– Fanny Hensel, 1834

The second strongest influence on Fanny and Felix was Beethoven. After the first few years of lessons in strict counterpoint and eighteenth-century compositional techniques with Zelter, the Mendelssohns eagerly dove into Beethoven’s middle, or “Heroic” period, works. During the final years of Beethoven’s life, the Mendelssohns immediately bought and played Beethoven’s late sonatas. His late style made a powerful impression on the siblings, and the powerful shadow of Beethoven—which famously crippled Johannes Brahms—did not spare Fanny Hensel. As we have just seen in Chapter 3, Beethoven may have been even more intimidating of a compositional model than Bach, while for Felix, the opposite was true. Her quotation offers us a rare opportunity to evaluate Beethoven’s influence on a female composer. But exactly what Fanny means by saying that Felix has “gone through and beyond” Beethoven’s style is not clear. Fanny’s remark on her own struggle with Beethoven is also intriguing; whether or not she actually “remained stuck in Beethoven” perhaps belongs in a class with her other self-deprecating remarks, but it is true that Beethoven did heavily influence both her and her brother’s music.
Although the influence of Beethoven does not become strongly evident in the works of Fanny and Felix until the mid-1820s, they were most likely first introduced to the piano works of Beethoven before 1820. The siblings took several piano lessons with Marie Bigot de Morogues *née* Kiéné in Paris and studied regularly with Ludwig Berger in Berlin. Both were sought-after pedagogues especially famous for their interpretations of Beethoven’s piano sonatas. Marie Bigot, the wife of Count Razumovsky’s librarian, had been a friend of Beethoven while the Bigots lived in Vienna, and Berger had been well schooled in the traditions of the late eighteenth century through his apprenticeship with Muzio Clementi. The first piano teacher for Fanny and Felix was actually their mother, Lea, but she quickly recognized that their talent needed more guidance, and hired Berger in 1817.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Berger was already possibly an acquaintance in the Mendelssohn family’s social circles, and was at that time very highly respected in Berlin’s musical establishment. Berger taught the Mendelssohns until about 1822, when an unknown disagreement with the family led to his dismissal. Berger complained to another former student in a letter that his contributions to Felix’s blossoming career were much greater than those of Zelter, who already received the bulk of the credit for Felix’s musical education.¹ The family apparently remained on civil terms with Berger, however, and Felix would dedicate his Op. 7, *Sieben Charakterstücke*, to his former teacher in

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1827. Berger also wrote Felix a letter of introduction to his old teacher Clementi when Felix traveled to England in 1829. As their only regular piano teacher, and very likely also their first composition teacher, Berger clearly played an as yet not fully understood role in the development of the piano and Lieder composition style of both Fanny and Felix. Zelter was not a pianist of any skill, and as is well known, was steeped in the ideals of the mid-eighteenth century—hardly a likely candidate for exerting a strong influence on the non-fugal piano compositions of the young composers.

Two of Fanny’s pieces that could have been particularly influenced by Berger and Beethoven are the Sonata Movement in E major (H-U 44) and the Piano Quartet in A-flat major (H-U 55), dating from 1822, when Fanny was just sixteen years old. The Sonata Movement in E major was perhaps an early essay in Sonata-Allegro form in preparation for the Piano Quartet, as it dates from January 29 to February 19, 1822, shortly before she began the Piano Quartet. The movement contains some good material; the opening features a motive rising from an offbeat in the left hand, rather than the right as in many of the Mendelssohns’ melody-dominated works. The formation of the theme is quite well crafted, as the pickup figure creates strong forward momentum and the consistent eighth notes provide a steady foundation that draw the listener in for the rest of the movement (Ex. 4.1).

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Allegro assai moderato

Example 4.1: Fanny Mendelssohn, *Sonatensatz E-dur* (1822), opening theme

Graceful turn figures are contrasted with octave doublings in both hands as the themes are developed with liberally applied arpeggio figuration and chromatic passing tones. The octaves, while visually forceful, could be played at any dynamic the performer chooses because Fanny did not provide a single dynamic indication in this piece. The style of the piece, as well as its place in Fanny’s developing reception of Beethoven, makes it quite likely that Fanny did intend a stormy interpretation here. A *subito piano* at m. 70, however, would be quite effective, and lighten the texture to result in a more “Mendelssohnian” sound (Ex. 4.2).

Example 4.2: Fanny Mendelssohn, *Sonatensatz E-dur* (1822), octave passage
As is common with Fanny’s early instrumental works, the thematic content is more figuration than melody, which is worked through in an almost etude-like fashion. Fanny does insert a repeat sign after the exposition here, which—at least in her extant works—she would rarely ever do again. Both Fanny and Felix preferred a subtle approach to the return of themes, and they would often bring back the main theme through an unexpected motivic transformation, rather than the brute force of the double bar and repeat sign. This method removes the most distinctive markers of the form, and creates a supple, continuous flow of music, which is so important to the elegant, even song-like, effect of the Mendelssohnian style in their instrumental works.

Fanny never finished the sonata in E major, turning instead to the Piano Quartet, which she began some two months later. The two works are even notated in the same working album, MA Ms. 32. Fanny’s inspiration seems to have flagged somewhat after the first and second movements of the Piano Quartet (begun May 1 and 28, respectively), but this time she persevered to the end, and completed the third movement on November 23, 1822.

Table 4.1: Fanny Mendelssohn, Piano Quartet in A-flat major (May 1–Nov. 23, 1822)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mvt.</th>
<th>Tempo</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Allegro moderato</td>
<td>May 1, 1822</td>
<td>A-flat major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Larghetto – Doppio movimento – Tempo primo</td>
<td>May 28, 1822</td>
<td>E-flat major – F minor – E-flat major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Tempo di Minuetto – Presto</td>
<td>Fine. Nov. 23, 1822</td>
<td>A-flat major</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first movement of the Piano Quartet is the strongest of the three, but overall the themes are too heavily reliant on etude-like figuration, which bulk out the form
without offering much in the way of thematic development. However, the first movement does have a certain dramatic thrust as three thickly voiced chords and a fiery arpeggiated figure propel the movement (Ex. 4.3). The strings (violin, viola, and cello) play a subsidiary role, essentially complementing the piano textures as if the quartet had been conceived as a concerto with reduced chamber accompaniment, rather than a fully integrated chamber work.

The compositional weakness of this work betrays the young composer’s inexperience, but it is striking to consider that four years later at nearly the same age – seventeen years of age – Fanny’s brother would pen the Octet for Strings, Op. 20, widely regarded as one of his most strikingly original works. If we compare Fanny at the age of sixteen to her brother at the same time, at the age of thirteen (when he was already writing his string symphonies), the conclusions are still either not flattering for Fanny, or show that Felix’s musical education was promoted at the expense of his sister’s.
The lyrical theme does not arrive until m. 51, after seven presentations of the opening chordal figure and some development of the arpeggiated figure. When the second theme does finally arrive, in the piano alone, the lyricism is especially striking, and of a type not commonly found in the works of Fanny and Felix (Ex. 4.4).
Lieder adaptations of the genre. The Mendelssohns would go on to develop the genre of the nocturne, which is now known to most audiences through Chopin’s later students to the innovator who was another protegée of Muzio Clementi. Berger most likely introduced his talented students to the innovations in the lyrical piano idiom that Field developed in Saint Petersburg, the nocturne, which is now known to most audiences through Chopin’s later adaptations of the genre. The Mendelssohns would go on to develop the genre of the Lied for piano, or the Lieder ohne Worte, which may thus also partly owe its inspiration to Field’s nocturnes.

Example 4.4: Fanny Mendelssohn, Piano Quartet in A-flat major (1822), I: Allegro moderato, second theme in the piano (mm. 51-58). Return of strings omitted in m. 58.

The theme could almost have been written by Chopin, or—more relevant for the pedagogical heritage of Fanny and Felix—John Field. Berger knew Field and his music well, because he spent some ten years teaching in Saint Petersburg alongside Field, who was another protegée of Muzio Clementi. Berger most likely introduced his talented students to the innovations in the lyrical piano idiom that Field developed in Saint Petersburg, the nocturne, which is now known to most audiences through Chopin’s later adaptations of the genre. The Mendelssohns would go on to develop the genre of the Lied for piano, or the Lieder ohne Worte, which may thus also partly owe its inspiration to Field’s nocturnes.
The second movement, in the dominant E-flat major key area, at first highlights the strings more prominently with a rising sequence of three melodic leaps in the violin. The piano plays a reduced role as continuo, while the viola and cello provide the inner voices. The construction of the theme here is actually more Mozartean than it is Beethovenian, calling to mind the sequential rising sixths and dotted rhythms followed by descending scalar motion in the opening of the Andante movement of Mozart’s Piano Concerto K. 467 (Ex. 4.5 and Ex. 4.6).

Example 4.5: Mozart, Piano Concerto No. 21 (K. 467), II: *Andante*
Example 4.6: Fanny Mendelssohn, Piano Quartet in A-flat major (1822), II: Larghetto

In the hands of a more experienced composer such as Beethoven, this movement most likely would have progressed as a theme and variations, but instead turns into a sort of da capo aria ternary form. Fanny does interchange the three layers slightly; the inversion of the rising melodic leaps appear at m. 20 in the right hand of the piano part, while the cello takes over the continuo bass and the viola and violin take the
inner voices. However, the teenage composer found the slow pace restricting, and so she broke into a lively *Doppio movimento* in F minor at m. 44. When the A section returns at m. 108, the melodic theme is distributed in both primary and inverted forms in all three string instruments, while the piano takes over both the continuo bass and the inner voices in parallel thirds (Ex. 4.7).

Example 4.7: Fanny Mendelssohn, Piano Quartet in A-flat major (1822), II: *Larghetto*, tempo primo, mm. 108-111

While there are just three movements, the third movement essentially plays the role of not only a minuet and trio but also the finale. Adopting first the inverted, *Seufzer* motive, version of the second movement theme, the minuet and trio proceeds in typical classical fashion, although Fanny blurs the lines between the A and B sections by neither presenting completely contrasting material in the B section, nor proceeding in the textbook minuet and trio form. The movement proceeds through a modified system of repeated sections: ||:A:||:A′:||:B:||:B′:||:AA′:||:Coda:|| → Presto (Finale). Once again, it seems
that Fanny is impatient to break the form and return to flashy figuration. While Fanny did eventually learn to maintain control of the thematic content and inherent characteristics of form, she would continue to experiment with non-standard forms for the rest of her life. And of course, she learned much about bending and warping form while studying the notoriously unorthodox scores of Beethoven.

While Fanny’s piano teacher Berger was well known for his Beethoven interpretations, he did come from the Clementi school, and the influence of etude-like figuration and sparkling textures is quite apparent in the works of the Mendelssohns while under Berger’s tutelage. Early strong influences on the Mendelssohns’ style also included Carl Maria von Weber, Hummel, and Moscheles, although none of these composers and performers served as a direct instructor over several years as Berger did. Almost as if aware of her compositional shortcomings, Fanny nearly abandoned larger forms in her piano writing for the next two years, and concentrated instead on writing etudes, or Übungsstücke. Soon, though, an even greater Beethoven presence would arrive in the lives of the young composers and inspire Fanny to try her hand once more at the sonata.

The fiery and charismatic Beethoven proponent Adolph Bernhard Marx was a very strong influence on Fanny and Felix in the early 1820s. Although there are no records of the interactions between Fanny and Marx, the theorist and writer spent hours with the family and sustained a nearly daily correspondence with Felix (which unfortunately was lost when Marx destroyed Felix’s letters to him after their quarrel over
their oratorio libretti in 1832 and 1839). As far as we know, the entire family participated equally in discussions and social activities, usually during evening gatherings of close friends around the piano. Marx also commented on Fanny’s skill as a pianist and composer, who he said “lacked [Felix’s] skill and strength, but not infrequently she was first in tenderness and sensitivity of interpretation, especially of Beethoven.” After Marx joined the family circle, Beethoven became much more important to the compositional development of the Mendelssohns, much to the dismay of their conservative counterpoint teacher Zelter and their father, Abraham. The siblings first encountered the middle period, or “Heroic” works of Beethoven, before moving on to grapple with the late-period works, which included especially the late piano sonatas. Fanny’s technique as a pianist was much more advanced by this time, which allowed her to study closely the intricacies of Beethoven’s eccentric late sonatas.

Already in 1824 Fanny exhibited signs of Beethoven’s influence in her curiously named Sonata o capriccio in F minor (H-U 113), which is not really a sonata. Rather, it is a one-movement piece for piano in F minor, which was most likely inspired by Beethoven’s “Apassionata” sonata (Sonata No. 23, in F minor, Op. 57). Fanny captured and reimagined the dark, thickly voiced, theme of Beethoven’s first movement in her creation. Fanny compresses her model slightly, however, and introduces the constant eighth-note rhythm section far sooner than Beethoven does. There is also a hint of the

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descending upper line within the piano texture, although Fanny’s interpretation uses the motive in a completely different musical setting (Ex. 4.8 and Ex. 4.9).

Example 4.8: Beethoven, Sonata No. 23, in F minor, Op. 57, the “Appassionata”

Example 4.9: Fanny Mendelssohn, Sonata o capriccio, descending upper line

Perhaps Fanny detected the tongue-in-cheek approach Beethoven often took to his sonata forms, which is evident in the “Appassionata”: it is stormy, but quirky. Beethoven’s themes and moods shift like a weathervane, so perhaps Fanny felt blending the sonata with the capriccio was more appropriate for a piece of this inherently playful character. Fanny’s opening is rather more stolid than Beethoven’s, however, perhaps also influenced by the thick, oscillating chords voiced low in the piano at the opening of
Beethoven’s Sonata No. 21, in C major, Op. 53, the “Waldstein” (Ex. 4.10, compare with Ex. 4.9 above).

Example 4.10: Beethoven, Piano Sonata No. 21 in C major, Op. 53 (“Waldstein”)

A more direct approach to the piano sonata can instead be found in Fanny's Piano Sonata in C minor (H-U 128) from the same year. Fanny is much more successful here with the genre than she had been just two years earlier while writing her Sonatensatz E-dur or her Piano Quartet in A-flat major. She also wrote the complete sonata in approximately the same amount of time it took her to write just the one-movement Sonatensatz E-dur (the Sonatensatz occupied her from January 29 to February 19, 1822, while the Sonata in C minor took from July 3 to July 19, 1824). She wrote three complete movements, and developed her themes with a greater sense of ease and overall organicism. Fanny maintains the character of each movement throughout with much greater control than in her Piano Quartet, showing that in just two years Fanny had matured by leaps and bounds.

Table 4.2: Fanny Mendelssohn, Sonata in C minor (1824)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Allegro moderato e con espressione</th>
<th>Begun July 3, 1824</th>
<th>C minor</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Andante con moto</td>
<td></td>
<td>E-flat major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Finale – Presto</td>
<td>Finished July 19, 1824</td>
<td>C minor</td>
</tr>
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Fanny repeats the exposition in this sonata, as well, but blurs the formal boundary by using a smooth transition back to the beginning, in the manner of a first and second ending, rather coming to a full stop and then returning to the beginning. The second movement is particularly effective at combining Fanny’s *Lieder* sensibilities with an instrumental genre. Fanny takes a gentle, song-like theme and combines it with a steady eighth-note rhythm. Beginning at m. 35, Fanny evokes the opening of Beethoven’s “Pastoral” sonata (Sonata No. 15 in D major, Op. 28) with a chordal motive that descends stepwise over a steady eighth-note drone. Fanny’s motive descends only a fifth while Beethoven’s descends an entire octave, but the voicing of the chords, suspensions, and rhythmic construction are quite similar (Ex. 4.11 and Ex. 4.12).

![Example 4.11: Beethoven, Piano Sonata No. 15 in D major, Op. 28, I: Allegro, mm. 1-10](image)

Example 4.11: Beethoven, Piano Sonata No. 15 in D major, Op. 28, I: Allegro, mm. 1-10

![Example 4.12: Fanny Mendelssohn, Sonata in C minor (1824), II: Andante con moto, mm. 34-38](image)

Example 4.12: Fanny Mendelssohn, Sonata in C minor (1824), II: Andante con moto, mm. 34-38
The final movement of this three-movement sonata diverges from the Beethovenian model and returns to the types of textures Fanny utilized in her etudes and Übungstücke. Fanny strictly maintains the pattern of running notes in one hand and chords in the other throughout the piece. In only a few instances do running notes or chords occur in both hands at the same time. The Presto tempo and this consistent handling of texture gives the piece a perpetuum mobile quality, not unlike many of Felix’s piano pieces, both composers’ tarantellas, or perhaps the Impromptus of Schubert (Ex. 4.13).

Example 4.13: Fanny Mendelssohn, Sonata in C minor (1824), III: Presto, mm. 1-3

The Mendelssohns often straddled the line between nineteenth-century character piece and etude, especially when they were not writing in Sonata-Allegro form, or in their Lied ohne Worte genre. They simply did not write the quintessential Romantic programmatic character pieces in the same way that Schumann did, perhaps due to their conservative education and belief in the power of absolute music. Despite this apparently absolute ideal in Fanny’s sonata, R. Larry Todd finds biographical evidence to support a reading of the sonata as an echo of Beethoven’s “Lebewohl” Sonata Op.
81a, or Carl Maria von Weber’s Konzertstück Op. 79, both of which mark a separation.\textsuperscript{5} During the summer of 1824, Felix was traveling with his father to Bad Doberan, and Fanny dedicated the sonata to Felix, writing at the end “To Felix. In his absence” (“An Felix. In seiner Abwesenheit”).

In addition to studying and learning the works of Beethoven in private and adapting his influence in their early compositions, the siblings promoted the middle-period works of Beethoven to a wider audience through their performances. Felix and Fanny’s primary stage in their early years was not the public concert hall, but rather the Musiksaal of their family’s Berlin residence. While public performance was out of the question for Fanny, Felix did give a number of public performances, appearing as a soloist in concerto or concerto-type works at least four times (and as a chamber musician on several other occasions) before embarking on his Grand Tour on 10 April 1829. Both young prodigies, however, did enjoy a remarkably active private musical life. Their concerto performances alone—gathered in Tables 4.3 and 4.4—display the breadth of repertoire and technical ability both pianists had acquired already by their late teens, especially remarkable for a young upper-class woman like Fanny Mendelssohn.

\textsuperscript{5} Todd (2009), 81-82.
Table 4.3: Fanny Mendelssohn’s selected concerto repertoire, 1822–25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composer, Work</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Performance Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Johann Nepomuk Hummel Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 85 (presumably) (1816)</td>
<td>Sunday musicale, Neue Promenade 7, Berlin</td>
<td>Presumably 24.3.1822&lt;sup&gt;6&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johann Nepomuk Hummel <em>Rondeau brilliant</em> in A major, Op. 56 (1814)</td>
<td>Aloys Schmitt’s residence, Frankfurt</td>
<td>7.1822&lt;sup&gt;7&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felix Mendelssohn Piano Concerto in A minor (1822)</td>
<td>C. F. Zelter’s residence, Berlin</td>
<td>22.10.1822&lt;sup&gt;8&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ludwig van Beethoven Piano Concerto in E-flat major, Op. 73 the “Emperor” (1809)</td>
<td>Sunday musicale, Neue Promenade 7, Berlin</td>
<td>11.5.1823&lt;sup&gt;9&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felix Mendelssohn Concerto for Two Pianos in E major (1823) (with Felix)</td>
<td>Sunday musicale, Neue Promenade 7, Berlin</td>
<td>7.12.1823&lt;sup&gt;10&lt;/sup&gt; and 14.11.1824&lt;sup&gt;11&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felix Mendelssohn Concerto for Two Pianos in A-flat major (1824)</td>
<td>Presumably Sunday musicale, Neue Promenade 7, Berlin</td>
<td>Presumably 1824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johann Sebastian Bach Keyboard Concerto in D minor (BWV 1052) (ca. 1728)</td>
<td>C. F. Zelter’s residence, Berlin</td>
<td>3.12.1824&lt;sup&gt;12&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ludwig van Beethoven Piano Concerto in G major, Op. 58 (1804-07)</td>
<td>Presumably Sunday musicale, Leipzigerstrasse 3, Berlin</td>
<td>By 1825&lt;sup&gt;13&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>6</sup> Letter of 29 March 1822, Lea Mendelssohn to Henriette von Pereira-Arnstein; GB-Ob M.D.M. c. 29.
Table 4.4: Felix Mendelssohn’s selected concerto repertoire, 1818–27

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composer, Work</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J. L. Dussek</td>
<td>Private event (no review), Berlin</td>
<td>1818\textsuperscript{14}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Concert militaire} (1798)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felix Mendelssohn</td>
<td>Public concert of Anna Milder-Hauptmann, Berlin</td>
<td>5 December 1822\textsuperscript{15}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano Concerto in A minor (1822)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felix Mendelssohn</td>
<td>Schauspielhaus, Berlin, and Sunday musicale, Neue Promenade 7, Berlin</td>
<td>3 July 1823\textsuperscript{10} and 25 May 1823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double Concerto in D minor, with Eduard Rietz (violin) (1823)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart</td>
<td>Bad Reinerz, celebration for Nathan Mendelssohn’s iron foundry</td>
<td>24 August 1823\textsuperscript{17}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano Concerto (key unknown)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felix Mendelssohn</td>
<td>Sunday musicale, Neue Promenade 7, Berlin</td>
<td>7 December 1823 and 14 November 1824\textsuperscript{18}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerto for Two Pianos in E major (1823) (with Fanny)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart</td>
<td>Sunday musicale, Neue Promenade 7, Berlin</td>
<td>14 November 1824\textsuperscript{19}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano Concerto in C minor, K. 491 (1786)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ludwig van Beethoven</td>
<td>Concert of violinist Ludwig Maurer, Berlin</td>
<td>2 November 1825\textsuperscript{20}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Choral Fantasy}, Op. 80 (1808-09)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felix Mendelssohn</td>
<td>Stettin (Szczecin), concert directed by Loewe</td>
<td>20 February 1827\textsuperscript{21}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerto for Two Pianos in A-[flat] major (1824), with Carl Gottfried Loewe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl Maria von Weber</td>
<td>Stettin (Szczecin), concert directed by Loewe</td>
<td>20 February 1827\textsuperscript{22}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Konzertstück}, Op. 79 (1821)</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{14} Todd (2003), 36.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 103.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 118.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 122. An account says he “embellished” the movement, playing essentially in double time, because the other musicians (about seven) were inept and were playing the \textit{Allegro} as an \textit{Andante}.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 135.
\textsuperscript{20} Todd (2003), 155. Reviewed by A. B. Marx. See Marx (1825a); and Marx (1825b).
\textsuperscript{21} Todd (2003), 167. Felix Mendelssohn’s overture to \textit{A Midsummer Night’s Dream} was also given its public orchestral premiere at this occasion.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 167.
Not so clear is what kind of accompaniment Felix and Fanny would have had for their performances of concertos performed in private venues; an orchestra would have been possible for performances at the Mendelssohn residence, since Abraham and Lea Mendelssohn often hired members of the royal orchestra to premier Felix’s string symphonies at the Sunday musicales.\(^{23}\) More probable, however, is either a second piano or small string ensemble. Fanny and Felix frequently presented four-hand or piano duet works, and we do know that Fanny performed Felix’s *Rondo brillant* Op. 29 with a string quartet and double bass at one of her own *Sonntagsmusiken* in 1835.\(^ {24}\) Furthermore, string quartet and other reduced chamber accompaniments for concertos were not uncommon at this time; Felix Mendelssohn and Frédéric Chopin both performed concertos with chamber accompaniments in Paris during the winter of 1831–32. Felix presented several Mozart concertos in this manner, and Chopin his own Piano Concerto in E minor, Op. 11.\(^ {25}\)

A little-known source which provides a significant example of Fanny’s early enthusiasm for the music of Beethoven both as a performer and a composer lies tucked away in a mixed manuscript at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz: a cadenza Fanny wrote for Beethoven’s Piano Concerto in C major, Op. 15. The date on the manuscript of the cadenza, penned in her hand, is “11 April [18]23,” which suggests a performance that year, if not earlier. However, the cadenza\(^ {26}\) is the third item in what appears to be a pre-bound volume containing primarily piano etudes and lieder, dated

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\(^ {23}\) Lea referred to the Sunday musicales as “Sonntags Uebungen”, perhaps in the spirit of their function as trials to promote Felix’s talents. Letter of 19 October 1821, Lea to Henriette von Pereira-Arnstein, cited in Klein (2005), 11.

\(^ {24}\) Klein (2005), 41.


\(^ {26}\) D-B, MA Ms. 33, 4–5.
consecutively from March 22, 1823 to September 12, 1823. The cadenza shows no signs of the wear that might accrue from repeated performances, and appears to be a Reinschrift, bearing only a few corrections. The manuscript occupies two pages, on the inner leaves of a double bi-folio gathering (Table 4.5). The integrated position of the cadenza within this mixed manuscript suggests that this version of the cadenza was not a performing version, but rather a memory aid, either the record of something that had either already been improvised in performance, or the preparation for a future performance.

Table 4.5: Construction of MA Ms. 33, pp. 1-8

1. Übungsstück (H- U 53) 22 March 1823 (copy of 6 November 1822)
2. Übungsstück (H-U 53) 22 March 1823 (copy of 6 November 1822)
3. Wiegenlied (H-U 65) March 1823
5. Cadenz zu dem Concert v. Beethoven aus C dur Op. 15. 11 April 1823
6. Die furchtsame Träne (H-U 66) 16 April 1823
7. Die furchtsame Träne (H-U 66) 16 April 1823
8. Im Molo di Gaeta (H-U 89) 17 April 1823, etc.

Fanny conceived her cadenza in the late eighteenth-century tradition of Mozart, stylistically appropriate for this early Beethoven work firmly entrenched in the late Classical style (composed 1795, revised 1800, published 1801). The Mozartean style of Fanny’s cadenza is evident in the emphasis on the prolongation of the cadential six-four chord, the brevity of the cadenza, and its tendency to merge spontaneous,

27 This first entry in the manuscript, however—an Übungsstück for piano in C major—is a copy of a piece composed on 6 November 1822. The copy is dated 22 March 1823 (see H-U 53). The intervening pieces—Im Herbst (H-U 54, 9 November 1822) to Das Ruhetal (H-U 64, February 1823)—are all notated in D-B MA Ms. 32. There is no surviving manuscript of the earlier version of the Übungsstück.
improvisational gestures with themes and motives found in the concerto. It is as if Fanny combined improvisation and composition, so that, as Christoph Wolff has observed of Mozart’s own cadenzas, the cadenza is “gradually…removed from genuine improvisation” and, instead, becomes “much closer to compositional elaboration.”\textsuperscript{28} We will see how this concept of compositional elaboration—not far removed from Türk’s concept of the “concerto summary” or the practice of revision—forms the basis for Fanny’s approach to the cadenza.\textsuperscript{29}

As shown in Plate 4.1, the cadenza occupies two pages in oblong format. Although most of the cadenza is notated non-mesuré, Fanny inserts fourteen bar lines, several of which appear in structurally important locations before cadential six-four chords, or to reinforce thematic material—in one passage (Ex. 4.15, MA Ms. 33, p. 4, fourth system), closely modeled on mm. 432 ff. of Beethoven’s first movement, she introduces regular bar lines, almost as if to acknowledge her source. If completely re-barred in the Common time of the concerto, the 164 beats of Fanny’s cadenza would equal 41 bars, comparable to the length of a typical Mozart cadenza.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{28} Wolff (1991), 235.
\item\textsuperscript{29} According to Türk, a cadenza should not be too long ("several minutes" is excessive), should be in a mood appropriate for the concerto, should not merely offer a technical showcase, and should not modulate to any key the composer did not use in the concerto. A cadenza should be composed of themes from the concerto, presenting something approaching a summary of the concerto. Türk points out that a cadenza thus properly constructed could not be reused in another concerto, which suggests that performers were recycling cadenzas in the manner of the "suitcase" aria. Türk, \textit{Klaverschüle} (1982 translation), 297–309.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
FIGURE 1. Fanny Mendelssohn, cadenza for Beethoven's Piano Concerto in C Major, Op. 15, 11 April 1823. Mendelssohn Archiv, Ms. 33, p. 4
Figure 4.1: Fanny Mendelssohn, Cadenza to Beethoven’s Piano Concerto in C major, Op. 15 (Reproduced by permission of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, MA Ms. 33, p. 4-5).
The cadential six-four chord reappears intermittently throughout Fanny’s cadenza as a structural marker, clearly dividing the cadenza into five sections. Fanny varied the spacing and register so that each six-four chord occupies a unique position in the cadenza (Ex. 4.14). The result is an apparently well-planned and balanced musical architecture.

Example 4.14: Cadential six-four chord structure in Fanny Mendelssohn’s cadenza

A particularly intriguing aspect of these five cadential six-four chords is that they raise the possibility that Fanny improvised beyond what she preserved in notation for her cadenza. As is apparent in Ex. 4.14, the cadential six-four chords demarcate distinct sections, each recalling one or more thematic elements from Beethoven’s concerto. These sections continue to prolong the cadential sonority, much like the eighteenth-century “Eingang,” a harmonically static decoration of the cadential harmony, and the arrival on the cadential chord at the end of each section naturally results in an interruption in the flow of the cadenza. If these sections represent planned transitions between sections of free improvisation, the concept of the cadenza would change radically, from what appears to be a brief Mozartean cadenza to a considerably more developed concept of improvisation, which would be especially significant for Fanny as a young, female performer. However, we have no evidence beyond this manuscript, so
this possibility must remain an open, tantalizing, question and we will turn instead to a few of the most salient examples of what we can understand of Fanny’s reading of Beethoven’s themes in her cadenza.

The first section of Fanny’s cadenza echoes a particularly distinctive triplet motive adapted from non-thematic passage work in Beethoven’s first and third solos (Ex. 4.15 and Ex. 4.16). Fanny does not quote Beethoven’s theme verbatim, but rather expands and elaborates on Beethoven’s concept; she extends the triplet scales to encompass the whole octave and reverses directions, whereas Beethoven restricted the motive to a fifth and retained the descending contour.

![Example 4.15: Beethoven, Concerto in C major, Mvt. I, bars 414–416](image)

Example 4.16: Fanny Mendelssohn, cadenza, section 1

The second section of Fanny’s cadenza, an energetic ascending scale motive filled out with chords, bears a substantial resemblance to a passage in the solo part of
Beethoven’s Concerto in E-flat major, Op. 73, the “Emperor,” which provides a valuable clue to the context for Fanny’s cadenza for the C-major concerto. Correspondence of Fanny’s mother, Lea, reveals that Fanny performed the “Emperor” Concerto on 11 May 1823, exactly one month after dating her cadenza for the C-major concerto. In addition, Fanny’s own list of the Mendelssohns’ music library shows that in 1823 they received a full score of Beethoven’s “Emperor” Concerto as a gift from Eduard Rietz. Rather than allowing the performer to improvise a cadenza for the “Emperor,” Beethoven had interpolated cadenza-like passages throughout the first movement—this in itself an act of compositional elaboration, which is dictated by the composer instead of left to the taste of the performer—and here, in these “mini cadenzas,” we find distinctive stylistic elements that appear in Fanny’s cadenza for the C-major concerto.

For instance, Beethoven employed sections of non mesuré notation and shifting subdivisions of the beat such as triplets, quintuplets, and sextuplets; Fanny introduced similar divisions into her cadenza (see Fig. 4.1, MA Ms. 33, p. 4, first system, first bar: triplets and sextuplets; MA Ms. 33, p. 5, first and second systems: quintuplets). The similarity of the third section of Fanny’s cadenza to the passage in bar 371 of the “Emperor” Concerto extends beyond the scale motive to include the manner of concluding the passage; Fanny’s four repeated c⁴’s, set against the rising motive in the inner harmonic voices, correspond to Beethoven’s four repeated a-flat⁴’s, also set above the rising motive, although Fanny modifies the inner voices to include the vii⁰⁷/V she utilized before each cadential chord (Ex. 4.17 and Ex. 4.18). Since most likely she would have been preparing the “Emperor” in the early months of 1823, Fanny’s study of that

work appears to have influenced her cadenza for the C-major Concerto, and further reinforces the dating of her performance of the C-major concerto to this same time period.


Example 4.18: Fanny Mendelssohn, cadenza, section 3

After the scale motive in the second section races up four octaves to pause precariously on the third cadential six-four chord, Fanny defuses the explosive energy of the first two sections by thinning the texture to a delicately descending scale. This scale falls two octaves back down the keyboard to introduce the third section, the passage that most closely approaches a direct quotation of Beethoven’s Op. 15 (Ex. 4.19 and Ex. 4.20).
Fanny alters the allusion slightly, however, by compressing Beethoven’s passage. Unlike Beethoven, who in the space of four bars strays as far afield as D-flat major, Fanny remains in the orbit of C major; in the third “measure” she uses an a-natural in the bass instead of Beethoven’s a-flat, allowing her to proceed directly to a first-inversion dominant-seventh chord in the fourth “measure” instead of Beethoven’s D-flat major chord. Beethoven then requires four more measures to arrive on the cadential six-four chord; Fanny needs only two. Fanny does not provide performance indications, but one may safely assume that she would have interpreted this section pianissimo and legato just as Beethoven directs in the concerto.

Example 4.19: Beethoven, Concerto in C major, Mvt. I, bars 432–440
The final trill on the dominant prompts a final comparison between Fanny's cadenza and Beethoven’s C-major concerto. Below Fanny’s final trill, the left hand recalls the chromatic voice leading of a motive from Beethoven’s Op. 15 (Ex. 4.21 and Ex. 4.22), showing that Fanny exploited the possibilities of Beethoven’s compositional palette beyond just the primary themes.
These five examples show Fanny to have been a careful observer of Beethoven’s thematic structures, as well as a performer who could balance conscientious adherence to the “finished” score with a personal compositional interpretation of the fundamental formal and thematic elements of Beethoven’s concerto. Beyond the evidence provided by this cadenza and its relationship to the “Emperor” Concerto, no precise record or possible date for Fanny’s performance of the C-major concerto is known at this time, nor do we have any records of Fanny improvising cadenzas for her other concerto performances. It is the only known surviving manuscript of a cadenza composed or improvised by Fanny Mendelssohn, but it is not the only cadenza to be found among her papers at the Mendelssohn-Archiv in Berlin.

The other known surviving cadenza in Fanny’s hand is not a new cadenza by Fanny, but rather her copy of Beethoven's second cadenza for the first movement of his Piano Concerto No. 4 in G major, Op. 58. This manuscript presents exactly the opposite problem from that of the C-major cadenza: records of Fanny’s performances of Beethoven’s Concerto in G major do survive, but Fanny’s copy of the cadenza is undated. However, this particular manuscript copy\textsuperscript{32} can date no earlier than 1825.

\textsuperscript{32} D-B, MA Ms. 51, p. 176–177.
because it is notated directly in a full score of the concerto presented to the Mendelssohns by Eduard Rietz at some point in 1825.\textsuperscript{33} Carl Klingemann and Felix Mendelssohn recorded an important clue about the chronology of the G-major concerto in Fanny’s repertoire when they fabricated a humorous letter from Beethoven to accompany a present of Beethoven’s Piano Sonata Op. 106 to Fanny on her twentieth birthday, November 14, 1825:

My most worthy Fräulein! Reports of your efforts on my behalf have reached as far as Vienna—a stout Herr with a moustache [Wilhelm Hensel] and a thin man with a Parisian accent [Eduard Devrient] whose names I cannot recall relayed how you managed to keep a cultured audience there politely listening to my Concerti in E-flat and G and my Trio in B-flat, so that only a few fled the performance.\textsuperscript{34}

Thus, we learn that Fanny had already performed the concerto in G major by the time this letter was dated on November 8, 1825.\textsuperscript{35} Fanny’s next recorded performance of Op. 58 was on September 1, 1833, which was the opening concert that year for her Sonntagsmusiken.\textsuperscript{36} It is thus possible that the copy of the cadenza dates from this later performance, and was not entered into the copy of the concerto until then.

The concerto itself is meticulously copied in Rietz’s precise and beautiful hand, but one final ruled page remained unused in the back of the volume; it is on this page that Fanny copied the cadenza. The cadenza was slightly too long to fit onto the page, so she ruled by hand one more grand staff on the blank leaf on the inside of the back

\textsuperscript{33} Lambour (2001), 110; Elvers and Ward Jones (1993).
\textsuperscript{35} Because this copy of the concerto bears no markings of a performance, it is possible that there was another copy of parts for an even earlier performance of the G major concerto by either Fanny or Felix which has not survived, nor recorded in Fanny’s record of their musical library.
\textsuperscript{36} Klein (2005), 33.
cover. This cadenza, like the manuscript for the C-major cadenza, shows no signs of performance wear, nor does the impeccably preserved score for the G major concerto. The concerto is copied on heavy paper with decorative green edges, and the volume is signed “Fanny Mendelssohn Bartholdy” inside the front cover—giving us a hint that she felt some ownership of this concerto, even though she listed it in the “Musikalienverzeichnis” she compiled between 1823 and 1833 for both herself and her brother. How Fanny came into possession of this original Beethoven cadenza nearly forty years before its publication is as yet unknown. Beethoven’s cadenzas to his first four piano concertos, committed to paper in 1809 for Archduke Rudolph of Austria, were not published until 1864, when they appeared as part of the complete Beethoven edition. Beethoven’s autograph of the cadenza is now held by the Beethoven-Haus Bonn.37 How a copy of the cadenza made its way into Fanny’s hands can only be a matter of speculation, but any of the frequent international musical guests in the Mendelssohn home could have transmitted the manuscript.

Fanny’s copy differs only in a very few small particulars from the version printed in the Beethoven complete edition and other modern editions, demonstrating that she had in her possession an extremely reliable source. Although not Beethoven’s longest cadenza, it is quite eccentric, and is rarely played today. On the autograph, Beethoven scrawled “Cadenza (ma senza cadére)” or “Cadenza (but without falling)”, offering a challenge to the intrepid performer—or, perhaps, offering a clue that this cadenza was never intended for performance, but was conceived rather as a didactic exercise or musical joke for the Archduke Rudolph.

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37 Sammlung H. C. Bodmer, HCB Mh 15.
The cadenza puts performers through their paces with a succession of virtuosic figures that seem expressly designed to trip the pianist. The most difficult hurdle is the double trill at the conclusion, which is surrounded by motivic material in the outer fingers of both hands, spaced too far apart and metrically overlapped so that hand crossing is rendered impossible (Ex. 4.23).

![Example 4.23: Beethoven, Cadenza for the Concerto in G major, Op. 58](image)

The technical challenge of this section is comparable to or even greater than the difficulty of the lengthy trills in several of Beethoven’s sonatas; two of these were already in Fanny’s library by 1825. At the conclusion of the third movement of the Sonata in C major Op. 53, the “Waldstein”, which appears in Fanny’s “Musikalienverzeichnis” for the year 1816, the 36-measure trill becomes a double trill for only two measures, but exhibits a similar use of thematic material in the outer part of the right hand. Lengthy double and single trills feature as well throughout Op. 106, the “Hammerklavier”, which as we have seen Fanny received for her birthday in 1825, the same year Rietz gave her the Concerto in G major. The sonata in E major, Op. 109, listed in Fanny’s “Musikalienverzeichnis” in 1827,\(^{38}\) showcases thematic material above and below the double trill in the measures just preceding the final single trill in the bass in Variation VI,

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in a manner quite similar to Beethoven’s cadenza for the G-major concerto. If Fanny did perform this cadenza, it would attest to the level of her technical ability, but in the absence of evidence either way, it is equally possible that the cadenza served as a study copy and she improvised her own cadenzas for her performances. Improvisation was certainly an integral part of both Fanny’s and Felix’s compositional process, and in many cases the unrevised solo piano works of Fanny impress as notated improvisations, merely one version of many possible performance variants.

Felix appears to have improvised his cadenzas on the spot without a great deal of prior preparation, and his appearances throughout his career as a soloist in both Mozart and Beethoven concertos for which no cadenzas were supplied were numerous. As R. Larry Todd has shown, Felix especially favored Mozart’s concertos K. 466 and K. 467,\(^39\) as well as Beethoven’s Concerto in G major, Op. 58, which he apparently performed often enough to name his *cheval de bataille* in 1842.\(^40\) Thus, Felix had to improvise cadenzas for each of these many performances. We might expect him to have worked out and reused cadenzas, and he very well may have relied on some sort of formula, but in one instance at least, his irrepressible creativity and tendency to self-revision was apparent: while rehearsing for a June 24, 1844, concert with the Philharmonic Society in London, Felix treated the musicians in the orchestra to four different cadenzas for Beethoven’s Concerto in G major—one for each rehearsal, and yet another during the performance itself.\(^41\) There is as yet no evidence that Felix ever used his sister’s copy of Beethoven’s own cadenza for Op. 58 in his own performances, but there would have been no expectation for him to do so, as the prevailing

\(^{40}\) Letter of Felix to Lea Mendelssohn, 11 December 1842. Mendelssohn Bartholdy (1868), 285.
\(^{41}\) Rockstro (1884), 96–97.
performance practice of the time was for (male) soloists to improvise their own cadenzas.

Although countless numbers of Felix's improvised cadenzas to the works of other composers have been lost due to the ephemeral nature of the genre—enjoyed, applauded, and forgotten—several manuscript source fragments and references in letters attest to his serious engagement with the practice. After a performance of Mozart's Concerto in D minor, K. 466 in Leipzig in 1836, Felix felt sufficiently proud of his cadenza to notate portions of it in a letter to Fanny:

In the first movement I made a cadenza, which succeeded wonderfully and caused a tremendous sensation [Mordlärme] among the Leipzigers. I must write down the end for you. You remember the theme of course? Towards the close of the cadenza, arpeggios come in pianissimo in D minor, thus:

Then again G minor arpeggios; then:

Then: Arpeggios and
etc., to the close in D minor. Our second violin player, an old musician, said to me afterwards, when he met me in the passage, that he had heard it played in the same hall by Mozart himself, but since that day he had heard no one introduce such good cadenzas as I did yesterday – which gave me very great pleasure.  

If we extend the interpretive possibilities of Felix's letter to a more general cadenza practice for the Mendelssohns, we may even return to the question of whether or not Fanny's cadenza for Beethoven's Concerto in C major, Op. 15, was complete, or represented only thematic transitions between further improvisations; it certainly is possible that the process Felix describes above—“arpeggios etc.” between thematic references from the concerto—is precisely the process that Fanny employed in her own cadenza. Even within the cadenza itself, a relaxed approach to the (unfinished?) score is beneficial; section 4 of Fanny's cadenza is improved greatly by the addition of further

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arpeggiations of the dominant harmony to complete the pattern already begun, and to fill out the texture of the arching figures.

The following review of Felix Mendelssohn’s 1832 performance of Mozart’s Concerto in D minor, K. 466, could have just as well been written in response to a performance by Fanny Mendelssohn, had she publicly performed Beethoven’s Concerto No. 1 in C major, Op. 15 with her own cadenza:

Herr Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy performed the exquisite concerto with much taste and thorough skill... The cadenza, added at the end of the first movement and the performer's own creation, was founded on some motives of the movement totally in the spirit and style of this masterful composition.43

That Fanny wrote her own cadenza at all would have certainly interested a reviewer, since even young women who were able to perform publicly generally did not provide their own cadenzas for concertos—for example, when Louise Dulcken performed Felix Mendelssohn’s Piano Concerto No. 2 in D minor, Op. 40, in Dublin in 1847, Felix is reported to have provided her with a cadenza, although it is not clear where she would have inserted the cadenza.44 By writing her own cadenza, Fanny claimed her place alongside her brother as a composer; furthermore, by writing a cadenza to a work by Beethoven, Fanny asserted her intellect in the role of the masculine artistic creator, the nineteenth-century concept of genius which excluded

43 Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung 34 (1832): col. 802: “Das treffliche Concert für das Pianoforte von Mozart in D moll trug Hr. Felix Mendelssohn Bartoldy mit vielem Geschmacke und solider Fertigkeit” ... “Die am Schlusse des ersten Satzes hinzugefügte Cadenz, von eigener Erfindung, war auf einige Motive desselben ganz im Geiste und Style der meisterhaften Composition gegründet.”
44 C. R. (1847), 118. This source also provides a mid-century English definition of what a cadenza should entail: “A cadenza in a concerto is very different thing from a cadenza in a vocal morceau. It is a brilliant development of some motive of the concerto, and is written so as to employ the executive power of the pianist to the greatest advantage.” Unfortunately, Felix’s cadenza for Dulcken is not known to survive. When Fanny did perform in public—a total of three times—she played works by Felix, such as the Piano Concerto in G minor, Op. 25 (February 19, 1838), the Trio in D minor, Op. 49 (March 4, 1840), and as an accompanist (February 21, 1847). Reviewers noted her rare talent and the social limitations on her career options. See Todd (2003), 363.
women.\textsuperscript{45} We may never know how Fanny’s private audiences responded to her cadenza, but we have seen that the fragments from and descriptions of Felix’s cadenza practice closely reflect the elements of stylistic integrity we found in Fanny’s notated cadenza, leading us to a deeper understanding of how the two composers approached the genre. We have seen that both composers not only displayed a sensitivity to the stylistic integrity of the concertos they performed—in a manner that especially Daniel Gottlob Türk would have applauded—but that they also adapted and further developed and elaborated Beethoven’s and Mozart’s themes to create cadenzas that reflected their unique readings of the concertos.

For both composers, improvisation was never far from composition, reflected perhaps in the great number of compositions Felix left unpublished. For Fanny, who wrote without the expectation of publishing for most of her life, the concept of the mutable work is even stronger. While many of her manuscripts in the collection at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preu\ssischer Kulturbesitz do betray the signs of a conscientious artist in their occasional revisions and in some cases up to two or three copies, we can only wonder what her repeated performances of her own works in her studio and \textit{Musiksaal} may have sounded like.

After Fanny married Wilhelm Hensel on October 3, 1829, she assumed the role of concert hostess in the Mendelssohn home at Leipzigerstrasse 3, and organized a series of Sunday concerts similar to the events inaugurated by her parents in the

\textsuperscript{45} For more on women as concerto soloists, see Ellsworth (2003).
1820s. Fanny appeared frequently as a soloist, chamber musician, accompanist, and conductor in these concerts, which she hosted throughout the 1830s and 1840s. Attended at times by up to 200 people, the concerts became one of the most sought-after invitations in Berlin. Franz Liszt and Clara Schumann numbered among the illustrious guests and performers, and Fanny’s concerts were even attended by Prussian nobility on occasion. The concerts ranged from intimate events with lieder and chamber music to the Berlin premieres of some of Felix’s larger works—his first oratorio *Paulus* on 22 January 1837\(^47\), for instance. Fanny was thus in a position of great cultural power (following in the footsteps of her aunt Sarah Levy\(^48\)), and her choice of repertoire had the potential to shape the taste of her peers in Berlin and beyond.

Several composers appear with some frequency on her programs, but Beethoven emerges as a favorite, nearly equal to her beloved brother. We see, for example, in her diary entry of October 28, 1833, that Fanny calculated how often she had programmed works of nine composers over the previous two months on four occasions:

- 6 times Beethoven
- 2 times Bach
- 2 times Mozart
- 4 times Weber
- 3 times Felix
- 1 time Gluck
- 1 time Spohr
- 1 time Moscheles
- 1 time me \(^49\)

\(^{46}\) Abraham and Lea Mendelssohn organized concerts first at Neue Promenade 7, then at the final family residence in Berlin, Leipziger Strasse 3, where the family was living by mid-1825. The events Fanny Hensel organized in the 1830s and 1840s were also at Leipziger Strasse No. 3. See Todd (2003), 31, 73, and 137.

\(^{47}\) Klein (2005), 45.

\(^{48}\) Wollny (1993).

Regrettably, Fanny’s records are incomplete, and there were periods of months and even years when—due to travel, sickness, or deaths in the family—the concerts did not take place. Nevertheless, enough evidence survives to extend Fanny’s list to compile a provisional list of her most frequently programmed composers (Table 4.6).

**Table 4.6: Fanny Hensel’s Most Frequently Programmed Composers, 1833–1847**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performances</th>
<th>Composer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Ludwig van Beethoven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Johann Sebastian Bach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Carl Maria von Weber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Fanny Hensel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Christoph Willibald von Gluck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>George Frederic Handel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Joseph Haydn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ferdinand David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karl Anton Florian Eckert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Johann Nepomuk Hummel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ignaz Moscheles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Charles de Beriot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frédéric Chopin</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heinrich Marschner</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gioacchino Rossini</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Louis Spohr</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Henri Vieuxtemps</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This list represents at best approximate tallies of only those composers mentioned in Fanny’s diary or letters of her family members (most usually her mother), and thus may be skewed in the direction of Felix’s works, while various works of other composers were most likely performed without being recorded. Even so, this sample demonstrates that Felix Mendelssohn and Beethoven were Fanny’s clear favorites, with
a steep drop-off to Bach, Mozart, and Weber, then another cluster around herself, Gluck, and Handel, with Haydn and ten other composers bringing up the rear. Fanny’s early engagement with the music of Beethoven, then, continued to influence profoundly her choices as both a performer and composer and remained central to her musical activities for the remainder of her life.

Most likely written for her *Sonntagsmusiken*, although no record of a performance survives, is the String Quartet in E-flat major (H-U 277). This is Fanny’s only mature work in that genre (and among the first surviving string quartets by any woman), and stands alongside her Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11 as one of her most impressive chamber works. The quartet dates from 1834, but was actually begun five years earlier. In the days just after her wedding in 1829, the remarkably self-possessed new bride commenced work on a new piano sonata (H-U 246), but she abandoned it before returning to mine the work for her string quartet. What prompted Fanny to return to this earlier work for compositional material and why she chose to transform the genre from a piano sonata to a string quartet is unknown. However, a study of the original manuscript offers several clues.

**Table 4.7: Fanny Hensel, Piano Sonata in E-flat major, H-U 246 (1829)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Allegretto:</th>
<th>E-flat major</th>
<th>October 18, 1829</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Adagio</td>
<td>E-flat major</td>
<td>October 18, 1829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Intermezzo:</td>
<td>C minor</td>
<td>November 9, 1829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Largo molto</td>
<td>A-flat major</td>
<td>November 12, 1829</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The distinctive, sighing, arpeggiated opening motive, which quickly slithers away from E-flat major to C minor, remains essentially untouched in the opening of the String Quartet. Both the early piano version and the final String Quartet version occupy exactly 77 measures, but she did not simply transcribe the work note-for-note to string quartet, so this work offers a rare and excellent study in Fanny’s full revision process. Quite impressive is how Fanny managed to develop the motivic content of the work, while retaining the same length. Whether or not it was important to Fanny to retain the measure count is also completely unknown, but several subtle adjustments—inserted and deleted measures—allowed her to achieve this end.

The spacing is quite wide, especially in the rising arpeggiated motive in m. 5, counter to the falling arpeggios of the opening. These spacings in the piano sonata are not unusual in Fanny’s piano music but in several cases quite awkward to achieve as a performer. The arpeggios instead lend themselves well to stretto entries for four string players, and the four-part writing is maintained quite strictly throughout the movement, which is an unusual feature in a piano work for either Fanny or Felix.50 Given these characteristics, the transformation of the first movement to the string quartet genre was not a difficult one, and perhaps even gave Fanny the idea to repurpose the work for a

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50 See, for example, Felix’s Prelude in E minor, Op. 35, No. 1, from 1827, which devolves from a strict fugue into heavy, pianistic chords.
new instrumentation. One could even wonder whether or not Fanny intended the "piano sonata" as a closed-score sketch for the String Quartet; however, it is clear from the manuscript that it is a work for piano, with pedal markings, etc. Ex. 4.24 and Ex. 4.25 show how Fanny adapted the first movement of her intended piano sonata almost note-for-note in the first movement of the string quartet.

Example 4.24: Fanny Hensel, Piano Sonata in E-flat (1829), I: *Adagio*, mm. 1-8

Example 4.25: Fanny Hensel, String Quartet in E-flat (1829), I: *Adagio ma non troppo*, mm. 1-8

Throughout the remainder of this movement, Fanny continued to adapt the piano sonata almost exactly, but did make a few changes, mostly to accommodate the opportunities for the more extensive counterpoint afforded by four instruments. We see
as well in the first theme that Fanny changed her concept of the phrasing from a long sigh for the piano to shorter slurs for a more articulated sound in the violin.

Both versions of the first movement have exactly the same number of measures, despite the deletion and addition of measures in several places. Measure 28 from the piano version is missing entirely in the string quartet version. This deletion moves the development of the motives forward and renders the return of the opening theme less weighty. Fanny also added eighth-note repetitions of the rising half-step sequence in the lower voices, which intensifies the drama before the return of the main theme. Another slight change between the two versions are the use of the natural form of a, rather than a flats, in all versions of the descending sixth or third motives in the string quartet, not just the final instance as in the piano sonata. This is not simply a later editor's error: examination of the manuscript for the piano sonata version (D-B MA Ms. Depos. Lohs 4, p. 73) reveals that Fanny did not write the additional naturals in the piano version of 1829 (Ex. 4.26 and Ex. 4.27).

Example 4.26: Fanny Hensel, Piano Sonata in E-flat major (1829), I: Adagio, mm. 26-29
Example 4.27: Fanny Hensel, String Quartet in E-flat major (1834), I: *Adagio ma non troppo*, mm. 26-28

Whether or not Fanny intended to maintain the exact number of measures is unknown, but she added a whole measure of silence at what was m. 61 in the piano sonata version which makes up for the measure deleted at m. 28, as seen above in Exx. 4.26 and 4.27. This addition of silence renders the drama much more intense in the string quartet, setting up the final section of the movement (Ex. 4.28 and Ex. 4.29).

Example 4.28: Fanny Hensel, Piano Sonata in E-flat (1829), I: *Adagio*, mm. 60-62
Fanny retained the main character of the second movement up until the very end of the piano version, but then took this movement in a completely different direction. She added a section that begins with a scampering fugato in all four voices (evoking strongly the trio in the Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67), and then developed the motives for some 90 measures before returning to the opening theme to conclude the movement in an extended ternary form, or Scherzo and trio. Changing the genre from a piano sonata to a string quartet allowed Fanny to lighten the character of this “Intermezzo” movement with additional grace notes and pizzicatos (Ex. 4.30, Ex. 4.31, and Ex. 4.32).

Example 4.29: Fanny Hensel, String Quartet in E-flat major (1834), I: *Adagio ma non troppo*, mm. 59-62, extra rests make up for deleted m. 28.
Example 4.30: Fanny Hensel, Piano Sonata in E-flat major (1829), II, Intermezzo: Allegretto, mm. 1-4

Example 4.31: Fanny Hensel, String Quartet in E-flat major (1834), II: Allegretto, mm. 1-4
Example 4.32: Fanny Hensel, String Quartet in E-flat major (1834), II: Allegretto, mm. 53-58, fugato at beginning of C-major trio

Fanny disposed of the original third movement of her piano sonata altogether. With its thickly voiced chords and repetitive march-like rhythms, Fanny may have felt it was too pianistic, and that she could write better music. The movement starts out with the four-part harmony that is common to this piano sonata, but quickly devolves into heavy, rhythmic chords (Ex. 4.33 and Ex. 4.34). Instead, Fanny inserted a “Romanze” slow movement and concluded with quicksilver Allegro molto vivace. The theme for this Romanze, as well as the C-minor Scherzo from the second movement, were Felix’s favorites from the quartet, as we shall see later.

Example 4.33: Fanny Hensel, Piano Sonata in E-flat major (1829), III: Largo molto, mm. 1-3
The completely new Romanze movement showcases a *cantabile* theme in the first violin, which is supported by surprisingly thick, pianistic, textures in the other instruments for such a delicate effect. The motive arrives seemingly out of thin air, and then appears to search for the tonic through a series of sighing motives exchanged between the upper strings (Ex. 4.35). The movement is supposed to be in G minor, but like Beethoven’s Symphony No. 1 in C major, Op. 21, begins instead with a V/viv harmony. Every time this opening motive returns, the G-minor tonic is foiled by the B natural and the flat seventh (F). In fact, in a way that is almost playful—Fanny was known for her dry wit—a cadence on G minor is never attained throughout the entire movement. Fanny always slips the rug out from under the resolution at the last moment, and even in the final measure of the piece she denies the G-minor cadence. Instead, one last B natural (but no flat seventh this time) gives us a G-major rising arpeggio.
vaporizing into a pianissimo. The effect is not unlike that at the end of Felix’s Scherzo in his Octet for Strings in E-flat, Op. 20.

Example 4.35: Fanny Hensel, String Quartet in E-flat major (1834), III: Romanze, mm. 1-4

The final movement is a lively Allegro molto vivace in E-flat major. The main theme of the movement, as R. Larry Todd has shown, clearly refers to the opening of the third movement of Felix’s Fantasie for piano in F-sharp minor, Op. 28, which had occupied Felix as an improvisation for about three to four years (starting around 1828) before he published it in 1832. Fanny recasts her brother’s fierce, minor key, Presto in a lively major mode, but clearly adapts his overall contour, phrasing—she uses accent marks instead of phrases—and time signature, although she chose 12/16 to Felix’s 6/8, which in Fanny’s implementation sounds the same but has a somewhat incongruous visual effect (Ex. 4.36 and Ex. 4.37).
We can’t help but wonder what Fanny would have gone on to do had she had the gift of more years of life.

Example 4.36: Fanny Hensel, String Quartet in E-flat major (1834), IV: Allegro molto vivace


Strangely enough, then, we see Fanny first transform her piano sonata that had contained references to string works into a string quartet, and then write two new movements for her string quartet that display piano idioms and some references to piano pieces. The string writing in this movement shows a touch of the brilliance and exuberance we so love in Felix’s string symphonies and especially his Octet for Strings. We can’t help but wonder what Fanny would have gone on to do had she had the gift of even just five to ten more years of life.
In his biography of Fanny Hensel, R. Larry Todd has very convincingly shown how Fanny’s String Quartet in E-flat major echoes both Beethoven and Felix.\textsuperscript{51} The allusions to Beethoven permeate this string quartet, while similarities to works and stylistic traits of Felix’s music abound as well, as Table 4.9 and Table 4.10 clearly show. These tables have been drawn from Todd’s discussion, with a few additions of my own. Most of these allusions are to other string-dominated genres, such as string quartet and symphony; perhaps this explains in part why Fanny decided to turn her piano sonata into a string quartet. The musical themes in the earlier piano sonata were referring to works in other genres, yet she was not writing a comparable work. In 1829, Fanny had completed two large-scale piano sonatas – the Sonata in C minor and the Easter Sonata – so perhaps in 1829 she was still more confident in her abilities to express her compositional ideas in that genre. Unfortunately, Fanny did not write in any detail about her music in her diary, as discussed earlier, so we do not know what prompted Fanny to take up the challenge of writing a string quartet.

\textsuperscript{51} Todd (2009), 179-186.
Table 4.9: Allusions to Beethoven in Fanny Hensel’s String Quartet in E-flat major (1834)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Alludes to:</th>
<th>Allusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I: Adagio ma non troppo</td>
<td>mm. 1-4ff</td>
<td>Beethoven, String Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 74, the “Harp”</td>
<td>Slow, tonally ambiguous, introduction; rhythmic construction and downwards gesture of opening motive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II: Allegretto</td>
<td>Scherzo and Trio</td>
<td>Beethoven, String Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 74, the “Harp” and Beethoven, Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67</td>
<td>Same key structure: C minor Scherzo, C major Trio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II: Allegretto</td>
<td>Trio</td>
<td>Beethoven, String Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 74, the “Harp”</td>
<td>“Humorously wooden display of counterpoint” (Todd, 2010, p. 181)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II: Allegretto</td>
<td>Trio</td>
<td>Beethoven, Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67</td>
<td>Similar fugato subject at beginning of Trio</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.10: Similarities to Felix Mendelssohn in Fanny Hensel’s String Quartet in E-flat major (1834)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Alludes to:</th>
<th>Allusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I: Adagio ma non troppo</td>
<td>mm. 1-4ff</td>
<td>Felix Mendelssohn, String Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 12 (1829), which is also a response to Beethoven’s “Harp” string quartet</td>
<td>Rhythmic and harmonic construction of opening motive; inversion of opening motive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I: Adagio ma non troppo</td>
<td>mm. 1-2</td>
<td>Felix Mendelssohn, Overture, <em>Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt</em>, Op. 27 (1828)</td>
<td>Descending first violin line echoes the descending contrabass in the opening of Felix’s overture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II: Allegretto</td>
<td>Scherzo and Trio</td>
<td>Felix Mendelssohn, Octet for Strings in E flat major, Op. 20</td>
<td>Light, airy textures and darkly tinged minor Scherzo idiom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III: Romanze</td>
<td>m. 82</td>
<td>Felix Mendelssohn, Octet for Strings in E flat major, Op. 20</td>
<td>Ascending G arpeggio at end of movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV: Allegro molto vivace</td>
<td>mm. 1-3ff</td>
<td>Felix Mendelssohn, Fantasy for piano in F-sharp minor, Op. 28 (1828)</td>
<td>Adaptation of opening theme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fanny was most likely aware that if she were to write a string quartet, she would be entering an overwhelmingly male-dominated arena. Most likely she had no female models whatsoever; if she did, it would have been the Venetian violinist Madalena Laura Sirmen née Lombardi, who had been a student of Tartini. After studying with Tartini for thirteen years as a student in the all-girls school, Ospedale dei Mendicanti, Maddalena married another violinist, Lodovico Sirmen. The two went on a European tour, and appeared at the *Concert Spirituel* in Paris in 1768. Maddalena published six string quartets in Paris in the following year, but—resonating with Fanny’s story with Felix’s *Lieder* Op. 8 and Op. 9 some sixty years later—her publication appeared with the title page “Composed by Lodovico, and Madelena Laura Syrmen.”

Whether or not Fanny was familiar with Madalena Sirmen’s work or not is unknown. It is not out of the realm of possibility, as Sirmen’s string quartets and violin concertos were distributed in the major European capitals. However, as a composer working sixty years earlier in an era when continually new compositions were the norm, the Venetian violinist could have fallen out of public consciousness almost completely by the 1830s in Berlin. Sirmen’s string quartets are steeped in the high classical sound and display a reduced two-movement model. There is no evidence that she influenced Fanny, or that Fanny even knew about her. Instead, Fanny took her most revered male compositional models in the genre—Beethoven and her brother—and created a work that would have made a significant contribution to the genre in the nineteenth century, if it had been able to escape the confines of her *Gartenhaus*. Fanny explicitly asked if Felix

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might find a performance for her string quartet, but it is not known as yet whether or not he ever did.

After this discussion of Fanny’s string quartet, with its (for its time) unorthodox approach to harmonic progression and loose observance of form, it comes as hardly a surprise that Felix penned a harsh critique of the work, especially the first movement. From Düsseldorf, Felix wrote to his sister with a detailed response to her work on January 30, 1835, already some three months after Fanny completed it on October 23, 1834. Fanny had promised to send him a complete score directly after Christmas, and appears to have done so.\(^{53}\) Felix played it for himself at the piano; he had visited Berlin that summer and had given her comments on her Scherzo as she was writing it, which was a rare opportunity for the two composers with his travel schedule, but it wasn’t read by a string quartet until after November 4.\(^{54}\) Felix noted that the C-minor Scherzo (from the second movement) was his favorite part of the quartet, and that the theme for the Romanze pleased him very much as well. However, Fanny’s handling of form and key areas troubled him:

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\(^{53}\) Citron (1987), 161, 480.

\(^{54}\) Citron (1987), 154, 475. Letter of November 4, 1834: “I’ve finished my quartet and incorporated your advice on the scherzo as best I could. I’ll have it tried this week.” “Mein Quartett habe ich fertig gemacht, u. dabei doch Deinen Rath was das Scherzo betraf, nach meinem besten Wissen benutzt. Ich werde es nun diese Woche probiren lassen.”
and modulations, the piece becomes undefined, and dissolves. I've noticed the same problem in some of my newer things, and thus have good advice, but I don't know whether I can do it any better.

In the first movement, which is otherwise especially dear to me, as I believe I already mentioned to you in Berlin, there are some other problems. To give you an example, I'd like to mention a bit about the themes and the conclusions, which are, all the way to the end, not really in any key, and if that appeared also for example to be necessary, it would still be too much, never stylish, when it comes to the others [other movements?]. In the first movement at the beginning, where it wavers between E flat, D, and C minor, that is beautiful; but then in the following cadence in F minor, and then beginning of the eighth notes in F minor, and the fermata in F minor, and the violas in F major (although they are very good) – that's what I mean. In the same way, the end of the Scherzo, which actually also is not in any particular key, and immediately following, the beginning of the Romanze, and then the middle, which modulates here and there.

Don't take offense, dear girl, and take me for a Philistine – which I am not, and believe I am in the right, if I have more respect for form and orderly work, and for what may otherwise be called the expression of my craft, than I used to. Please send me something nice, otherwise I will think you have struck me dead as a critic.

Felix clearly could not come to terms with Fanny's loose handling of key areas and what we now consider to be her fantasia-like approach to form. We now analyze such aberrations from the norm with interest and enjoy their unique qualities, but for Felix, Fanny's experiments offended his sense of respect for the classic forms he had been educated to use, and strayed perhaps from the style the two composers had
developed together. Fanny could also deliver sharp criticism of her brother’s music, and on August 1, 1834, not even a month before beginning work on the string quartet, Fanny took Felix to task for altering the melody in a symphony. This work was most likely the Symphony No. 4 in A major, the “Italian” which Felix had returned to revising in June 1834.

Thank you for the Symphony movement that just arrived; it gives me great pleasure. I immediately played through it with Beckchen twice… I don’t like the change in the first melody at all; why did you make it? Was it to avoid the many a’s? But the melody was natural and lovely. I don’t agree with the other changes as well; however, I’m still not familiar enough with the rest of the movement to be able to render a reasonable judgment. Overall I feel you are only too ready to change a successful piece later on merely because one thing or another pleases you more then. It’s always difficult, however, for one to become accustomed to a new version once he knows the old one. Bring the old version along when you come and then we can argue about it. 55

It was perhaps Felix’s visit to the family home in Berlin that prompted Fanny to work on her string quartet. It was a rare opportunity for the two composers to work side-by-side, and she may have wished to have something significant to share with him, to show him what she had been working on, and what she could was capable of composing. Even though the siblings did exchange barbs in their letters, they cared deeply about what the other thought of their music, and it is clear that Fanny especially craved the artistic approval of her brother. In her response to her bother, written over two weeks later on February 17, 1835, Fanny merely thanked her brother for his comments

and asked if he might have it performed. Rather than respond to his criticism directly, Fanny in turn criticized what she perceived as childish mannerisms in his cantatas, although she insisted it wasn’t retaliation. However, Fanny never wrote another string quartet. Perhaps, discouraged once again by her brother’s harsh criticism, Fanny preferred to move on to other genres, as well as to keep composing in her primary genre, the Lied.

Fanny was clearly somewhat hurt by her brother’s honest assessment—Felix was honest almost to a fault, which cost him some dear friendships—but Fanny did try to explain herself in an indirect way. In response to Felix’s request to “send something nice,” Fanny mentioned one of her newest works, a setting of Io d’amor, oh Dio, mi moro, for soprano.

I’ve composed a soprano aria that you would like better than my Quartet in terms of its forms and modulations. It’s rather strictly handled, and in fact I had finished it before you wrote me about the Quartet.

Her insinuation here is that she was aware of her own compositional “failings,” or at least she wished to show that she could write strictly enough to please her brother without his prompting. Fanny was clearly insecure about her musical identity, and because she tended to experiment with genres for only a few years before dropping them entirely, she never had the chance to fully refine her style. She was painfully aware of her compositional dependency on her idols, and especially Beethoven. In this same letter, we find a very revealing statement about her relationship with the musical giant:

See Chapter 3, p. 166, for this letter.
Todd (2009), 186.
I've reflected how I, actually not an eccentric or overly sentimental person, came to write pieces in a tender style. I believe it derives from the fact that we were young during Beethoven's last years and absorbed his style to a considerable degree. But that style is exceedingly moving and emotional. You've gone through it from start to finish and progressed beyond it in your composing, and I've remained stuck in it, not possessing the strength, however, that is necessary to sustain such tenderness. Therefore I also believe that you haven't hit upon or voiced the crucial issue. It's not so much a certain way of composing that is lacking as it is a certain approach to life, and as a result of this shortcoming, my lengthy things die in their youth of decrepitude; I lack the ability to sustain ideas properly and give them the needed consistency. Therefore lieder suit me best, in which, if need be, merely a pretty idea without much potential for development can suffice.59

When Felix wrote back ten days later, he did not address this baring of Fanny's soul. Rather, he expressed relief that she had not been angry with him for his criticism of her quartet, and encouraged her to bring the soprano aria with her on her planned trip to meet him in Düsseldorf.

Clearly, Fanny was very aware of her debt to Beethoven, and wished she could write something original, but also beyond, Beethoven, which she apparently felt Felix had been able to do. She certainly was not the last to feel that way: Beethoven was not just an inspiration, but also a burden. As discussed in Chapter 3, it is possible that the situation was the same for Felix and Bach. While Fanny was equally influenced by Bach, she never expressed anxiety about her debt to Bach, nor wished to escape his influence, as far as we know, while for Felix, the not-always-beneficial presence of Bach in his

music was a constant refrain. Perhaps this greater debt to Bach, rather, was how Felix escaped the shadow of Beethoven, if indeed he actually did. Beethoven certainly figures just as heavily in Felix’s works—the symphonies (especially Symphony No. 1 in C major, Op. 11), the string quartets, etc.

Perhaps Fanny felt she was at a disadvantage because of her relatively less rigorous musical education. She did not feel confident that she had the compositional wherewithal to sustain large forms—although we know she actually did—but like many women of her time, she bought into the idea that her sex was inherently weaker and less creative, and belittled her own compositional achievements—she had just completed a full, four-movement string quartet, after all—by saying that she should abandon her ambitions and return to her “pretty little things,” her Lieder. Fanny’s family, especially her father, had always encouraged her to write Lieder above all other genres, and it appears that this implied critique of her talents for larger works irked her at a deep level.

Perhaps Felix did not respond to Fanny’s rant because he felt in some way responsible for inciting it. Instead of praising her and encouraging her to write more string quartets, larger genres, even symphonies, Felix gave Fanny’s hesitantly budding compositional ambitions a cold shower. He did not tell her not to compose more string quartets, and one would assume that if he took time to study and respond to her music that he respected it and hoped she would take his criticisms to heart to improve her next attempts. But, more often than not, after such criticism, Fanny didn’t return to that genre, which is a pattern we saw as well with the cantatas in Chapter 3.

Perhaps this was the reason that Felix was hesitant to give his sister encouragement to start publishing professionally. As he explained it to his mother, professional publishing required a string of new compositions so that one would not
simply annoy the public with a few vanity publications. Felix had seen his sister start many times with the best of intentions and ambitions, only to stop short of continuing down each new path, and perhaps thus did not believe she could continue in the path of publishing. However, if Felix had fully encouraged his sister, who clearly depended on his approval, in each of her endeavors, maybe she would have had the confidence to proceed. Perhaps, then, Beethoven was a catalyst, a metaphor, for the frustrations Fanny felt in her musical career, and in her relationship with her brother.
Chapter 5 Felix

In which we leave Felix to his travels through Europe and turn our attention fully to our heroine Fanny – the nature of the sibling relationship – how her marriage to Wilhelm affected her relationship with Felix and Music – Fanny struggles with decisions about her life and career.

Marriage to Wilhelm Hensel required Fanny to examine seriously her relationship with two of the most important parts of her life: music and her brother Felix. Much has been written on the musical relationship between Fanny and Felix, in recent years most notably by Cornelia Bartsch and R. Larry Todd so I choose to focus instead on the relationship in the correspondence, in the context of kinship studies. The unusual attachment between the siblings has caused some speculation about the true nature of their relationship, with some writers (most famously, or infamously, David Warren Sabean) going so far as to suggest the possibility of incest. However uncomfortable it is for us to acknowledge this issue, there is firm scholarly basis and a well-documented context for the discussion.

The story of too-close-for-comfort relationships between siblings in the nineteenth century involved many families and even some famous figures, including Clemens Brentano, whose sister Bettine would win him over his future wife if she were not his sister, which he unfortunately expressed to his fiancée in the most vivid terms. Examples of problematically close siblings are not limited to Europe; in the Cape Colony

(now South African) Dutch Reformed Church community, Maria Murray and her brother, the prominent evangelist Andrew Murray, struggled to come to terms with their “sinful” relationship in 1853. Viewing the relationship between Fanny and Felix in this context may offer some new interpretations of the complex issues of gender roles and the perceived repression of Fanny that Mendelssohn scholars have struggled to come to terms with for decades.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, upper-class family units were so tightly organized that siblings were thrown into nearly suffocating proximity to one another. This was also an age when young girls (at least in higher class families) were educated alongside their brothers, so that they were able to take an equal part in the intellectual pastimes of their brothers, and become sounding boards for the ideas and life choices that their brothers would then take out into the world as they established their careers. Thus, brothers, as they became men, returned to their sisters as the foundation of their identities, their touchstones for reality and moral and ethical standards. Sisters in turn were expected to model perfect feminine love, demonstrating for their brothers what type of woman they should select for a wife. The pure love of a sister, ideally devoid of sexual attraction, produced the image of the consummate woman as virtuous, unblemished, supportive, unconditionally loving, and willing to sublimate her desires and identity to the greater good of the family.

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In many cases, life partners were chosen from the tight circle of friends that formed around influential families. The friends of sisters became potential wives for the brothers, while the school friends and business partners of the brothers became potential husbands for the sisters. Thus, marriage became an extension of the sibling relationship; future life partners were already friends approved by the mutual love of siblings, and in some cases so integrated into the family circle that they were viewed and treated as siblings.

But these close relationships did bring up the specter of the greatest of family shames: incest. The language with which siblings addressed each other was, by today’s standards, inappropriate. For whatever reason, the system of sibling rivalry—which ideally causes children to compete with their siblings, fight with them, and develop a healthy distaste for their siblings, while still loving them as family—failed. Sibling competition still existed, to be sure, but for some reason didn’t cause the more marked differentiation in identity that we see in today’s society.

However, these feverish expressions of love may have sprung from another source: a creative and intellectual intercourse that transcended the socially and morally prescribed limits of sexual intercourse. Thus, today’s discussions of incest in nineteenth-century families usually stop short of any direct allegations of sexual intercourse—which can never be proven unless explicitly acknowledged in a primary source\(^7\)—to identify a different kind of intimate relationship grounded in shared lives and experiences. As several of the essayists in *Sibling Relations* demonstrate, literature of the mid-eighteenth and through much of the nineteenth centuries displays a fixation with the idea of sibling

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\(^7\) One would have to be extremely unguarded to put such an admission into writing, in an age where the publication of personal correspondence and diaries was in vogue.
love, which is usually fatal for the female protagonist whose body all too publicly bears witness to the shameful liaison and the weakness of her morality.8

The Mendelssohns both conform to and break from this sibling model proposed by Sabean and others in the provocative book *Sibling Relations & the Transformation of European Kinship, 1300-1900.*9 The Mendelssohn family was extremely close and intellectually intertwined. There were intense friendships shared between multiple members of the family in an atmosphere of artistic superabundance. Johann Gustav Droysen managed to arouse the jealousy of both Wilhelm Hensel and Fanny Mendelssohn, because of his closeness to both Fanny and Felix.10 Brilliance of mind and character, creativity, wit, and intelligence were equally as attractive to the Mendelssohn siblings as any physical traits, and all four of the Mendelssohn siblings were highly talented. Fanny was not considered beautiful, but for those who knew and loved her, the intensity of her intellect was her most attractive feature. Felix, on the other hand, had been described as “beautiful” by both sexes since his earliest days. His long, curly black hair, delicate facial features, and petite frame, coupled with his vivacious personality, flirtatiousness, and fame as a child prodigy stamped Felix as something of a dandy for the rest of his life. It was not just siblings in this era effusing about each other at

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8 Ruth Perry, “Brother Trouble: Murder and Incest in Scottish Ballads,” in Johnson and Sabean (2011), 167-188. Issues of marriage to cousins and to the sister of a dead wife were being litigated, especially in the United Kingdom, so these issues were current and most likely somewhat morbidly fascinating to readers at the time.


uncomfortable length, but also acquaintances or even strangers who would describe Felix in infatuated, feminized, or beatific terms. We are familiar with these sorts of descriptions from the literature on Frédéric Chopin, as well.\textsuperscript{11}

Where the Mendelssohns broke the sibling model proposed by Sabean was in marriage. Curiously enough, Felix did not choose a woman like either of his sisters for his wife, nor did he choose a woman from amongst his sisters' friends or his friends' sisters, as was so often the case for his contemporaries. Cécile Jeanrenaud was delicate, beautiful, blonde, quiet, and calming: the ultimate embodiment of the feminine ideal in the nineteenth century and a complete contrast to especially Fanny. Cécile was from Frankfurt, the daughter of a Huguenot minister, not even remotely known or socially advantageous to the Mendelssohn family, and—worst of all for Fanny, Rebecka, and their mother—the marriage took place and almost a year had passed before Cécile was even introduced to the family.

Fanny's husband was eleven years older, was not socially or monetarily a particularly advantageous match, and was even a questionable choice in terms of religion. Wilhelm's younger sister, Louise, converted to Catholicism and encouraged her brother to do the same. Wilhelm did consider it, which caused a rift in the family and prompted Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy to ban correspondence between Fanny and Wilhelm during his 5-year sojourn to Italy. The separation without any means of expressing their feelings to each other took a real toll on their relationship. Fanny's mother believed that a young woman should not be swooning over love letters, and she also most likely wished to avoid the perpetuation and development of their love for each other.

other, just in case Wilhelm did return from Italy a Catholic and the relationship would have to be terminated. However, Fanny turned to song instead to relieve her feelings, and perhaps poured some of her developing sexual awareness into her relationship with her brother and friends, as well.

Although she clearly loved Wilhelm, and wanted nothing more than to marry him, Fanny feared what her new status as a wife and intimate of another man would do to the intimacy of her relationship with her brother. Bound up with these issues for Fanny were most likely the realizations that the childhood that both had treasured so dearly was at an end. January through October 1829 was beyond doubt one of the most emotionally turbulent periods in Fanny’s life as she learned to let go of her childhood and prepared for her future role as a wife and mother. The letters that Fanny wrote to both her brother and her fiancé during this time show her emotional turmoil in a way that her typically laconic diary does not. Whether or not one chooses to sensationalize this topic—as Sabean perhaps did just a little, to the peril of the underlying truth in his argument not being taken seriously—the letters speak for themselves. The first issue Fanny dealt with was the feeling that she was about to replace Felix with Wilhelm, and the accompanying sense of fear and perhaps even guilt at doing so.

At first, early in the engagement, Fanny could not let Felix go and asked her fiancé to accept him as an equal contender for her love, and to love him as well in a spirit of complete openness:

Last evening Felix composed, and his eyes were beautiful. There is something peculiar to his eyes: in no other person’s eyes have I perceived a soul so directly. You must love him without end, between the three of us everything must be perfectly proper and harmonious and true—then in this world I will have no
unhappy moments. If you really love each other, I will be content with my relationship to you both.\textsuperscript{12}

Whether or not Wilhelm was alarmed at Fanny’s reluctance to fully surrender her affections to him as her future husband, he replied with understanding and full acceptance of the situation:

I don’t have anything against this situation, that Felix rightly shines in his place in the foreground, rather; I throw my arm around him, and the three of us will make a good group!\textsuperscript{13}

Fanny was satisfied with this response, and rejoiced that she had Wilhelm’s acceptance, which she needed to go forward with the relationship. That Wilhelm could give Felix “preference” in loving Fanny would seem somewhat strange to us today, but the social context, as we have seen, placed such an emphasis on sibling love that this situation most likely did not concern Wilhelm as much as we think it should have.

I mainly know that [Hensel] loves me because he respects my love for you and gladly even gives it preference to a certain extent. I assure you that I feel very good; I fared well with you and with him and finally with both of you, and there is something to establish with both of you. You both grab hold of art firmly and use it to express your individual creative instincts.\textsuperscript{14}


\textsuperscript{13} Helmig and Maurer (1997), 146: “Ich habe nichts dagegen, daß Felix recht glänzend im Vorgrund steht, sondern schlinge den Arm um ihn, Euch u wir werden eine gute Gruppe Machen!”

\textsuperscript{14} Citron (1987), 53. German, p. 404: Letter of Fanny Mendelssohn to Felix Mendelssohn, June 11, 1829: “Daß er mich liebt, sehe ich hauptsächlich, u. am liebsten aus der Art wie er meine Liebe für Dich respektirt, u. ihr gewissermaßen gern den Vortritt läßt, ich versichere Dich mir ist wohl in meiner Haut, ich bin gut gefahren, einmal mit Dir, dann mit ihm, schließlich u. sechstens mit Euch Allen, u. mit Euch Volk ist was aufzustellen, ihr stellt der Kunst ein Bein, u. kniet ihr auf den Hals, u. sagt dann was ihr von ihr wollt.” The image of this passage is somewhat more violent than Citron translated it: both Felix and Wilhelm forcibly hold “art” down with a knee on her neck, and demand what she wants from them.
Throughout these letters, Fanny does appear to be almost obsessed by the image of Felix. She was losing him twice over that Spring and Summer, both to his travels and to her marriage. Her descriptions of the beauty and expression of his eyes, and her confessions to having him constantly in her thoughts and heart border on the sorts of emotions one typically has for an absent lover:

Oh Felix, your absence will now be felt more keenly, for thus far it was as though you would return with the others. The curtains on your windows are still there, and during the day I diligently looked over to see if you were still there. But in the evening it's dark. In general, people probably hear a kind of inner music during the deepest silences. For me, however the situation is now reversed. I have a deep silence within me when I hear noises, am in the middle of conversation, and am busy doing everyday activities, and I never stop thinking about you. Take very good care of yourself, and let yourself become quiet and reflective at times in the midst of London's great noise.\(^{15}\)

As time wore on between April and October, Fanny's letters became increasingly direct in their expression of her feelings for her brother. Wilhelm painted a portrait of Felix that summer and the family hung it above Fanny's piano. This picture became a favorite place for Fanny and her sister to sit and wait for it to “move” them as they contemplated his likeness.\(^{16}\) The strength of Fanny’s emotions became even almost physically apparent, as she felt a debilitating need to know that he was happy:


\(^{16}\) Ibid., 53. “... your picture is good, and we—Beckchen and I, your dear girls—sit in front of it for hours and wait for it to move us. It does indeed move us, but not literally, and thereby does its duty.” German, p. 404. Letter of Fanny Hensel to Felix Mendelssohn, June 16, 1829: “...Dein Bild ist gut, u. wir sitzen, Beckchen u. ich, Deine Geren, stundenlang davor, u. erwarten, daß es sich rühren möge, u. es rührt auch, wenn nicht sich doch uns, u. thut seine Schuldigkeit.”
Once again I need your assurance that you’re happy. Sometimes it’s as necessary to me as air is to life, and then it will tide me over for a while.17

She would dream of his presence, look forward to the day when he could “romp” on the couch between his two sisters, and was most often overcome by emotions while engaging in musical activities—that part of life which they had shared the most intimately:

Your Hora [Felix's motet Hora est, written for Fanny in December 1828] is beautiful. How do I arrive at that conclusion? I’ve been alone for two hours, at the piano, which sounds especially nice today, playing the Hora. I get up from the piano, stand in front of your picture, and kiss it, and immerse myself so completely in your presence that I—must write you now. But I’m extremely happy and love you very much. Very much.18

In contrast were Fanny’s love letters to her future husband. She did express her love in the strongest terms for Wilhelm, but it was a different sort of expression which was based in a serious effort to work out differences, appease ruffled feathers, and settle logistics for their wedding and future household. Complicating Fanny’s emotional state was her mother’s intractability while discussing wedding plans with Wilhelm. On several occasions, there were very unpleasant scenes between Wilhelm and Lea Mendelssohn. Wilhelm was not accustomed to negotiating with Lea, who was extremely strong-willed and difficult to please. In these moments as well Fanny missed her brother, whose charm apparently won over even their difficult mother:

Mother has never learned to say yes to something, and that still produces extremely unpleasant moments. Just recently, we had a terrible scene regarding my marriage. Of course, when one views the entire situation, things are well and

good and couldn’t be better, and the minor flaws disappear. But none of us is as
good and clever as you, and therefore no one gets anything from Mother. You
are our alpha and omega and everything in between. You are our soul and our
heart, and our head as well – the rest can go hang itself.\(^{19}\)

Even while Fanny felt more and more painfully the absence of her beloved
brother throughout that summer, she began as well to come to terms with the realities
and joys of her changing role in life. We learn that Fanny had functioned as a sort of
partner to Felix, which was a role she now transferred to her soon-to-be husband:

Overall we’re busy with trifles, as usual. I’m hardly bothered by such things, for I
previously took care of many details for you and am doing the same for Hensel,
whom details affect almost as adversely as you.\(^{20}\)

These “details” apparently included encouraging Wilhelm to apply himself to
obtaining what he wanted for his career – in this case a royal studio – but as usual, even
when planning for her future life with her fiancé, the conversation drifted back to Felix:

Hensel has now found a place for his studio in the Luisenstift and I’m very happy
that it’s fairly close. He awaits only the confirmation of the King. I become
involved in his affairs and push him a little, and think that I’ll gradually cure him of
this shortcoming, especially since he’s given up and yet taken on so much
because of his love for me. By the way, believe it or not, when we’re together,
you, and then you again, are always the topic of our conversations.\(^{21}\)

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\(^{19}\) Ibid., 40. German, p. 397. Letter of Fanny Mendelssohn to Felix Mendelssohn, May 27, 1829:
“Mutter hat noch immer nicht gelernt, zu irgend einer Sache ja zu sagen, u. das giebt nach wie
vor die unangenehmsten Momente. Noch neulich hatte ich wegen meiner Heirath eine der
schlimmsten Scenen mit ihr. Uebersicht man freilich die Sache im Ganzen und Großen, so ist sie
schön und gut, und unverbesserlich, u. die kleinen Ecken und Flecken fallen weg. Aber so gut u.
so klug wie Du ist keiner von uns, u. darum erlangt keiner was von Mutter. Du bist unser Alpha u.
Omega u. alles was dazwischen liegte. Du bist unsre Seele, u. unser Herz u. der Kopf dazu, der
Rest mag sich hängen lassen.”

\(^{20}\) Ibid., 40. German, p. 396-97. Letter of Fanny Mendelssohn to Felix Mendelssohn, May 27,
1829: “Ueberhaupt geht es mit Kleinigkeiten, wie es gegangen ist. Für mich bin ich wenig reizbar,
wie ich aber früher für Dich an solchen Dingen litt, so jetzt für Hensel, den es fast so wie Dich
affizirt.”

\(^{21}\) Ibid., 44. German, p. 399. Fanny Mendelssohn to Felix Mendelssohn, June 3, 1829: “Hensel
hat jetzt ein Local für sein Studium im Luisenstift gefunden, zu meiner großen Freude also
ziemlich in unserer Nähe, u. erwartet nur die Bestätigung vom Könige. Ich nehme mich seiner
Sachen an, u. treibe ihn ein wenig, u. denke, daß ich ihn wol von diesem Fehler nach u. nach
befreien werde, da er mir zu Liebe schon so Manches abgelegt u. angenommen hat. Uebrigens
sage ich Dir, Du magst es nun glauben oder nicht, daß, wenn wir beisammen sind, Du, u. wieder
Du, allezeit der Gegenstand unserer Gespräche bist.”
While this fixation with Felix had to have been somewhat disconcerting for Wilhelm, it was not Fanny alone who expressed such feelings. Felix wrote weekly letters which were delivered on Wednesdays, and Fanny describes the family’s mad race to rip the letter out of the hands of the postman every week—on one occasion at the expense of the peas the sisters were shelling in the kitchen\textsuperscript{22}—and the subsequent scramble for ownership of the prized missive. Even their father, as Fanny affectionately pointed out, broke his usual reserve to join in the competition for the letter and was caught on several occasions reading and re-reading Felix’s letters in the evenings.\textsuperscript{23}

The family enjoyed writing to Felix as much as they enjoyed receiving his letters, and Fanny’s letters show that despite the absence of Felix, and despite the stress over planning a wedding, the family fully enjoyed their summer with friends in Berlin. These letters also reveal the Mendelssohns as a truly fun-loving and not always sophisticated family. The somber portraits we have now of the family (especially those by Magnus), and the two hundred years of separation from our time, tend to emphasize an image of the family as prim and proper pre-Victorians. In reality, the entire family and their friends—“The Wheel”—enjoyed long, loud, laughter-filled evenings sitting on the front porch, in the back garden, and even walking publicly on the streets of Berlin late at night. Members of their group flirted shamelessly with each other, both at home and in public. One would expect guarded behavior at least in public from a daughter of such a prominent family, but Rebecka (fondly referred to as “Beckchen”) was once laughed at

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 64, 411. 
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 67, 414.
by an entire room full of dinner guests when Niccolo Paganini rejected the eighteen-
year-old’s flirtatious advances.  

In private, though, Fanny reverted to her emotional distress over her separation
from Felix, which intensified as her wedding drew closer. As the summer went on,
friends started to drift away, the “wheel” began to dismantle as members accepted
positions in other cities or began their own romantic relationships, and Fanny felt keenly
how her childhood was slipping away. There is also a certain sense of stagnation, as if
Fanny felt that the world was happening around her, but she was not active in it,
especially in that she could not travel. The movement described in her diaries and letters
is from the vantage point of a stationary observer, in relation to her life, as others chose
to come and go and leave their imprints behind at Leipzigerstraße 3:

We’re experiencing another period in which many things are ending and none
are beginning. We must try to hold the remainder together. All things considered,
when you return you’ll find more things reduced than changed. David and
Heydemann are going away, Gans comes less often, numerous unimportant
people have also moved away, and no one new has arrived. On the other hand,
many strangers have recently brought their momentary lives just like migrating
birds, and you’ll find their tracks in Hensel’s sketching books.

Part of what may have prompted this wistfulness and feeling of relative stasis

was that throughout the summer, Fanny and Wilhelm had been secretly attempting to
plan a trip to accompany Felix to Italy, which was Fanny’s dream destination. In the end,
practicality and the fear of the disapproval of the Mendelssohn parents – who, Fanny


24 Ibid., 35, 393.
25 Ibid., 79. German, 421. Letter of Fanny Mendelssohn to Felix Mendelssohn, August 31, 1829:
“Es ist jetzt wieder so eine Zeit, wo Mehreres abfällt, u. nichts Neues hinzukommt. Wir müssen
sehn, den Rest zusamm zu halten. Im Ganzen genommen, wirst Du bei Deiner Rückkehr mehr
eingeschränkt, als verändert finden. David u. Heydemann gehen fort, Gans kommt seltner,
mehrere Unbedeutende haben sich auch weggezogen, u. kein Neuer ist hinzugekommen,
dagegen in der letzten Zeit viele Fremde, Dir als Zuvögel ein vorübergehendes Leben
mitgebracht haben, u. deren Spuren Du in Hensels Büchern finden wirst.”

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knew, would not consider the expenditure of an entire year’s income at the beginning of a marriage as prudent – tabled the plans until over ten years later.

Life was changing for Fanny in ways beyond the dissolution of purely emotional attachments. Fanny had to come to terms with the approaching realities of a physical attachment to her new husband, as well. However, whether or not this was a new experience for her is not entirely known. Sabean goes so far as to suggest that Fanny had at least one sexual partner before her marriage to Hensel, during a party at a lake home near Berlin.\textsuperscript{26} The language in the letter that prompts this conclusion is ambiguous and nearly incoherent, as Fanny writes just days before her impending nuptials.

I can’t conceal from you that my crown adorns (“zählt”) a new bride, dear Felix. Two years ago I would’ve hesitated to share this news with you, especially with your little foot wound, out of fear of increasing your fever. But ever since the time when the entire Lake Sacrow, together with its house, garden, vineyards, heliotrope fragrance, vanilla tea, and people, was transformed into a quartet, you can probably hear with coolness that I—don’t venture that—o Rietz!—Victoire—and Rudolph (not Gustav) Decker—not Magnus—Oh no, now it’s out, and it’s very likely that you’re falling into a dead faint.\textsuperscript{27}

This passage is given here as Marcia Citron translated it, using the word “adorns” for “zählt.” Given this translation, Citron included a footnote indicating that this was a “poetic” way for Fanny to declare to her brother that she was a virgin. However, Sabean argues that the word “zählt” means more nearly “belongs to” or “designates,” which would make Fanny’s rightful ownership of the crown of flowers (rather than the crown of

\textsuperscript{26}Sabean (1993).
straw which women who were not virgins had to wear) less secure.\textsuperscript{28} If Fanny were declaring to her brother that she were a virgin, why would she expect the news to be so shocking that he might faint? It is possible that this was merely a joke between them, as many somewhat incoherent passages in their correspondence are, but it is also quite possible that Fanny really was not a virgin. Our estimation of her as a composer certainly does not hinge on this fact, but it is of interest for assessing more fully her character, which since the publication of \textit{Die Familie Mendelssohn} by Sebastian Hensel has usually been painted in carefully guarded and conservative colors.

Another ambiguous passage confided not in a letter to either Felix or Wilhelm, but in her diary, may indicate that Fanny and Wilhelm engaged in some pre-marital intimate encounters, as well. The two were almost constantly surrounded by family and friends, and weren’t even allowed to be alone a room together until their engagement was official on January 23, 1829, so the chance of anything happening was slim. However, Fanny relates in her diary an unusual occurrence on July 12, 1829:

July 12, I need to make a note right away of a fantastical scene that occurred between Hensel and me in Felix’s room. This hint will suffice.\textsuperscript{29}

Reading between the lines here is not difficult. Something happened while the engaged couple—who had waited for each other for seven years—was apparently alone together in the absent Felix’s bedroom, something that Fanny is reluctant to fully spell out in her diary, but wished to be able to remember later. The chance that Fanny and Wilhelm had sexual intercourse on this day is high, but not necessarily the case; they may have

\textsuperscript{28} Sabean (1993), 710.
simply engaged in a higher level of physical intimacy than was possible before. That this activity may have taken place in Felix’s bedroom is quite significant, given the erotic tinge to the attachment between Felix and Fanny.

In any event, Fanny and Wilhelm began to address each other with a greater degree of familiarity and less hesitance about describing wished-for physical contact throughout the summer. Fanny began to express her longing for Wilhelm in increasingly passionate terms, as this letter from some point between mid-July and August demonstrates:

My only, beloved Wilhelm, I wish I could give you all my love and faithfulness, everything that I passionately feel for you, in one word, in one kiss, in a manner of speaking even throw it after you, because as soon as you have left, I immediately long for you, and feel unsatisfied that I have not said enough to you, that I haven’t proved my love enough, except that this yearning, especially the entire present, has an agreeable excitement for me, as it does for you, who think only of the future. Don’t believe it of me, when I am happier, like you, that it is a cooling [of my feelings for you], because how could I be so happy if I didn’t love you so passionately?30

Fanny appears to be throwing herself with abandon, and even a hint of insecurity, into the relationship with Wilhelm. On August 23, Fanny evinced an even greater physicality:

I can’t go to bed, until I have at least attempted to calm my soul. Oh Wilhelm, it has become so hard for me to let you go, so that I can’t take your dear worried head in my hands, press it to my breast, and soothe you.31

31 Ibid., 152. Letter of Fanny Mendelssohn to Wilhelm Hensel: “Ich kann nicht zu Bett gehen, ehe ich wenigstens versucht habe meine Seele zu beruhigen. Ach Wilhelm, was ist es mir heut schwer geworden, Dich gehen zu lassen, Dein armes sorgenvolles Haupt nicht in meine Hände, an meine Brust nehmen, u. beruhigen zu können.”

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Wilhelm replied with a tender sentiment of his own on September 13, 1829, the day their wedding was announced in the papers. He clipped the notice and sent it to her, along with a poem, which he asked her to imagine him singing to her at night. Wilhelm was surely eager to begin their life together, with its accompanying conjugal joys.

Sleep, sleep!
Close your eyes, Open your sweet mouth And in your dreams and tell me again Everything that I already know.

Sleep, sleep!
As eye meets eye, How mouth to mouth they confessed, And their hearts flamed in union, Telling how everything happened:
Sleep, sleep!

Schlaf, schlaf!
Schließe Deine Augenlider, Oeffne Deinen süßen Mund Und in Träumen gieb mir kund Alles was ich kenne wieder.

Schlaf, schlaf!
Wie sich Aug’ in Auge traf, Wie sich Mund an Mund bekannten Und die Herzen einig brannten, Sage wie sich Alles traf:
Schlaf, schlaf!

Fanny set this text to music on September 21, 1829 (H-U 241), but as Todd points out, she changed some of the words slightly, to a slightly less suggestive, and thus less personal, interpretation:

How lip to lip they asked, And their hearts spoke as one.

Wie sich Lipp’ an Lippe fragten, Und die Herzen eines sagten.

While Fanny and Wilhelm fell back in love after Wilhelm’s five-year absence, and Fanny dealt with the separation from her brother, a third pattern started to emerge in the letters: Fanny began to mature. She began to view both of her relationships more philosophically, and to realize that she didn’t have to choose between the two, and that loving a husband was an entirely different relationship than loving a brother:

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32 Ibid., 153. Letter of Wilhelm Hensel to Fanny Mendelssohn, around September 13, 1829.
33 Todd (2009), 128.
Hensel is a good man, Felix, and I am content in the widest sense of the word, happier that I ever imagined possible. For I dreamed and feared that such a relationship would tear me away from you, or rather alienate us, but it is, if possible, just the opposite, I've gained more awareness than before, and therefore am closer to you. I reflect more often and therefore I reflect on you more often. And the more I have now and will have in the future, the greater I will have you and need you. It's not possible for you to ever take any of your love away from me, because you must know, as I do, that I can't do without even the smallest part of it. I'll repeat the same to you on my wedding day, because thus far, I've never known any emotion or situation in which I wouldn't have thought and said the same thing.  

Some of the anxiety over her marriage had probably stemmed from the five-year separation from Wilhelm. While she had been experiencing her late teens and early twenties—becoming a woman—she had cemented her relationship with her brother, and Wilhelm had become a stranger. In effect, he was almost an intruder on and competitor for her affections. However, no matter how much Fanny philosophized about her marriage, the reality was still there: she could never fully possess her brother, and despite her affirmations to the opposite effect, their love for each other would change, especially as Felix continued to travel, experience life far from her side, and eventually find his own spouse.

This realization was most likely at the root of the final letter Fanny wrote to Felix as an unmarried woman, just hours before she headed to the Parochialkirche for her wedding vows:

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My dearest Felix! Today is the third of October and my wedding day. My first joy on this day is in finding a quiet fifteen minutes, which I’ve wanted for a long time, so that I can write on this very day and tell you once more everything that you’ve already known for a long time. I am very composed, dear Felix, and your picture is next to me, but as I write your name again and almost see you in person before my very eyes, I cry, as you do deep inside, but I cry. Actually I’ve always known that I could never experience anything that would remove you from my memory for even one-tenth of a moment. Nevertheless, I’m glad to have experienced it, and will be able to repeat the same thing to you tomorrow and in every moment of my life. And I don’t believe I am doing Hensel an injustice through it. Your love has provided me with a great inner worth, and I will never stop holding myself in high esteem as long as you love me.

She was still clearly feeling almost guilty about marrying Wilhelm, as if by doing so she was betraying Felix. At the same time, she recognized that the strength of her feelings for Felix was a problem for her relationship with Wilhelm and felt the need to justify those feelings by contextualizing her attachment to Felix as necessary for giving her the “inner worth” necessary to make a good wife for Wilhelm. How Fanny believed she could never forget Felix for “even one-tenth of a moment” and still manage to avoid doing her husband an injustice is somewhat questionable, and doubtlessly she discovered this truth soon after her wedding.

Surprisingly—or perhaps not—Felix avoided responding directly to his sister’s emotional outpourings. He tended to deflect the seriousness of her feelings with humor.

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when he did address them, but usually simply moved on. His silence may have had something to do with the manner in which his letters were received in the house; as Fanny described it, his letters were read and re-read by every member of the family, so the possibility of conveying any truly private or intimate thoughts to Fanny via letters was essentially impossible. Although Fanny continued to express complex emotions to Felix throughout their correspondence for the rest of their lives, her insecurities declined noticeably after her wedding. As she settled into her carefully furnished new home in the Gartenhaus with Wilhelm and very quickly became a mother, Fanny discovered the joys of domesticity and the rule of her own household, and left the anxieties of the summer of 1829 behind.

iii

Still an issue for Fanny, however, was the opposition of her relationship with the three most important men in her life—her father, brother, and husband—and music. I have addressed many musical similarities between the music of Fanny and Felix throughout this dissertation, so I choose to focus instead on the less-discussed contextualization of the relationship within kinship studies. Today, the idea that there has to be an opposition seems unfair, but as we know quite well from social and cultural studies on the nineteenth century, as well as the correspondence of all three of these men, Fanny’s career in music was a real problem. Also involved in the picture were the many friends of the family with whom Fanny shared an artistic intimacy. As Fanny transferred her allegiances as daughter, sister, and friend to that of a wife, the most important arbiter of her decisions became Wilhelm. Because of the strength of her attachment to her brother, however, it took Fanny many years to fully transfer her trust to
her husband. Wilhelm early on proved himself both an attentive and somewhat jealous husband as well as supportive artistic partner.

As already mentioned above, the friendship of Johann Gustav Droysen caused some jealousy within the family circle. Wilhelm felt threatened by the closeness of the friendship between Fanny and Droysen, and apparently expressed reservations about the friendship that prompted an impassioned and somewhat drastic response from Fanny:

Dear Wilhelm, you have quite rightly expressed something that gives me much pain. Since you expressed it with such determination, I cannot and will not disagree with you, but rather append my decision to yours. I will never compose again for the voice, at least not on texts by poets known to me, and at the very least not on texts by Droysen [emphasis original]. Instrumental music remains to me, which I can trust, since it is discrete. Thus I will not send you the scene by Droysen, as I had intended, but instead I will return it to him tonight, and just tell him that I can’t take on this project just now, that I am too much occupied by other thoughts, etc.36

Why Fanny felt it necessary to completely foreswear all Lieder composition is unknown, but presumably, Wilhelm had expressed some discomfort with Fanny’s work. The last text of Droysen’s that Fanny had set, previous to Wilhelm’s letter at some point in mid-September, was the Liederkreis on the departure of Felix in May and June 1829 (H-U 236). The texts address topics of departure and reunion with Felix, so it is not likely that Wilhelm saw any romantic threat in that particular setting, but rather in the closeness of the relationship, which had formed while Wilhelm was away in Italy.

Throughout the summer, the “scene” Fanny and Droysen had been planning to collaborate on was an extended project of Lieder which were related in a larger dramatic sense, i.e., a song cycle, although that’s not how Fanny referred to it in her letters. The topic was to have been the Loreley, and it is somewhat ironic to note that this was precisely the topic of the opera that Felix eventually began to write just before his death; neither sibling was able to write Die Loreley. Fanny resigned herself to writing only instrumental music, free of extra musical connotations and emotional dangers, and contextualized this decision within the writings of Jean Paul:

I understand now, what I’ve always heard, and which the speaker of truth Jean Paul had already told me: Art is not for women, but for girls, so on the threshold of my new life, I will take leave of this child’s play, which will provide sufficient compensation.

Fortunately, Wilhelm had never intended for Fanny to absolutely give up the composition of Lieder, nor even her collaboration with Droysen, and he expressed this to her quite strongly in his reply:

What, my dear Fanny, are you reacting to! No, my God, it cannot, may not, and should not be. How can you wish to lay this responsibility on me, to be guilty for destroying the wealth of creative powers that God and the world has entrusted to you. Under no circumstances will I accept such a sacrifice, could my pain be assuaged by your making so large a sacrifice? Without paying any such price, you will sustain the completely free and uninhibited practice of your art, I immediately retract my statement from today for the time being and we will discuss lovingly how we can make this less harsh.... But keep in mind that the most basic condition is the completely unlimited practice of your art. ... So, if Droysen arrives earlier than I do, please do not return the scene to him, consider that we will both be implicated in this matter, which I wish to avoid; he can’t believe anything other than that this originates with me. ... No, you should not take leave of your childhood occupations, at the threshold of your new life and your art, which essence of your being will be a heavenly joy to me. We want to

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38 Helmig (1997), 155: Letter of Fanny Mendelssohn to Wilhelm Hensel, mid-September 1829: “Ich sehe nun wohl ein, was ich immer gehört, u. was mir auch der wahrheitredende Jean Paul gesagt hat: Die Kunst ist nicht für Frauen, nur für Mädchen, an der Schwelle meines neuen Leben nehme ich Abschied von dieser Kindergespielin, es wird mir Ersatz genug bieten.”
prove that Jean Paul can be wrong. ... Would you like to send me the scene by Droysen, or shall we read it together?39

Here, we can see that Fanny clearly over-reacted to a comment that Wilhelm had made earlier that day. His impassioned plea in response is greatly to his credit, and we can see the foundations for his later unconditional support of Fanny’s musical activities, which he extended even to publication, against the wishes of Fanny’s father and brothers. Wilhelm vigorously protests Fanny’s plan to give up music altogether as the pastime of a child, and bids her as well not to return the text for the extended scene to Droysen. He even encourages a continued involvement in the project, to the point of becoming involved in it himself. Unfortunately, this perceived objection of Wilhelm’s means that we do not have this setting of the Loreley legend, because Fanny kept her promise and never set another text by Droysen.

Fanny, however, heeded Wilhelm’s plea not to give up music entirely. As shown in Table 5.1, we can see that Droysen did in a way intrude in Fanny’s Lieder projects while Hensel was away, which was most likely the root of Wilhelm Hensel’s jealousy. Her marriage and subsequent pregnancy did of course have a negative impact on her

39 Helmig (1997), 156: Letter of Wilhelm Hensel to Fanny Mendelssohn, mid-September 1829: 
“Was, liebe Fanny, erwiderst Du mir! Nein, mein Gott, so laß es, so darf, so soll es nicht seyn. Wie kannst Du die Verantwortung auf mich legen wollen, das Dir anvertraute Pfund zerstört zu haben, mit dem zu schaffen Du Gott u. Welt schuldig bist. So nehm’ ich solch Opfer auf keinen Fall an, könnte mein Schmerz den Linderung finden wenn Du einen Größern hast? Ja bist Du um keinen andres Preis in ganz freier, unbefangener Kunstübung zu erhalten, nehm’ ich vorläufig meine Spruch von heut früh zurück u. wir berathen in Liebe wie sich die Sache weniger schroff stellen läßt. ... Denke u. hilf Du, nur Grundbedingung von allem bleibt ganz uneingeschränkte Uebung Deiner Kunst. ... So, sollte Droysen früher als ich kommen, gieb ihm, ich bitte, die Scene nicht zurück, bedenke daß wir dadurch gleich in das fielen, was ich aber vermeiden möchte; den er könnt es nicht anders als von mir veranlaßt glauben. ... Nein, du sollst nicht Abschied nehmen von Deiner Jungendspielin [sic], an der Schwelle Deines neuen Lebens u. Deine Kunst, Theil, ja Wesen Deines Wesens wird meine heilige Freude seyn. Wir wollen beweisen daß Jean Paul sich irren konnte. ... Willst Du mir die Scene von Droysen schicken oder wollen wir sie zusammen lesen?”
productivity for several years, as shown in Chapter 4, but contrary to the warnings of her father, music did remain the foundation of her life and being. Table 5.2 shows the settings of any poet that Fanny set six times or more, throughout her life.

Table 5.1: Settings of texts by Droysen and Hensel, 1822–1829

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Johann Gustav Droysen</th>
<th>Wilhelm Hensel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sehnsucht VIII, June 24, 1828 (H-U 219)</td>
<td>Lebewohl, June 15, 1822 (H-U 48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heut' in dieser Nacht, August 5, 1828 (H-U 221)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gram, January 6, 1829 (H-U 228)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schlaf du, schlaf du süß, April 11, 1829 (H-U 233)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lied, lost, May 20, 1829 (H-U 234)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liederkreis, May 25 – June 6, 1829 (H-U 236)</td>
<td>Nachtreigen, June 29, 1829 (H-U 237)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liederzyklus, unfinished/lost</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Droysen and Hensel</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>August 1829 (H-U 240)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schlaf, schlafl September 21, 1829 (H-U 241)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.2: Poets that Fanny set six times or more, 1820–1847

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poet</th>
<th>Settings</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jean Pierre Claris de Florian (13 settings: 3.22.20–3.9.21)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (46 settings: 7.1820–10.4.46)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ludwig Uhland (10 settings: 1–9 set 5.1822–9.6.23)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilhelm Hensel (23 settings: 6.15.22–7.29.46)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ludwig Tieck (17 settings: 12.22–11.16.30)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilhelm Müller (9 settings: 1.10.23, through 1823)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friederike Robert, née Braun (6 settings: 6.20.23–10.1.31)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Johann Peter Eckermann (6 settings: 9.16.24–1.29.25)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ludwig Hölty (14 settings: 6.20.25–9.8.38)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heinrich Heine (26 settings: 8.5.27 – Italy, 1839/40)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (5 settings: 9.12.27–5.22.1835)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Johann Gustav Droysen (12 settings: 6.24.28–6.6.29)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emanuel Geibel (6 settings: 6.6.41–6.10.46)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nikolaus Lenau (10 settings: 7.28.41–12.27.46)</td>
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</table>

1820 1847
We can see in Table 5.2 that texts by Droysen formed merely a tiny fraction of the some three hundred *Lieder* on texts by sixty-three different poets that Fanny would go on to write over twenty-seven years. 40 She tended in general to focus on just one or two poets at a time before dropping them completely. Only Goethe and Wilhelm Hensel, unsurprisingly, remained a constant throughout her oeuvre. We can appreciate how distraught she must have been to propose sacrificing this life of composition for a pre-marital misunderstanding. We can also see how seriously Fanny took the criticism of those who loved her. To propose giving up composition entirely, for a woman who had already written nearly 240 works (including instrumental genres), is drastic indeed. Wilhelm was clearly a positive influence in Fanny’s life, and the two settled into the *Gartenhaus* and worked out the initial problems of space, lifestyles, and parenting to eventually settle into a harmonious union they viewed as a “double counterpoint” of music and painting.

iv

Another person who wielded just as much or more artistic power over Fanny—intentionally or not—was, to return to the main topic of this chapter, her brother Felix. Fanny’s emotional angst over her separation from Felix settled eventually into an artistic angst. As the two composers began to shape their own lives apart from each other, the intimacy of their interaction of necessity had to break down. The two composers continued to express their desires to be near one another, to share once again so closely the happy days of their youth when neither wrote a note without the other already

40 The poets Fanny set only one to five times are not included on this table. See Hellwig-Unruh (2001), 445-46 for a list of the poets and H-U numbers for each of the *Lieder*.
aware of the final outcome. Despite Fanny’s happy marriage and her contentment with her domestic routine, Fanny continued to struggle with the limitations her father and brother had imposed on her artistic ambitions. We will see in Chapter 6 how Fanny eventually worked her way through these issues, but we will focus now on one last example of a particularly disturbing letter that Fanny wrote to Felix.

In a letter of July 30, 1836, which ranges from sisterly teasing about the “lovely young lady” that Felix had fallen in love with in Frankfurt—his future wife, Cécile Jeanrenaud—to discussions of her rehearsals of Felix’s *St. Paul* for her *Sonntagsmusiken*, we find an example of just how distant the relationship had become as well as a stark reminder that even seven years into her marriage, Fanny still remained strongly under the influence of her brother.

She opened the letter with a sarcastic remark, “it doesn’t occur to me to be angry or request a few personal letters, dear Felix,” before complaining that she herself hadn’t written because she had nothing significant to report from home. Fanny believed that she and Felix remain bound together at some subconscious level, because both she and Felix were independently re-reading Goethe’s biography, which neither had done since childhood, and which she asserted is “one of those little coincidences that occur more often as we get older and which I don’t care to ascribe to chance.” She expressed disappointment that “all your romances have taken place away from home, and so I’ve never seen you in the midst of courtship, and yet I’m very curious about this area of your life.”

41 Citron (1987), 207. German, 513. Letter of Fanny Hensel to Felix Mendelssohn, July 30, 1836: “Es fällt mir nicht ein, böse zu seyn, oder eigene Briefe für mich allein zu verlangen, liebster Felix...Es hat mich darin unter Andern eines jener kleinen Zusammentreffen erfreut, die sich in unserm Leben öfters wiederholen, u. die ich nicht gern Zufall nennen möchte, daß Du zum ersten
She then proceeded to drop what we would call today a “bomb”:

I don't know exactly what Goethe means by the demonic influence, which he mentioned very often near the end, but this much is clear: if it does exist, you exert it over me. I believe that if you seriously suggested that I become a good mathematician, I wouldn't have any particular difficulty in doing so, and I could just as easily cease being a musician tomorrow if you thought I wasn't good at that any longer. Therefore treat me with great care.\textsuperscript{42}

The invocation of the “demonic influence” to describe the relationship between Fanny and Felix is at once quite accurate, as we have seen throughout this chapter, and quite disturbing. Because both Fanny and Felix were at that time reading Goethe’s autobiography, \textit{Dichtung und Wahrheit}, in which Goethe discusses his concept of the “demonic influence,” Fanny knows that her brother will understand why she made this reference. When we read this quotation out of context, as we often do, it can sometimes appear even more shocking.

Goethe’s “demonic influence,” as he described it, was a spirit of active, yet not entirely detrimental, contradiction:

He [the young Goethe, referred to in third person] thought he could detect in nature—both animate and inanimate, with soul and without soul—something which manifested itself only in contradictions, and which, therefore, could not be comprehended under any idea, still less under one word. It was not godlike, for it seemed without reason; nor human, for it had no understanding; nor devilish, for it was beneficent; nor angelic, for it often betrayed a malicious pleasure. It resembled chance, for it evinced no succession; it was like Providence, for it hinted at connection. It seemed to penetrate all that limits us; it seemed to deal

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Ibid.}, 514. "Ich weiß zwar nicht genau, was Goethe mit dem dämonischen Einfluß meint, von dem er zuletzt so viel spricht, doch soviel ist klar, daß wenn dergleichen existirt, Du es in Bezug auf mich ausübtest, Ich glaube, wenn Du mir im Ernst vorschlägst, ein guter Mathematiker zu werden, so würde ich keine besondere Schwierigkeit dabei finden, eben so wie ich morgen keine Musik mehr würde machen können, wenn Du meintest, ich könne keine machen. Nimm Dich daher mit mir in Acht."
arbitrarily with the necessary elements of our existence; it contracted time and expanded space. In the impossible alone did it appear to find pleasure, while it rejected the possible with contempt. To this principle, which seemed to come in between all other principles and separate them, and yet link them together, I gave the name of Daemonic, after the example of the ancients and others with similar experiences.43

As Goethe defined it here, the “demonic influence” is represented by the character of Mephisto from Faust, whose destructive power is never quite realized as Faust continually resists him in an ontological tug-of-war: Faust’s insatiable desire for perfect beauty keeps him both perpetually locked in his contract with Mephisto, and keeps him alive. Until Faust is satisfied, Mephisto must keep creating new ways to make Faust perfectly happy, thus resulting in the contradiction of destruction and creation.

This Daemonic force—although as Fanny points out, it is difficult to fully understand what Goethe really means by it—is perhaps one of the most intriguing ways to think about the relationship between Fanny and Felix. The unseen, unfelt, elusive, but incredibly powerful nature of this “demonic influence” meant that Fanny could be held in its thrall without being aware precisely how she was being influenced by it.

Another aspect of the “demonic influence” that Goethe expands on a few pages later is not quite flattering to Felix:

But the most fearful manifestation of the Daemonic is when it is seen predominating in some individual character. During my life I have observed several instances, either closely or at a distance. Such persons are not always the most eminent men, either in intellect or special gifts, and they are seldom distinguished by goodness of heart; a tremendous energy seems to emanate from them, and they exercise a wonderful power over all creatures, and even over the elements; and, indeed, who shall say how much further such influence may extend? All the moral powers combined are of no avail against them; in vain does the more enlightened portion of mankind attempt to throw suspicion upon them as dupes or as deceivers—the masses are attracted by them. Seldom if ever do they find their equals among their contemporaries; nothing can vanquish them but the universe itself, with which they have begun the fray; and it is from observation of facts such as these that the strange, but tremendous saying must have risen: Nemo contra Deum nisi Deus ipse [No one against God unless God himself].

Many of the aspects here can be used to describe Felix: he had a tremendous energy, had great influence over many people, was adored by the masses, and was considered in his time without equal. What doesn’t apply, however, is that Felix did not lack eminence, intellect, or goodness of heart (as far as we know). Fanny surely was not applying Goethe’s theory carte blanche to her brother, either, but the implications are quite intriguing. We can perhaps explain in part how Fanny reacted throughout the years to Felix’s responses to her music by observing it within the context of this “demonic influence.” Felix was encouraging, but often devastatingly critical; with one stroke of his

pen he could cause Fanny to give up entire genres (such as the cantata and string quartet) and take up new ones (such as more “brilliant” piano pieces). He could even cause Fanny to completely lose her self-confidence as a composer if he chose to.

Fanny, by her own admission, was Felix’s puppet. Felix most likely never intended for Fanny to take his criticism so much to heart, but Fanny really was somehow nearly powerless in the face of his opinions. Placing this label on how she felt about his influence may have helped trigger the process of freeing herself from it.

These letters show that Fanny continued maturing so that she no longer poured emotion-laden insecurities into her letters (or that, lacking any response from Felix, she eventually stopped), but also show how painfully distant the siblings had become. They surely loved each other as much as they always had, but Fanny often complained that Felix never wrote to her anymore. On October 19, 1836, she expressed her disappointment, sadness, and hurt with a passive-aggressive accusation and self-pitying metaphor:

I plan to keep my mouth shut and not utter a word until you will have written everyone in the world and lastly me. As the saying goes: that which is shouted into the forest will be echoed out of the forest. But that’s not the case with us—I shouted continually the entire summer without hearing a single echo. Now I actually don’t take this badly in the least, for I know how busy you are, However, since writing exists in the place of conversation, it also bears a similarity to it: if one person alone always speaks, in the end he makes himself weary and the listener as well.45

She clearly did take it badly. As Todd shows in his discussion of this period, Fanny became increasingly anxious about her lack of compositional productivity and the decrease in Felix’s praise for her works.\textsuperscript{46} The relationship changed so much within another ten years that by the time Felix was writing his second oratorio, Fanny found out only from the newspapers that he had selected “Elijah” as his topic. The journey to Italy in 1839/40 produced a momentary bloom in her inspiration, but returning to gray, sad Berlin, with the absence of her father and the death of her mother in 1842, Fanny once more felt a damper on her compositional inspiration. Fanny clearly needed a new challenge, a new reason to compose and push herself: she needed to publish.

\textsuperscript{46} Todd (2009), 202-203.
Chapter 6 Bittersweet Authorship

In which Fanny expands her musical horizons – revives the Sonntagsmusiken – first publications – how she (and Felix) felt about her new professional status – and in which we wonder if things are not quite as they seem.

As Fanny settled into her role as wife and mother through the 1830s, she began again to think more seriously about her musical life. Music remained, as always, an important part of her life, but in several cases—such as difficult pregnancies, trips, and deaths in the family—it could not be the focus of her day-to-day life. Fanny’s bi-weekly Sunday afternoon musical gatherings, her Sonntagsmusiken, provided a significant artistic outlet for the highly talented and ambitious composer and performer, but eventually she outgrew this venue, as well. Fanny also grew apart from her brother during this period, which caused her great sadness, but at the same time freed her from the constraints of conscience she had felt towards the wishes of her father and brothers.

As discussed in Chapter 1, wide public knowledge of Fanny’s true achievements was impossible for most of the twentieth century, when she was known mostly by her published works, Opp. 1-11. However, eleven publications are hardly the hallmark of a serious composer; as Felix pointed out to his mother in June 1837, when explaining why he would not support his sister’s desire to publish:

I hopefully don’t need to say that as soon as she decides to publish I will spare no effort, to the extent that I can, to find her opportunities. But to encourage [emphasis original] her to publish I cannot do, since it runs counter to my views and convictions. [...] One should publish only if one is willing to appear and remain an author for one’s life. That means a series of works, one after the other, to come forward with just one or two is only to annoy the public, or it will become a so-called manuscript for friends, which I really do not like. Fanny, as I know her, has neither enthusiasm nor calling for authorship, because she is too much a proper wife as is correct, raising Sebastian and looking after her house, and
thinks neither of the public, nor the musical world, nor even about music, until this most important calling has been fulfilled.¹

Apparently Felix did not quite understand his sister’s artistic goals, nor does it appear that he stopped to consider the higher injury he was doing the musical community by keeping Fanny’s *Lieder*—which even he considered some of the finest he knew—from reaching a wider public. Felix was writing this already nearly ten years before Fanny finally did start publishing. We often fall into a chronological trap of imagining that Fanny woke up one day and decided to be a professional composer, and we dramatize how much that first publication may have changed her art. While becoming a professional composer did indeed have a profound influence on how Fanny proceeded with her next compositional projects, it is worth considering how much of the decade from the mid-1830s to the mid-1840s must have served as a testing ground for Fanny, as she struggled with the decision to publish.

Fanny was not entirely without an audience before she started to publish, however. The economic prosperity and social success of her family offered her a poisoned apple: on one side, she was not allowed to embark on an artistically fulfilling career, as the middle-class Clara Wieck Schumann could, but she did have the personal financial means to enjoy an incredibly rich and varied musical life in her own home. She

welcomed an international circle of friends and colleagues to her garden house at Leipzigerstrasse 3 in Berlin, just off Potsdamer Platz, to perform in her musical Sunday events for audiences of up to 200 people. Her concert series were private in name only, her programming influence was immense, and her musical prowess was Berlin’s worst kept secret. Fanny thus wrote much of her music for these events, and had at her disposal the resources for hearing her chamber music and music for other larger ensembles performed and for testing her musical ideas before an audience.

The Sonntagsmusiken were never a typical salon, because the events were focused exclusively on the performance of music rather than the reading of poetry or the discussion of politics, art, culture, and other topics of interest to the specific members of each salon. Fanny’s guests most likely did discuss these sorts of topics in a casual manner during breaks in the music, but these discussions were not the reason people attended Fanny’s concerts. However, Fanny did draw inspiration for her concert salon from the women in her life, thus connecting her efforts to a long series of the most influential of the many Berlin salons that proliferated in the first half of the nineteenth century. Sarah Levy, one of the founding members of the early nineteenth-century Berlin salon culture, was Fanny’s great-aunt. Fanny’s mother, Lea, started the first of the Mendelssohn musical events in the early 1820s, before Fanny transformed the concept into a full-fledged concert salon in the 1830s. Rahel Varnhagen von Ense lived and held her salon just a few doors away from the Mendelssohns when they lived in Jägerstraße,
and she and her family remained close to the Mendelssohns throughout their lives. The Stägemanns held their salon for only a few years, and it was mostly an intimate family-and-friends affair, but these gatherings resulted in several landmark contributions to nineteenth-century art, poetry, and music, which included most notably Wilhelm Müller’s *Die schöne Müllerin*, which was the inspiration for Franz Schubert’s song cycle (although, of course, Schubert never knew about the Stägemanns). The Stägemanns also appeared in the Mendelssohn family’s circle, and two of the attendees in their salon in 1816-17 were Ludwig Berger and Wilhelm Hensel. We do not know for sure if the Mendelssohns knew the Stägemanns before engaging Berger as their composition teacher, or before Wilhelm began to court Fanny, but the close connections in these salons makes it quite likely that they were at least acquainted. Thus, the salons provided not only entertainment, education, and opportunity, but also friendship, mentors, and spouses.

Unfortunately, the letter in which Fanny informed Felix of her intention to revive and reorganize the *Sonntagsmusiken* does not survive, so we do not know exactly what her reasons were for doing so. However, we can assume that Fanny decided to host these events to give herself and her family a chance to enjoy once again the company of good friends and good music. However, her concept expanded over the years, until her guests numbered up to two hundred in the summer, when the *Gartenhaus* doors could be opened. In the winter, the events were accommodated in Fanny’s own music room.

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2 In fact, the Varnhagen von Ense residence was between the Mendelssohn bank (at Jägerstraße 51), and the Mendelssohn home on the corner of Jägerstraße and Markgrafenstraße, which borders the Eastern edge of the Gendarmenmarkt. The Mendelssohn residence was thus merely a 30-second walk to the Schauspielhaus, where Weber’s *Der Freischütz* was premiered in 1821. Today, a plaque marks the location of Varnhagen von Ense’s legendary salon, and the only remaining part of the original building that housed the Mendelssohn bank, the stables, has been transformed into a museum and recital space. The Mendelssohn family and a team of volunteers maintains the exhibit and plans regular salon-style events.
and overflow seating was accommodated in adjoining rooms: this space could accommodate up to about one hundred guests.\(^3\) An event of this size was definitely no longer a casual salon performance.

We do not know if Fanny’s guests sat and listened quietly, or if they socialized during performances, but according to the growing practice of audiences to remain quiet in the nineteenth century, we can assume that for the most part Fanny’s audiences did remain quiet, at least when seated in the main room during the winter performances. In the summer, however, when the guests spilled out into the garden, we get quite a different picture of the atmosphere:

At this time of year, as the garden become more green and beautiful each time (next Sunday I play with the obligato accompaniment of nightingales and lilac flowers, the nightingale sits right in front of the music hall), I take great pleasure in it.\(^4\)

We begin to understand why Fanny’s events were so popular and such a sought-after invitation. The excellent music, played by the best performers either resident in Berlin or travelling through on concert tour, the lovely atmosphere, and the array of eminent guests (ranging from virtuoso musicians, painters, politicians, and writers to Prussian nobility), brought great prestige to the family house. Klein suggests that, even in the face of family budget deficits (Fanny had to hire musicians and pay famous virtuosi on occasion, as well as provide refreshments for up to two hundred people on a regular basis), Fanny was encouraged by her family to keep offering the concerts.

\(^3\) All of these details, as well as reconstructions of the known programs, can be found in Hans-Günter Klein, “...\textit{mit obligater Nachtigallen und Fliederblütenbegleitung}”: \textit{Fanny Hensels Sonntagsmusiken} (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2005).

because they did significantly maintain the Mendelssohn family reputation in Berlin and abroad.\footnote{Klein (2005), 16.}

**Table 6.1: Fanny Hensel’s *Sonntagsmusiken***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concerts</th>
<th>Pauses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summer 1831 (new beginning)</td>
<td>Summer 1832 (still birth on Nov. 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1, 1833–June 29, 1834</td>
<td>Summer 1834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 14, 1834–May 10, 1835</td>
<td>Summer 1835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 15, 1835</td>
<td>Winter 1836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 19, 1836</td>
<td>Summer 1836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 4, 1836–January 22, 1837</td>
<td>Death of father, a second still birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 25, 1837–February 25, 1838</td>
<td>Wilhelm absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 10 and 17, 1839</td>
<td>In Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 10, 1841–July 25, 1841</td>
<td>Late summer 1841, and winter 1842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1, 1842–June 12, 1842</td>
<td>Death of mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 29, 1843–June 23, 1844</td>
<td>Uninspired, trip to Rome to help Rebecka and family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 15, 1846–November 1, 1846</td>
<td>Winter 1847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 11, 1847 (Final event)</td>
<td>Planned performance of Felix’s <em>Die erste Walpurgisnacht</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 16, 1847</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite how much Fanny enjoyed directing and performing at her concerts, it was not always possible to maintain a truly regular concert series. These were still private, in-home, events, despite their prestige, and even though Fanny’s family often helped her with the arrangements, she was still the only driving force behind the salon. Table 6.1 shows how large gaps often appeared in the series.
The summer months were ideal for utilizing the garden (although typical Berlin summers are rainy and cold so she couldn’t depend on good weather), but Fanny tended to stop offering concerts after June or July, and would resume them in September or October, break again briefly for Christmas, and then resume with greater regularity from January through May, which basically followed the prevailing concert season which is still generally observed even today. The darkest winter months were thus enlivened by these social and artistic events. During the winter, the guests were also able to peruse Wilhelm’s studio, which was close to Fanny’s music room, so that the concertgoers were given a multi-media artistic experience (and were, perhaps intentionally, exposed to Wilhelm’s work, as well).\(^6\)

At which points Fanny decided to start or stop offering her concerts often depended on her family situation and emotional or physical state. In 1831, when Fanny decided to begin her own series, she was just emerging from a nine-month musical hiatus surrounding the birth of Sebastian. As usual, Wilhelm was behind her return to focusing on her own artistic needs. One significant indication that Fanny had returned to thinking about her life and music is that she started writing in her diary again on March 4, 1831, almost exactly seven months after her previous entry of August 6, 1830.

Habit is such a powerful thing, and a diary is such a thing of habit, that I couldn’t return to it before now, even though I wanted to, and don’t really want to do it now, even though Wilhelm wishes it, and I like to do anything for him, out of love.\(^7\)

\(^6\) Klein (2005), 13-14.
As discussed in Chapter 3, this period was also a blossoming of compositional activity and ambition for Fanny, as she embarked on her cantata project. Fanny's missing letter apparently communicated to Felix that she intended to offer her concerts to promote vocal music primarily, most likely after Zelter's model, because Felix responded enthusiastically with a strong exhortation to include instrumental music, as well.

But for your letter of yesterday I thank you again, it was so enjoyable and fresh, and made me so, too; specifically I can’t say enough how much I like the idea of the new *Sonntagsmusiken*, it is a brilliant idea, and I beg you for the love of God, O Fanny, don’t let this idea sleep again, rather give your itinerant brother that much more reason to write something new for you, he wants do it very much, because he is so thrilled with you and your ideas.8

Felix continued with some brotherly—and professional—advice, that Fanny should select pieces that her audiences might wish to hear (“for the people have rights, O Fanny!”), before recommending some works of Bach and Handel, such as J. S. Bach’s cantata, *Du Hirte Israel, höre*, BWV 104, or Handel’s *Dixit Dominus*.9 Whether or not Fanny took her brother’s programming advice is not known, because Fanny did not start to keep records for her concerts until several years later, but it is quite likely that she did either perform or think seriously about *Du Hirte Israel, höre*, because this work


heavily influenced her first cantata, the *Lobgesang*, as shown in Chapter 3. Felix also clearly saw and appreciated the opportunity for Fanny to significantly increase her musical activity through these concerts, by including instrumental music, performed for the most part by herself.

Won’t you also play something for the people? I had thought that it couldn’t hurt you. They will put wind in your sails and you must practice piano, thus it would be a vocal and instrumental concert. I just wish I could be there and give you my compliments afterwards.\(^\text{10}\)

These letters show Felix throwing himself whole-heartedly behind Fanny’s new endeavor, even offering to write new music for her concerts. Whenever he was visiting his family, he naturally performed on his sister’s series as a soloist or chamber musician. We know that Felix did *not* support his sister’s desires to publish so enthusiastically, which may seem like hypocrisy. Clearly, because these events were private, Felix felt no compunction about encouraging his sister to organize and perform. Ironically, then, it was not that Fanny could not engage in such creative leadership roles, but that the world at large could not know that she was doing it.

Although Fanny’s *Sonntagsmusiken* were wildly successful and brought her much artistic satisfaction, as well as a real testing ground for her compositions, she was soon dissatisfied and felt a need to widen her audience even further. Even so, we see that Fanny’s husband remained instrumental in encouraging her *Sonntagsmusiken*, while Felix continued to challenge her to compose:

The local music scene is more slovenly than ever. I’d love to know why they engaged Hauser, since he never performs. At Hensel’s request, I’ve started performing again on Sundays, but the Ganzes are not here, and I’m really too

spoiled to let myself be accompanied by beginners. As the strict taskmaster has ordered, I’ve continued to compose piano pieces, and for the first time have succeeded in completing one that sounds brilliant.\(^{11}\)

Fanny apparently did feel she had been successful at writing more “brilliant” piano pieces, because her ideas for publishing them were what prompted her mother to write to Felix a year later asking for his help getting his sister’s music published, which as we have just seen he steadfastly refused to do. Just two years later, Fanny would travel to Italy, where she enjoyed the company of younger musicians such as Charles Gounod, who admired her skill at the piano and her knowledge of J. S. Bach and Felix Mendelssohn. The affirmation of her value to the musical world at large that she received from this international artistic community was one more stepping stone in the direction of finally deciding to become a professional composer. Fanny was a highly educated woman of unusual intellect, talent, and ambition. Even today her dogged determination and sharp observations of humanity would have served her well in nearly any profession she might have chosen. Truly fencing her in was nearly impossible.

When Fanny did finally decide to start publishing ten years later, she went ahead without her brother’s blessing or assistance, and wrote him these telling lines on July 9, 1846:

I wouldn’t expect you to read this rubbish now, busy as you are, if I didn’t have to tell you something. But since I know from the start that you won’t like it, it’s a bit

awkward to get under way. So laugh at me or not, as you wish: I'm afraid of my brothers at age 40 as I was of Father at age 14—or more aptly expressed, desirous to please you and everyone I've loved throughout my life. And when I now know in advance that it won't be the case, I thus feel rather uncomfortable. In a word, I'm beginning to publish.\textsuperscript{12}

Even in this landmark announcement—Fanny was finally breaking free of the disapproval of her father and brothers at the age of forty, which should have been cause for celebration—she still belittled herself and suggested that her brother would be too busy to care. She continued:

I hope I won't disgrace all of you through my publishing, as I'm no \textit{femme libre} and unfortunately not even an adherent of the \textit{Young Germany} movement. I trust \textit{you} will in no way be bothered by it, since, as you can see, I've proceeded completely on my own in order to spare you any possible unpleasant moment, and I hope you won't think badly of me. If it succeeds—that is, if the pieces are well liked and I receive additional offers—I know it will be a great stimulus to me, something I've always needed in order to create.\textsuperscript{13}

Fanny was fully aware of the potential professional and social problems she risked when she took the decision to begin publishing her music. It is almost tragic to see how Fanny believed she had to proceed completely on her own, in order to spare her brother “any possible unpleasant moment” when he had told his mother ten years earlier that he would help her if she only came to him directly. Clearly, the intimacy, 


honesty, and trust that had characterized the relationship between Fanny and Felix during their childhood and teenage years had by this time completely dissolved.

The early success of her first publications had a rejuvenating effect on Fanny’s mood and compositional output, which Marian Wilson Kimber believes was the main impetus behind Fanny’s decision to publish, rather than authorship itself. Fanny wrote in her diary in February 1847:

I cannot deny that the joy in publishing my music has also elevated my positive mood. So far, touch wood. I have not had unpleasant experiences, and it is truly stimulating to experience this type of success first at an age by which it has usually ended for women, if indeed they ever experience it.

Even though she had claimed to be “no femme libre,” Fanny took an understandable degree of subversive satisfaction in her newfound artistic autonomy from Felix. As the two had grown apart in their last decade, the musical communication between them had waned, until Fanny was clearly no longer Felix’s “only musical adviser” nor could she offer judgment “before any thought was written down” – indeed, increasingly, Fanny sometimes did not see a work until it was published, and in the case of his second oratorio of 1846, she did not even know it had been on Elijah until she had seen it reported in the press following its premiere.

The only thing I don’t like in your letter is the uncertainty of your visit here, and the fact that I don’t know anything yet about your new oratorio whose name, to be sure, I’ve discovered (I also have pet topics for teasing). The entire Birmingham public, however, among whom there may be a few who enjoy your music as much as I do, is wise to the piece—the chorus and orchestra even wiser. “And a tremendous affair it is,” said the report in the Morning Chronicle about one of the encored numbers, which my friend, Lord Oxenpantoffel, sent me.

directly. In short, I’m very impatient. Do I have to wait until everything is published? That can really take a long time, and a person ages considerably during that period.\textsuperscript{16}

One can only imagine the sort of loss of closeness or even significance to her brother that Fanny must have felt in this situation. She even made a bitter joke that a fictional “Lord Oxenpantoffel” had been even more considerate than her brother in sending her reports of the premiere.\textsuperscript{17}

This same letter contains as well a full expression of her frustrations with her lengthy road to authorship. She had previously sent a copy of her Opus 1 to Felix’s wife, Cécile (not, significantly, to Felix himself), and wrote in this letter to her brother:

Why didn’t I address my lieder to you? In part I know why, in part I don’t. I wanted to enlist Cécile as a go-between because I had a sort of guilty conscience towards you. To be sure, when I consider that 10 years ago I thought it too late and now is the latest possible time, the situation seems rather ridiculous, as does my long-standing outrage at the idea of starting Op. 1 in my old age. But since you’re so amenable to the project now, I also want to admit how terribly uppity I’ve been and announce that six 4-part Lieder, which you really don’t know, are coming out next.\textsuperscript{18}


\textsuperscript{17} This fictitious character may not have been entirely made up, but may rather have been a rhetorical gesture to show the alienation Fanny felt from Felix, because Felix did write immediately to his brother Paul reporting on the performance on August 27, 1846, and did at that time mention encored sections. Paul most likely forwarded the news to Fanny immediately, and thus “Lord Oxenpantoffel” is probably Paul. Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Letters of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy from 1833 to 1847 / edited by Paul Mendelssohn Bartholdy and Carl Mendelssohn Bartholdy; with a catalogue of all his musical compositions compiled by Julius Rietz; translated by Lady Wallace (London: Longman, Roberts & Green, 1864), 372-74.

\textsuperscript{18} Citron (1987), 353, German, 613. “Warum ich meine Lieder nicht an Dich adressirt habe? Zum Theil weiβ ichs, zum Theil nicht, ich wollte Cecile als Vermittlerin in Anspruch nehmen, weil ich doch so eine Sorte von bösem Gewissen Dir gegenüber hatte, denn allerdings, wenn ich bedenke, daß ich vor 10 Jahren fand, es wäre zu spät, u. jetzt, es wäre grade die äußerste Zeit,
An almost vindictive glee emanates from this letter. Fanny clearly took satisfaction in her success, won by her own hard work and musical talent. The success of her first publication and the contract for a second thus proved to both her brother and herself that her music was worthy of public distribution for enjoyment by objective outsiders. Unfortunately, before Fanny was able to plan and accomplish any sort of systematic publication of her works, she died suddenly, at the age of 41, leaving behind upwards of 450 unrevised, unpublished works. It can only be a matter of speculation which of these works she would have returned to revise and publish—maybe the String Quartet in E-flat major (1834), the Piano Sonata in G minor (1842), the Cholera Cantata (1831), etc. It took Fanny nearly two decades to build the courage and self-confidence to publish: what did she decide, then, after all those years of indecision, to present to the public? Why were the Lieder in Op. 1 chosen above hundreds of others for presentation?

On texts of her favorite poets, Heine, Goethe, and Eichendorff, the six Lieder in Op. 1 are no mere ‘pretty ideas’ but rather accomplished, dramatic works that display a true sensitivity to text setting. The poems are supported and enhanced by Fanny’s remarkably supple and effective melodies and harmonic nuance. The styles range from the light-hearted “Mendelssohnian” sound in the Maienlied (No. 4) to the lament-like so ist das rather [English original] lächerlich, so wie ich mich auch lange bei dem Gedanken empört habe, auf meinen alten Tage mit op. 1 anzufangen. Da Du nun aber so überaus liebenswürdig dabei bist, will ich dir auch bekennen, wie entsetzlich mausig ich mich gemacht habe, u. daß nächstens 6 4stim. Lieder kommen, von denen Du kaum eins kennst.” The letter from Felix that Fanny references is from August 12, 1846, cited in this study on p. 272.
Warum sind denn die Rosen so blaß? (No. 4) with a particularly autumnal turn to the flat-key side; this is the song that Felix’s wife selected as her favorite.

The stakes were high for Fanny’s first publication. Not only was she going ahead without her brother’s help or blessing, she was also entering the same field as her internationally famous brother at the age of forty. She did not attempt to distance herself from the family name, however: on the contrary, she was listed as “Fanny Hensel, geb. Mendelssohn Bartholdy” on the title page of Op. 1, and would include her maiden name on all of her future publications as well. Fanny’s publishers and her musical contacts—which did include many of Europe’s finest musicians in both Berlin and abroad—already knew her musical worth, but to the uninformed member of the public, the music of the “new” Mendelssohn would have been subject to immediate comparison with the music of Felix Mendelssohn, which by this time included nearly seventy publications.

Table 6.2: Fanny Hensel’s Op. 1 (Berlin: Bote & Bock, 1846)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Poet</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Schwanenlied / Swansong H-U 358</td>
<td>Heinrich Heine</td>
<td>1839 – 1841</td>
<td>G minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Wanderlied (II) / Wandering song (II) H-U 317</td>
<td>J. W. von Goethe</td>
<td>Summer 1837</td>
<td>D major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Warum sind denn die Rosen so blaß? / Why are the roses so pale? H-U 312</td>
<td>Heine</td>
<td>January 26, 1837</td>
<td>A minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Maienlied / May song H-U 387</td>
<td>Joseph von Eichendorff</td>
<td>1841 or later</td>
<td>G major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Morgenständchen / Morning serenade H-U 388</td>
<td>Eichendorff</td>
<td>1841 or later</td>
<td>E major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Gondollied / Gondola song H-U 377</td>
<td>Emanuel Geibel</td>
<td>June 5, 1841</td>
<td>A major</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is quite significant that Fanny mentions her new friend, Robert von Keudell, in nearly the same breath as her decision to finally publish. Like Gounod, she says, Keudell re-energized her artistic ambitions and provided her with the same sort of daily musical feedback she had experienced with her brother, which was apparently essential for her to feel confident about the quality of her music. It is believed that Keudell’s encouragement, added to that of her husband and the “brilliant offers” from the publishers, finally pushed Fanny to make the decision to publish.

Fanny did not use any of her newest, Keudell-approved works for her first opus, however, but rather selected *Lieder* from the previous ten years or so of her compositional activity, or what she considered as her “best things”.

As for music making in general, I value Keudell very much, who by the way has been on a journey like Borchardt these past 14 days, and am very excited to have him around, like Gounod before. He takes a great interest in anything new that I write, and makes me aware of any failings, and as a rule he is correct. So I have now decided to publish my things. Bote & Bock have made me offers, which no dilettante has ever before received, and Schlesinger has made even more brilliant offers. I’m not flattering myself that this will really succeed, but rather I am happy for the time being that my best things will appear, since I have decided this once to do it.\(^{19}\)

The earliest selections dated from 1837, while the rest clustered around 1841. These *Lieder* were inspired in part by Fanny’s experience in Italy during 1839 and 1840, where she felt her artistic creativity had been rejuvenated by the relaxed atmosphere,

The key areas are carefully arranged, as is typical for the sets of songs or piano pieces by the Mendelssohns. In Fanny’s Op. 1 we find two tonic-dominant pairs (G minor–D major and A minor–E major), as well as two major mode-minor mode pairs (G minor-G major and A minor-A major). How these key areas are placed sequentially, however, becomes more interesting when we observed that there are two groups of key areas: the first traverses G minor to A minor, and the second G major to A major, each anchored by a dominant key area which tonicizes the first or last key area (See Fig. 6.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>G minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>D major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>G major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>E major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A major</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6.1: Key areas in Fanny Hensel’s Op. 1

Fanny was often at her best while writing in minor-mode key areas, and this set of Lieder proves the point. Nos. 1 and 2, Schwanenlied, and Warum sind denn die Rosen so blaß? impress the listener with their poignant beauty, surprising harmonic shifts, and effortlessly arching melodies. The Maienlied (No. 4) and Morgenständchen (No. 5) come out of the earlier Second Berlin Liederschule tradition of Fanny’s first teacher, Ludwig Berger, with their pastoral texts, bright chordal accompaniments and

20 See Todd (2009), Chapter 10, “Italian Intermezzo (1839-1840)” for a beautiful account of Fanny’s life as a tourist and musician in Italy.
simple or primarily triadic melodies. These two Lieder are also set apart from the rest of set in terms of texture: all other Lieder in this opus employ arpeggio accompaniment figures in the piano, but Nos. 4 and 5 feature repeated block chords which risk weighing down the joyous melodies.

One oversimplification about Fanny’s compositional process is that she rarely revised, since she was not writing towards publication, or so we have believed. In some cases, this can be true, and many of her works, especially the larger instrumental genres, do exist in only one version. The Piano Sonata in G minor (H-U 395, 1843), for instance, is a formidable work, with a powerful, stormy first movement, and an imaginative, shimmering Scherzo. The third movement is solid, but somewhat too long and repetitive, almost in the manner of some of Schubert’s piano sonatas. The last movement, however, ends quite weakly, with an extended period of hammering on the tonic at the end. Fanny could not have been satisfied with this ending, but she did not revise it on paper. We know that most of Felix’s compositional process took place in his head, much of the material improvised and played over and over again before being committed to paper. Fanny was probably similar, although she did not improvise as extensively as her brother did (as far as we know) and repeated performances of her works in her home were most likely never the same. However, many of her lieder do survive in more than one version, and as she embarked on her publishing career, the

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Gondellied from Op. 1 provides an opportunity to study some of Fanny’s revision process towards publication.

The *Niederschrift* of the lied dates from June 4, 1841, in light-colored ink, contained in a mixed working manuscript, now in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin-Preußischer Kulturbesitz. Written directly into this score are corrections in darker ink, added at an unknown date, but most likely during the summer of 1841. These corrections are assumed in the *Reinschrift* in the beautiful *Reisealbum*, which Fanny and Wilhelm put together to commemorate their lengthy trip to Italy the year before. The selections in this album—solo lieder, group lieder, and piano pieces—for the most part trace their journey to Italy; included are themes of wandering and pilgrimage, sights, and villas they visited, all beautifully illustrated with vignettes painted by Wilhelm.

The *Gondellied*, for obvious reasons, remembers their visit to Venice. The *Lied* started its life with a more specific reference to the actual boatman, as a *Gondollierlied*, but it was changed to the more generic *Gondellied* by the second version. The two autograph versions and the final published version of the *Gondellied* are presented in Ex. 6.1, Ex. 6.2 and Ex. 6.3. The most obvious change between the 1841 first versions and the 1846 published version involved the vocal line, which dips down to an F-sharp on “Mondespracht” instead of rising to the high A. Although subtle, the change makes a significant impact, as the first version sounded somewhat too triadic and the rising line created a secondary high point which weakened the effectiveness of the high A, the highest note in the piece, which had already been used shortly before. Fanny further adjusted the harmonies and voicings in the piano part between each version.
Example 6.1: Fanny Hensel, *Gondollierlied*, first version, final measures, June 4 1841, D-B MA Ms. 46, p. 53
Example 6.2: Fanny Hensel, *Gondollied*, clean copy, final measures, before mid-November 1841, incorporating revisions made to the first version in darker ink, at an unknown date. D-B MA Ms. 163, p. 22 (from the *Reisealbum*).
Following the success of her first publications, Fanny apparently changed her mind about how much she wanted to publish (she had intended just to publish a few things, as we saw in her diary entry from late July 1846), but the joy and artistic affirmation she received from her newfound public profile gave her the energy to produce six more publications before her early death less than a year later. As a quick scan of all the dates of composition for all of her published opuses shows, Fanny did not consider her older things worth publishing. Rather, she chose a few works from the late 1830s, many works from the Italian journey, or around 1841, and the final group is made up of works newly composed after she started publishing.

One significant exception from this rule is Op. 9. Here, the works have been quite incongruously chosen from the 1820s, and are not on texts of Fanny’s favorite poets of the late 1830s and 40s, but rather some of her childhood favorites. Some speculation has arisen over who selected the Lieder for this posthumous opus, because it clearly was not Fanny. Robert Keudell, Wilhelm Hensel, and Felix Mendelssohn have all been put forth as candidates. Keudell is a possibility, but Hensel is not, because someone with musical ability clearly put this opus together, as the key areas are carefully arranged (E-flat major → G minor → E major → A-flat major → A-flat major → E-flat major). Felix is the most likely candidate for several reasons. He travelled to Berlin after the summer of 1847 to visit Fanny’s grave and view her music room. On this occasion, he most likely selected some of her papers for himself, including the Lieder for Op. 9, Op. 10, and the Piano Trio, Op. 11. The first eight of Fanny’s publications were brought out by either Bote & Bock or Schlesinger in Berlin, while the last three were published by Breitkopf & Härtel, Felix’s preferred publisher, in Leipzig. Finally, the Lieder in Op. 9 almost all date from prior to 1830; most likely, Felix selected his favorites of Fanny’s Lieder from the
happest days of their youth, just before the two parted for what would turn out to be an almost permanent separation. Fanny never would have published these *Lieder* herself, as she clearly focused on her more recent works. This publication of her earlier works in a later opus is completely typical of posthumously published works for any composer, including Felix.

Table 6.3: Fanny Hensel's Op. 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Op.</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Sechs Lieder für eine Stimme mit Begleitung des Pianoforte</em></td>
<td>Berlin: Bote &amp; Bock, 1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Schwanenlied (Heine)</td>
<td>Fall 1839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Wanderlied (Goethe)</td>
<td>Summer 1837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Warum sind denn die Rosen so blaß? (Heine)</td>
<td>January 26, 1837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maienlied (Eichendorff)</td>
<td>1841 or later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Morgenständchen (Eichendorff)</td>
<td>1841 or later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gondollied (Geibel)</td>
<td>June 4, 1841</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.4: Fanny Hensel's Op. 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Op.</th>
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<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Vier Lieder für das Pianoforte</em></td>
<td>Berlin: Bote &amp; Bock, 1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Andante</td>
<td>July 19, 1836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Andante con moto (<em>September from Das Jahr</em>)</td>
<td>November 15, 1841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Allegretto grazioso (Villa Mills)</td>
<td>Fall 1839 – Summer 1840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Allegro molto vivace</td>
<td>October 28, 1843</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Table 6.5: Fanny Hensel's Op. 3

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<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Hörst du nicht die Bäume rauschen</em> (Eichendorff)</td>
<td>May 3, 1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>Schöne Fremde</em> (Eichendorff)</td>
<td>July 22, 1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Im Herbst III</em> (Uhland)</td>
<td>June 14, 1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Morgengrüss I</em> (Wilhelm Hensel)</td>
<td>June 24, 1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>Abendlich schon rauscht der Wald</em> (Eichendorff)</td>
<td>May 7, 1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>Im Wald</em> (Geibel)</td>
<td>February 9, 1846</td>
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</table>

Table 6.6: Fanny Hensel's Op. 4/5

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<th>Date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Allegro assai</em></td>
<td>April 5, 1839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>Allegretto</em></td>
<td>March 21 – May 3, 1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Allegro molto quasi Presto</em></td>
<td>December 1840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Lento appassionato</em></td>
<td>July 27, 1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>Allegro molto vivace</em></td>
<td>1840 or later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>Andante soave</em></td>
<td>1840 or later</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 6.7: Fanny Hensel’s Op. 6

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<th>Title</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Vier Lieder für das Pianoforte</em></td>
<td>Berlin: Bote &amp; Bock, 1847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>Andante espressivo</em></td>
<td>November 11, 1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Allegro vivace</em></td>
<td>Fall 1839 – Summer 1840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Andante cantabile (O Traum der Jugend, o goldner Stern)</em></td>
<td>May 16, 1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>Allegro molto (Il Saltarello Romano, Tarentella)</em></td>
<td>March 26 – 30, 1841</td>
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### Table 6.8: Fanny Hensel’s Op. 7

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<th>Date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Nachtwanderer (Eichendorff)</em></td>
<td>1843 or earlier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>Erwin (Goethe)</em></td>
<td>October 4, 1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Frühling (Eichendorff)</em></td>
<td>1846 or earlier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Du bist die Ruh’ (Rückert)</em></td>
<td>May 4, 1839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>Bitte (Lenau)</em></td>
<td>August 7, 1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>Dein ist mein Herz (Lenau)</em></td>
<td>July 11, 1846</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6.9: Fanny Hensel’s Op. 8

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<th>Date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Allegro moderato</em></td>
<td>Leipzig: Breitkopf &amp; Härtel, 1850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>Andante con espressione</em></td>
<td>May 14, 1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Lied (Lenau)</em></td>
<td>1846 or earlier</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Wanderlied</em></td>
<td>December 4, 1846</td>
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Table 6.10: Fanny Hensel's Op. 9

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Die Ersehnte</em> (Hölty)</td>
<td>February 26, 1827</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>Ferne</em> (Tieck)</td>
<td>October 29, 1823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Der Rosenkranz</em> (Voß)</td>
<td>March 3, 1826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Die frühen Graber</em> (Klopstock)</td>
<td>October 8, 1828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>Der Maiabend</em> (Voß)</td>
<td>August 30, 1827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>Die Mainacht</em> (Hölty)</td>
<td>June 24, 1838</td>
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</table>

Table 6.11: Fanny Hensel's Op. 10

<table>
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<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Nach Süden</em> (Wilhelm Hensel)</td>
<td>April or May 1841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>Vorwurf</em> (Lenau)</td>
<td>1846 or earlier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Abendbild I</em> (Lenau)</td>
<td>September 2, 1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Im Herbst II</em> (Geibel)</td>
<td>January 23, 1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>Bergeslust</em> (Eichendorff)</td>
<td>May 13, 1847</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.12: Fanny Hensel's Op. 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Op.</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Trio für Violine, Violoncello und Klavier in d- Moll</em></td>
<td>Leipzig: Breitkopf &amp; Härtel, 1850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>April 1847</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When Felix did finally write to welcome Fanny to the “guild” of composers on August 12, 1846, he gave her a mixed blessing:

My dearest Fenchel, only today, shortly before my departure, do I, bad brother that I am, get around to thanking you for your lovely letter and to giving you my professional blessing on your decision to join our guild. I herewith bestow it upon you, Fenchel; may you take joy and pleasure in providing so much joy and pleasure to others, and may you known only the joys of authorship and nothing of its bitterness, and may the public pelt you only with roses and never with sand, and may the engraver’s ink never seem oppressive and dark to you—actually, I believe there can be no doubt about all that. Why do I only now wish that for you? It is only because of the guild, and so that I as well could you my blessing, as hereby happens,

The fellow journeyman tailor,
Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy

After waiting over twenty years to finally make this step into the “guild” Fanny surely hoped for more enthusiasm from her brother, although she most likely did not expect it given his lifelong views against her publishing. Nevertheless, Fanny was hurt by his late and hurried congratulations.

Felix finally wrote to me, and gave me his professional blessing in a very amiable manner, even though I also know that it doesn’t seem quite right to him, I am still pleased that he finally indulged me with a friendly word about it.23

Der Tafelschneidergeselle,
Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy”

Felix's own entry into the "guild" decades earlier had been celebrated in the company of luminaries of no less magnitude than Carl Friedrich Zelter and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Fanny's entry only elicited a last-minute letter before yet another trip to England—this time, to conduct the premiere of an oratorio that Fanny didn't even know. She had just grounds to be annoyed and hurt, and she most likely was, but instead she rejoiced in the good things in her life, brought to her by her hard work, beloved (even if cranky) family, close friends, and unusually beautiful summer weather:

The unending contentment that pervades me this summer continues, like the wonderfully beautiful summer itself, the kind of which none of us have ever experienced before. This mood makes me selfish, because of it I don't have any desire to let the misfortunes of others disturb my inner peace, so I argue with Wilhelm, who unfortunately has retained his bad moods caused by a nervous attack this Spring, which renders him sick by every slight annoyance, so there's not much sympathy left for every occasion. However the warm summer does him good, but he has lost some of his flexibility for his work, which he himself notices with much regret.²⁴

Despite these daily annoyances, the beautiful summer brought with it as well planned (although unfortunately cancelled) trips with her choir to the water at Treptow (probably today's Rummelsburgersee, or, if they were going farther to what is today Treptow-Köpenick, the much larger Müggelsee). But there were as well moonlit nights of music making outdoors, which Fanny notes were “beyond compare.” Later that year, in
the autumn, Fanny wrote to Felix’s wife, Cécile, regretting that she hadn’t been able to join them to enjoy the summer in the Mendelssohn family garden, a summer which had brought back memories of her long-gone childhood:

How very much do I regret that you had to spend this most divine summer in the city, we have enjoyed it in our garden so very much, which I can barely remember having experienced at other times in my life, and I truthfully would have liked to say at every moment of my life, “Stay a little, you are so beautiful!”

After this invocation of the statement of complete satisfaction—“Verweile doch, du bist so schön!”—which would result in Mephisto collecting on his contract for Faust’s soul in Goethe’s Faust, it is quite ironic that Fanny had only another six months to live.

While we don’t have an entire lifetime of publications to assess in Fanny’s case, we can readjust our usual methods of inquiry to see that the question of Fanny’s authorial voice does not need to hinge on 1846, and thus on her decision to start publishing. While a new style may have developed had she lived longer, we have seen that Fanny did consider publication for most of her life, she did revise, and she did take her art very seriously. Fanny had warned Felix that his “demonic influence” over her had the power to make her give up music, but we can see here that Fanny had finally shaken off the negative aspects of her relationship with Felix, and confidently emerged as a professional composer. Every moment of joy has its sour note, however, and even the stimulation of publishing could not prevent Fanny from experiencing a drought in inspiration. Her final diary entry reveals that, following the completion of her Piano Trio in D minor for her sister Rebecka’s birthday in April 1847, she could not compose:

I’m having a dreadful time of it now, nothing will succeed for me musically, since my trio, I haven’t written a single usable note.26

These were in fact her very last words in her diary, which is symbolic for just how much music had become a central focus of Fanny’s life, despite her father’s warnings that it should not be so; throughout most of her life, Fanny had avoided writing about her own music or compositional activities in her diary. She finally did find her voice again, though, and just the day before she died, she picked up her pen again and wrote her final work, Bergeslust, on May 13, 1847. This Lied was also, fittingly and most likely intentionally, published as the final Lied in her Op. 10. Authorship had brought Fanny much joy, but also had shown her how much time she had lost, and how much more she needed to accomplish to even begin to be considered in the same league with her brother. Her own brother, whom she had nurtured, loved, and advised, and admired, could barely find the time to write her a note of congratulations when she became an author. It is most likely that if Fanny did feel any of the “bitterness of authorship” that she experienced it not from the publishers or the public, but from the beloved brother who had written those lines.

Fanny died too soon after her first publications for us to make any real conclusions regarding how publication affected her style. However, we can see that Fanny did start producing works in high concentration in the 1840s and offered her publications in evenly alternating genres of solo Lieder, choral Lieder, and sets of piano pieces. Most likely, Fanny would have gone on to develop her portfolio with larger genres, such as her Piano Trio (which was published posthumously), and perhaps a new string quartet and some new piano sonatas. She had established a pattern of publishing

26 Hensel, Tagebücher, 276. „Ich habe jetzt eine verdrießliche Zeit, es will mir nichts Musikalisches gelingen, seit meinem Trio have ich keine taugliches Takt geschrieben.”
only newer works, so it is unlikely that she would have returned to publish many of her older works, although she may have certainly returned to revise some of the works we consider among her best. These may have included her *Easter Sonata*, *Das Jahr*, her String Quartet in E-flat major, and her *Cholera Cantata*. Perhaps she even would have gone on to write a full symphony. Sadly, she never had the opportunity to prove to her brother what she could do.

The consistent profile as a composer that Fanny presented in her publications is at odds with her earlier compositional habits. Throughout her life, Fanny had tended to fixate on one genre at a time before abandoning it completely, somewhat like Robert Schumann. Thus, we see Beethoven influencing her choice to write chamber music and piano sonatas in the 1820s (several youthful attempts, plus the Sonata in C minor and the *Easter Sonata* date from the 1820s, with one outlier, the Sonata in G minor, in 1843). Her wedding prompted Fanny to try her hand at organ music in 1829, which she never touched again. Cantatas were next, occupying her for the entirety of 1831. After gaining experience with larger instrumental ensembles in her cantatas, Fanny experimented with an orchestral aria, *Hero und Leander* (H-U 262) and one orchestral overture (H-U 265) in 1832. After Felix's harsh critique of her String Quartet (H-U 277) in 1834, Fanny never tried that genre again. A constant throughout, however, were *Lieder* and solo piano pieces. It is thus unsurprising that she did choose from among her strongest genres for her first publications. Unfortunately, these were to be practically Fanny's only publications for the next two centuries (see Table 1.1 for a full list) and Fanny joined a long list of female artists awaiting full recognition.

Fanny Hensel (or Fanny Mendelssohn, Fanny Cäcilia Mendelssohn Bartholdy, or Fanny Cäcilia Hensel geb. Mendelssohn Bartholdy), is not the only woman to have
experienced misunderstandings about her creative process and publications and her desired roles in life. As Janet Todd and Linda Bree have shown, Jane Austen’s legacy has only recently come fully to light, and her image as a truly creative, hard worker has been hidden under generations of heavily encrusted concepts of gender roles. Fanny’s story too, has recently been uncovered by the work of Marcia Citron, Marian Wilson Kimber, Beatrix Borschardt, and Cornelia Bartsch, to name just a few of the pioneering feminist scholars with admittedly widely varying viewpoints. Just one viewpoint is never healthy, however, and when we are analyzing lives that were hidden for so long, various interpretations of the same facts are bound to occur. Agreed by most parties, however, and especially applicable to our oversimplified view of Fanny as a non-revising composer, is a point made by Janet Todd and Bree:

Many male critics appeared to think that a lady author should write artlessly, with no great pretensions to experiment and no unfeminine sign of artistic struggle. But the crossings out and rewriting of the manuscript of "Sanditon" showed that Jane Austen had forced her pen through what Virginia Woolf later characterized as "pages of preliminary drudgery".27

This point pertains to the Austen family’s decision not to publish Austen’s unfinished, or unrevised, manuscript of Sanditon in the 1860s (the full manuscript was not published until the twentieth century, a fate that most of Fanny’s works experienced as well). The concept applies just as well to Fanny Hensel and emphasizes why Fanny’s father and brothers did not want her to appear as a publishing author. Women were expected to maintain a “feminine” appearance, despite the even though they were also expected to negotiate the very real day-to-day hard work of perfectly managing a household and servants, planning menus, arranging business affairs with local

merchants, conducting or encouraging romantic relationships, managing correspondence, and scheduling and partaking in social life, not to mention giving birth to children and overseeing their education. Add to that the expected feminine accomplishments of dressing fashionably, conversing intelligently, reading widely, writing beautifully, embroidering delicately, drawing or painting skillfully, and playing piano or singing proficiently, and we wonder, along with Jane Austen’s Lizzy Bennett (*Pride and Prejudice*), at there being any such a woman on the planet. The contradictions in women’s roles and rights in the nineteenth century are certainly unfair to our modern eyes, but women were just as resourceful then as they are now, and Fanny Hensel, geb. Mendelssohn Bartholdy, was no exception.

As to whether or not we can call Fanny’s style “Mendelssohnian” or Felix’s style “Henselian” is in the end the wrong question. Fanny most likely never wanted to be called just “Fanny Hensel.” That choice appears to instead be a posthumous attempt to free Fanny of the onerous burden of being the lesser-known sister. Whether or not Fanny felt frustration at her situation, her identity, as well as Felix’s, was bound up with her name, which she proudly carried for the rest of her life as a performer, concert organizer, and publishing composer. The two composers, despite their lack of intimacy and time spent together at the end of their lives, loved each other deeply, respected each other completely, and probably would have been resistant to the idea that Fanny should separate completely from her family name. And it was not just a name: it was an entire tradition of family pride and a location for excellence and shared experience.

The Mendelssohns had worked long and hard to establish themselves in Berlin, their shared family home had become a center of Berlin’s cultural life, and all of Europe streamed through their front door; these guests “left their tracks behind” not just in
Wilhelm’s sketch book, but also in Fanny’s musical experience. Fanny left her impression on her guests, as well, and even had the opportunity to influence the next generation of musicians and composers. Fanny could not imagine herself anywhere else:

I can’t even express how happy the garden made me this summer. Our entire lifestyle depends so entirely on this location, that I can only think with terror of having to crawl off somewhere else.\(^{28}\)

Indeed, Felix had been inspired to write his Overture to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in that garden. The family had spent hours enjoying the long, soft, summer evenings in their garden with their friends, “The Wheel,” and Fanny had spent some of the happiest years of her life with her husband and son in the Gartenhaus, playing concerts, composing, or simply relaxing. While Fanny did express her struggles with her authorial identity much more openly than Felix did, Felix was also bound to Fanny, not just by the same last name, but also by the same family location. Although Felix did not appear to suffer from a fully reciprocal case of the “demonic influence,” Fanny was still absolutely essential to his mental equilibrium and compositional inspiration. A definitive example of this truth can be seen in how Felix reacted to the news of Fanny’s death in May 1847. After falling unconscious from the shock, Felix retreated to the Swiss Alps and to watercolor painting for the summer, before writing a few last works and succumbing to strokes on November 4, only six months after his beloved sister.

Attempting to alienate Fanny from this context is impossible and doing so only diminishes her importance as a Mendelssohn. She was born, raised, and educated a

Mendelssohn, lived her life as a Mendelssohn in the Mendelssohn home, and was buried in the Mendelssohn family plot. When Fanny’s circle of friends inducted her fiancé into their “Wheel” in the summer of 1829, Wilhelm in a way was becoming a Mendelssohn, rather than Fanny becoming a Hensel. Fanny was certainly proud to bear her husband’s name and she will always be “Fanny Hensel” before she is “geb. Mendelssohn Bartholdy,” but she identified herself as a Mendelssohn, and whatever anyone wishes to call her, Fanny’s music also identifies her as Mendelssohn. The shared musical style of Fanny and Felix is thus an enduring symbol of their shared identity as Mendelssohns.

Supporting this concept are the locations of the graves of Fanny’s and Felix’s spouses. Wilhelm is buried next to Fanny in the childrens’ plot of the Mendelssohn family section in the Friedhof Dreifaltigkeitskirche in Berlin-Kreuzberg. On the other side of Fanny lies Felix. Cécile is buried in Frankfurt.

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29 Supporting this concept are the locations of the graves of Fanny’s and Felix’s spouses. Wilhelm is buried next to Fanny in the childrens’ plot of the Mendelssohn family section in the Friedhof Dreifaltigkeitskirche in Berlin-Kreuzberg. On the other side of Fanny lies Felix. Cécile is buried in Frankfurt.
Figure 6.2: August Kaselowsky, Fanny Hensel in Rom (1845), private collection
Appendix: Ostersonate, Fanny Mendelssohn, 1828

Ostersonate

Fanny Mendelssohn

Berlin, 1828
Ostersonate / Easter Sonata

Fanny Mendelssohn

Berlin, 1828

Performing edition, Angela R. Mace

Duke University

2012

From the manuscript copy in possession of Eric Heidsieck, Paris, France

Autograph source, private collection

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KOPIEREN UND VERBREITUNG VERBOTEN!
This edition is making history. Here, for the first time ever, the Ostersonate is printed together with the name of the correct composer. Not even the original autograph source bears the name “Fanny Mendelssohn” – which is partly to blame for the misattribution of this sonata to Fanny’s brother, Felix, in the 20th century. Although lacking a signature, the music bears the musical stylistic signature of Fanny Mendelssohn, and the autograph displays without a doubt her musical hand writing and compositional process. How did we get here, and why is this such an important moment?

Fanny’s Ostersonate traced a path similar to that of her other largest work for piano, the cycle Das Jahr. Written, performed, then relegated to silence for nearly 200 years, the Ostersonate reemerged in the 20th century. Unlike Das Jahr, however, the Ostersonate experienced a further complication before coming fully to light. At some point, the unsigned manuscript, in absence of documentary evidence, and exhibiting the unmistakable “Mendelssohnian” sound, was believed to have been written by Felix Mendelssohn. The autograph was unavailable for research, so scholars were unable to confirm Fanny’s authorship; before the 1980s, the state of Fanny Hensel research was such that a conclusion may have been difficult in any case.

All of this changed when I heard, for the first time in 2008, the beautiful recording of the Ostersonate by Eric Heidsieck (Paris, Cassiopée, 1972). My research led me to Paris, in May 2010, to visit Heidsieck, discuss his experience recording and performing the sonata (until now, he is the only living person ever to have done so), and to view the autograph of the piece in private possession—reportedly the first time a Mendelssohn or Hensel scholar had viewed the score in at least 40 years, if ever. All traceable documentary and archival sources support the conclusion that the Ostersonate is by Fanny, and this was confirmed when I saw the autograph manuscript. The full details of my research and discovery will be presented in my dissertation, “Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, and the Formation of the Mendelssohnian Style,” at Duke University, 2013.

The Ostersonate, as suggested by its title, was begun around Easter 1828, in Berlin, and completed about six weeks later in June. Not every movement is overtly programmatic—the title is more atmospheric and chronological than it is prescriptive—but the sonata does exhibit several telling musical topos of the Passion story. Already by 1828, the Mendelssohns were deep in rehearsals and preparations for the 1829 revival performances of Bach’s St. Matthew Passion, and it is clear that Bach’s Passion influenced Fanny’s Ostersonate in especially the pungent prelude and fugue in E minor (the second movement), as well as the evocation of the “earthquake” topos in the fourth movement—rumbling tremolos in the bass. Beethoven, another particularly important compositional model for Fanny, is evident in the first movement; the lyrical turns and motivic development call to mind Beethoven’s late piano sonatas, here just a year after his death in 1827. The third movement is an effervescent but darkly tinged Scherzo—quintessentially “Mendelssohnian”—perhaps evoking the emergence of spring in April, May, and June (the loveliest months of the year in Berlin), as well as the ideas of spiritual and physical rebirth in the Passion story. The stormy fourth movement, most likely a depiction of the crucifixion, gives way to a radiant fantasy on the Easter chorale, “Christe, du Lamm Gottes” (“Christ, thou Lamb of God”).
Now, the Ostersonate will be given its American premiere, and its world premiere as a work of Fanny Mendelssohn instead of Felix Mendelssohn. This is truly a triumph for Mendelssohn and Hensel studies and for the musical scholarly community to see this work of one of the greatest female composers of the 19th century returned to its rightful authorship. Beyond the scholarly significance, the greatest triumph is returning this remarkable work to the concert stage, so that audiences can enjoy it and learn the full extent of Fanny’s contributions to the “Mendelssohnian” style.

This edition is still not complete, nor can it be a critical edition by definition—as we work with it over the coming year, I expect further errors to surface, and as of now, I do not have access to the autograph to confirm the correctness of the copy from which I made this performing edition. Therefore, this edition is strictly for private use only. Please do not make copies or redistribute in any way whatsoever.

Acknowledgements

Sincerest thanks to R. Larry Todd (Arts & Sciences Professor of Music, Duke University), my dissertation advisor, for alerting me to the mystery of the Easter Sonata, for introducing me to the recording by Eric Heidsieck, and for tirelessly proof reading and correcting the first several drafts of this performing edition. To John Supko (Assistant Professor of Music, Duke University), I will be eternally indebted for putting me in contact with Eric Heidsieck in Paris, and for translating my early correspondence with Heidsieck into and out of French. And to Bryan Christian (Ph.D. candidate, composition, Duke University): thank you for contributing your expertise with Finale software in the final editing stages to make the edition more visually appealing and easier to read.

I am grateful for the support of Jane Hawkins (Chair, Department of Music, Duke University), Scott Lindroth (Vice-Provost for the Arts, Duke University), Aaron Greenwald (Director, Duke Performances), and a Duke University Collaborative Artist Grant, to bring the Claremont Trio and Eric Heidsieck to the Duke University campus in September 2012 for the premier of Fanny Mendelssohn’s Ostersonate.

Angela R. Mace
Duke University
January 27, 2012
Ostersonate

Fanny Mendelssohn (1828)
ed. Angela R. Mace

Allegro assai moderato

quasi forte

Poco ritard

tempo

pp
cresc.

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8

177

180

185

190

194

sempre crescendo e accelerando

293
Largo e molto espressivo

ben cantato
Allegretto - Scherzo

sempre staccato
Allegro con strepito
\(182\)

\(188\)

\(192\)

\(197\)

\(202\)

320
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Biography

Angela was born in Salem, Oregon, on October 8, 1983, the second twin, and youngest of four. She moved with her family to Green Bay, Wisconsin in 1986, where she quickly became a Packers fan. She attended college at Vanderbilt University with her twin sister, Abigail, where they both earned B.Mus. in piano performance degrees in 2006. While earning her performance degree, Angela loved her music history courses, and became increasingly serious about a career in musicology. The turning point in Angela’s career came in 2005, when she traveled to Oxford, UK, with the support of a Vanderbilt University Undergraduate Summer Research Program fellowship, to research her senior thesis on Felix Mendelssohn in the Bodleian Library. She also attended the Fifth Biennial International Conference on Nineteenth-Century Music in Britain at the University of Nottingham, where she met R. Larry Todd. Angela promptly applied to Duke University for graduate school, and she lived in Durham, NC, more or less happily for seven years (2006-2013), earning her Masters in Musicology in 2008, and her Ph.D. in Musicology in 2013.

In 2010-2011, Angela was awarded a full research fellowship from the Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst (DAAD), and lived in Berlin, Germany, conducting her dissertation research primarily at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz. She enrolled as a guest student at the Humboldt University of Berlin, and attended and presented in the colloquium of Prof. Dr. Hermann Danuser. Angela served as a volunteer at the Mendelssohn-Remise, the Mendelssohn family historical exhibit and cultural event space, where she met many Mendelssohn descendants and other Mendelssohn enthusiasts. While there, she helped organize and presented in German at a Felix and Fanny Study Day, which brought together an international group of Mendelssohn authorities for a day-long symposium on the music and culture of the two composers at the Remise. Angela also traveled frequently to Leipzig for research and concerts at the Mendelssohn-Haus, as well as to Dublin, Ireland and Basel, Switzerland, to present at conferences.

Angela’s preliminary dissertation research in Berlin was made possible by the Julian Price Endowed Graduate Research Fellowship (2009-2010), the Graduate Summer Research Fellowship (2009 and 2011), and the Pre-Dissertation Research Travel Award (2009-2010). Her final two years of fellowship at Duke University have been supported by the Reference Internship at the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

Besides taking classes, serving as a teaching assistant, and working in the Duke University Libraries system during the summers, Angela kept busy preparing various publications. These include the revised and enlarged second edition of J. Michael
Cooper’s "Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy: A Research and Information Guide" for Routledge Press, 2010. Angela is also co-editor with Nicole Grimes of Mendelssohn Perspectives for Ashgate Press (2012), which includes her chapter, “Improvisation, Elaboration, Composition: The Mendelssohns and the Classical Cadenza.” Angela's article "Mendelssohn, Bartholomew, and the 'Elijah' Correspondence" appeared as part of the proceedings from the 2010 Lyrica Dialogues at Harvard (in Ars Lyrica 19). Angela is co-author, with R. Larry Todd, of “Mendelssohn and the Free Chorale” (Choral Journal 49/9, March 2009), and the "Verzeichnis der Werke Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdys" in the German translation of Todd’s Mendelssohn biography, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy: Sein Leben, Seine Musik (Carus/Reclam, 2008). She has also written short CD reviews for Early Music America, and full-length book and score reviews for Nineteenth-Century Music Review (7/1, July 2010 and 7/2, August 2010) and Notes (68/3, March 2012).

Angela has presented her research in English and German at conferences in the United States of America, Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Ireland. Most recently, she presented for the first time at the American Musicological Society at its 78th annual meeting, held in New Orleans, Louisiana (Nov. 1-4, 2012). On September 7, 2012, Angela and Todd organized a symposium at Duke University to announce the discovery of the manuscript for Fanny Mendelssohn’s long-lost Easter Sonata, which Angela had traced to a private owner in Paris. Susan Youens appeared as a guest speaker, and the Claremont Trio, with pianist Andrea Lam, performed an evening of Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn, including the world premiere of the Easter Sonata as a work of Fanny Mendelssohn. As a result of this announcement, Angela and Larry were interviewed for numerous articles, radio programs, and video features, including WCPE, WUNC, and Duke University Today, and Angela was also interviewed by The Chronicle of Higher Education.

Dr. Mace has accepted a position as Assistant Professor of Music (tenure track) in the Department of Music, Theatre, and Dance at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado, beginning August 16, 2013.